

INNOVATING **DISCIPLESHIP**



Four Paths to Real Discipleship Results

INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP also available as a
Leadia.tv Experience by the title FLUX.

Will Mancini

VERSION 1.0



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ABOUT THE CHURCH UNIQUE INTENTIONAL LEADER SERIES

The Series Originated Unexpectedly

Some things are found along the way, not calculated. Twelve years ago, my call into gospel ministry transitioned from pastoring in a local church to providing vision and strategy coaching for many churches. By God's grace I found unusual favor with a wide variety of pastors in different faith tribes and church models. I never planned to write, but eventually a passion for tool making would develop. Why? I observed firsthand how the right tool, at the right time, can change the trajectory of a church leader's calling. And it all started with the book Church Unique.

The Series is Not for Everyone

Please know that this series is not about minor improvements in your ministry. It's written with a higher aim—changed trajectory. Therefore it carries a bold voice and challenging ideas. It's not written to make you feel good or to entertain. It's not an aggregation of good-idea blog posts. In fact, it's not really written for most church leaders. It's written for the hungry-to-learn leader, the passionate dreamer and the disciplined doer. It's written for the intentional few.

The Series is a Unique Collection

I grew up with a dad who worked non-stop around the house. He bought only Craftsman tools. I can remember the trademark red color of the Philips screwdrivers and the signature-shape of the chrome wrenches. The reason he bought Craftsman was the lifetime guarantee. The reason I liked them is they felt different in my hand.

So how will the Intentional Leader Series look and feel different? We aim for these features:

- **High transferability through model-transcendent principles.** We are not creating tools to guide the strategy or tactics of one approach. Most books do this even without explicitly acknowledging it. Every book is applicable to any ministry model.
- **Immediate usability on the front line of ministry.** The tools have been refined in real, messy ministry. We will prioritize the application for your leadership huddle or staff meeting next week.
- **Clarity-first conviction.** This series connects to the foundational work in Church Unique; and each book, while able to stand on its own, will relate to and reference the fundamental tools like the Kingdom Concept and Vision Frame. The books will relate more like engine gears than like distant cousins.
- **To-the-point style.** These aren't gift books or lite e-books created for advertising purposes. We want to bring short reads with sharp insight. We want a tool you can read in an hour, but change your leadership forever.
- **Gospel confidence.** The only real power center for ministry is the Gospel and we are not ashamed of this reality! (Romans 1:16) Therefore, no growth technique or creative innovation or smart idea should diminish a Gospel-centered outlook on ministry. This series will remind the reader that Jesus is sovereignly building His church (Matthew 16:18).

I hope you enjoy the contents of the series as we strive to bring you tools that are transferable, usable, integrated and direct. More than this, I hope they challenge your thinking and make you a better leader in your time and your place. Please stay in touch at WillMancini.com.

THE INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP BACKSTORY

This book is special to me because it answers one of the most important questions for leaders who have read Church Unique and diligently apply a Vision Frame in ministry.

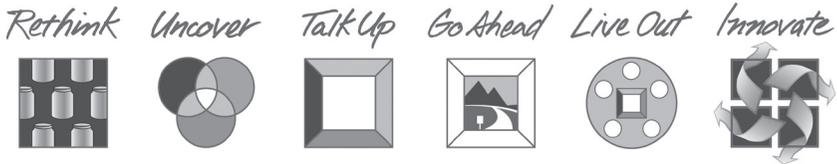
“When do we change our strategy?”

Some aspects of ministry DNA and vision should never change. Everything else should. INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP is about when to change. It will make complete sense even if you have never read the book Church Unique. But if you have, and you do lead with a Vision Frame, it will help you understand how and when to modify your mission measures and change your strategy.

That’s why we put in the “four paths icon” at the end of the Vision Pathway. As you “live out” your vision, the next step is continuous innovation for the sake of your unchanging mission and timeless values.

Here is one little key to help guide the way. When you see the term “output results” you can think “mission measures.” When you see the term “ministry model” you can substitute the “strategy” part of the frame.

May God bless you as you co-create the future with Him.



CONTENTS

Introduction: Fast Followers and Future Designers	1
Chapter 1: Finding Your Vision Switch	5
Chapter 2: Scoreboard 101: Three Kinds of Results	11
Chapter 3: ROI or IRO?	19
Chapter 4: Barriers to Ministry Design	27
Chapter 5: Three Approaches to Church Strategy	33
Chapter 6: Four Paths to the Future	45
Chapter 7: Path #2 - Innovation as Adapting.....	53
Chapter 8: Path #3 - Innovation as Infusion	61
Chapter 9: Path #4: Innovation as Creation	69
Chapter 10: Essentials to Limitless Innovation	79

DEDICATION

INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP is dedicated to my lovely wife, Romina.
In my world of continuous change, she is a constant blessing.

Will Mancini

INNOVATING **DISCIPLESHIP**



Four Paths to Real Discipleship Results

Introduction

Fast Followers and Future Designers

Not being able, as times change, to change under the Holy Spirit is ugly.

- Francis Schaeffer



The big idea of INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP is a simple whiteboard drawing. My hope is that it will help you achieve your wildest dreams for the mission of Jesus in the world.

If you are reading this you are most likely an early adopter. You know that change is important and you like it. Innovation is a word that motivates you. Innovation is fun.

You are a high definition leader. There are now more secondary screens in your life than children.

You are a high output leader. Multi-tasking and outsourcing are as basic to your existence as bread and water.

You are a high connection leader. You tweet at red lights. You “like” over breakfast. You read Seth Godin’s daily post on your latest Applegadget.

And what about your ministry?

It’s relevant and creative. My guess is that you serve in a multisite church (or just started something that will multi-try to multi-ply.) You digest new and dislike expected. You know what works. You think well on your feet. You care more about your community than the church down the street.

Honestly, you could pretty easily give a back-pocket talk on how to grow a church.

But as good as you are, you have a problem that you might not know about.

What is your probable problem?

Despite your strong gifts of leadership, most of your ministry is defined by fast-following and best-practicing.

Don’t get me wrong. Fast-following works and best-practicing can grow a ministry. But I believe that God wants more for you and hundreds of other gifted leaders. I believe he wants us to exchange our fast-following for *future-designing*. I believe He wants us to trade best-practices for *better-experiments*. I believe real ministry innovation should happen with the frequency of the sunrise not a solar eclipse. In the end the mission of making disciples is at stake.

WAVE RIDING VS. WAVE MAKING

I've met more and more pastors who are tired of fast-following and best-practicing. They want to accomplish more with their short lives. They are through with riding the next wave and are ready to make waves instead. More of the same thing the same way just doesn't seem better.

Listen to Steve Andrews, the lead pastor of Kensington Community Church. "I planted my church, and God grew it big. We've done externally-focused, church planting, and multi-site, and we'll keep doing them. But there are not enough years left in my life to simply keep growing this thing bigger. I'm interested in something more viral. I'm interested in changing the conversation from 'where is our next one' to 'how do we release 250 of our members to take our city?'

What about you?

I believe the moment is here to re-examine our assumptions about discipleship. Who will bring it? Everyday pastors will—from missional dreamers and megachurch leaders to church planting geeks and multiplication freaks.

What about you?

You are a fast-follower but were you were destined for more?

You are a best-practicer, but are best-practices limiting you?

You are an able leader, but is there a true originator and ministry inventor inside of you?

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP

This short read is intended to have a dual effect.

First, INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP is an annoying alarm clock that will aggravate you (just a little). It's time to wake up to the photocopied patterns of ministry that are holding the mission of discipleship back. We can't have you sleeping in when a new day is dawning.

Second, INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP is your Morpheus and he wants to free your mind. Or like the movie Limitless, this is the pill to provide access to dormant brain regions. It wants to create new synapses where ministry imagination expands and news ideas flash like 4th of July fireworks.

As we jump into INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP, we will be working from a simple whiteboard drawing- one tool to equip you as God's co-creator. After all, he designed you to help design a better future.

If you are still interested, take a trip with me to discover the meaning of this little equation:

$$1+2+4+16 = \infty$$

one whiteboard drawing

defined by

two vision decisions

reveals

four paths to the future

that provide

sixteen super-questions

for

limitless ministry innovation



Chapter 1

Chapter 1: Finding Your Vision Switch

[1 whiteboard drawing + 2 + 4 + 16 = ∞]

*Do not quench your inspiration and your imagination,
do not become the slave of your model
- Vincent Van Gogh*

Every once in while I find a new feature on my Mac or iPhone, because I discover a default switch or button that I didn't know existed. In fact, there is a specific definition for this:

¹Default: a selection automatically used by a computer program in the absence of a choice made by the user

Many times it's no big deal, but sometimes I want to kick myself for missing out on some cool functionality. I didn't know the default switch even existed!

After a decade of daily conversations about vision with ministry teams, I have discovered a hidden vision switch with a default position in the minds of church leaders. But this default setting is not just about missing out on a nifty feature. It's about a fundamental mode of thinking that's limiting us.

Let me explain.

One question I always enjoy asking church leaders is "How do you want your church to be different two years from now?"

What kind of answers do I get?

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/default>

The most common two-word response is “more people.” Of course that expresses itself in many forms:

- Increased worship
- More growth
- Higher attendance
- Additional services
- Reaching more people
- Reversing decline

Think about that for a minute. “How do you want your church to be different in two years?” Imagine the infinite number of answers possible to this question. For example, pastors could have responded with answers like:

- More desperate for Jesus
- More intimacy between husbands and wives
- More engaged in social justice and civic responsibilities
- More families having devotionals together
- More friendships with people far from God
- More students serving other students

But, for the most part, they don’t give answers like this. Despite the rainbow variety of gospel-centered, life-transforming possibilities the most common answer is always, in one form or another, “More people.”

Keep in mind that the one-dimensional answer of “more people” transcends an incredibly wide variety of church settings and leaders, from uptown to small town, mainline or online – from the newest staff newbie to the post-retired, hard-to-expire. Everyone wants “more people.”

And “more people” is good. Jesus wants more people, too. And, yes, churches “should count people because people count.”

But there’s something important behind the answer of “more people.” And that something reveals this default setting in the life of the everyday pastor. Church leaders are not just saying that want “more people.” What they are really saying is...

“We want more of the same thing the same way.”

Or to spell it out a little more...

“We want more of the same thing (people in attendance) the same way (with our existing worship and program offerings).”

Let’s unpack what this means even further.

When a leader tells me that they want more people, they are usually NOT saying two things.

First, they are typically NOT asking for a different result. The result they were looking for yesterday was more attendance. The result they are looking for today is more attendance. And, without intervention, the result they will be looking for tomorrow is more attendance. That’s the first way the hidden default switch works. **We don’t naturally look for fundamentally new, different, or better results**, but more of the same of what we commonly measure.

Second, the leader is typically NOT asking for a different strategy or revised ministry model. They already have worship offerings and some arrangement of additional classes, groups and events. The second way the hidden default switch works is by reinforcing the assumption that the same results will come *in the same way*. **That is, the leader is not really exploring or imagining a fundamentally new or different or better model.**

So, the hidden vision switch reveals two default mindsets in most conversations about church vision:

Default Mindset #1: More attendance is our primary desired result.

Default Mindset #2: Our ministry model doesn’t need to change.

Now let’s examine a second definition for the word default:

A selection made usually automatically or without active consideration due to lack of a viable alternative²

² merriam-webster

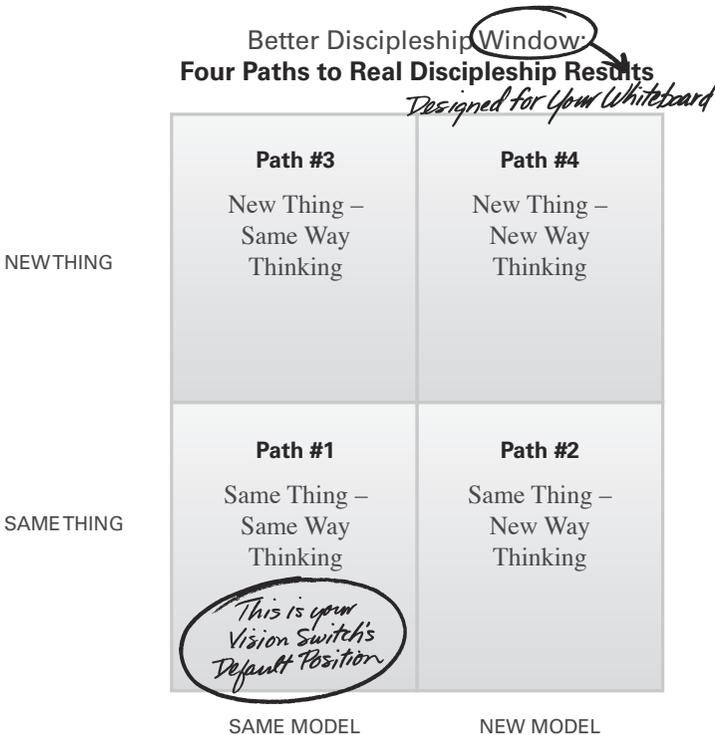
This definition exposes the liability of that darned hidden vision switch. What's at stake? Pastors make "automatic" decisions without "active consideration" of "viable alternatives."

So how do we open our mind's eye to consider new alternatives? That's what the rest of INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP is about.

For now, we will end the chapter with this conclusion statement:

When a pastor thinks about a better future for the church, the default desire is more of the same thing (usually attendance) the same way (existing ministry model). We will call this "same thing – same way," thinking for short.

If we create a matrix of the four potential paths, you have the start of one simple whiteboard drawing. Think of it as an innovation matrix. Through this window, you'll see the four paths to better discipleship results.





Chapter 2

Chapter 2: Scoreboard 101: Three Kinds of Results

[1 + 2 vision decisions + 4 + 16 = ∞]

Instead of counting Christians, we need to weigh them.
- Dallas Willard

The first of our two vision decisions is:

Decision #1: Is our vision to have more of the same results or some new result?

Identifying the default mindset in the last chapter brings us to the first huge barrier to innovation – lack of clarity about results. To the extent we are unclear about the results we want, innovation will either feel unnecessary or be driven by unanchored creativity.

I recently read a question posed by Mike Breen, former senior pastor and organic discipleship guru: “Why is all of our innovation in ministry about technology and not about discipleship?” That’s a great question. His point is that conversations about innovation can easily revolve more around gadgets than changed hearts. It’s easy to talk technology without connecting the dots to better outcomes in peoples’ lives.

In order to equip you to answer Decision #1, let’s provide some vocabulary and define some important points to keep you and your team crystal clear every day about results. Any result you can desire for your church will fit into three broad categories – input results, output results and impact results.

INPUT RESULTS

Input results in the church world focus on the number of people and dollars that “come into” the church. Input results are important. You don’t have a church without them. It’s also important to measure input results. You can’t lead well without knowing them.

Common ways we talk about input results include the “ABC’s” (Attendance, Buildings and Cash) or “nickels and noses” or “butts and bucks.” Every week, thousands of churches across the land will print their input results on a worship bulletin or review them in the next elders meeting. Input results inform the functional dashboard of the North American church.

OUTPUT RESULTS

Output results refer to actual life-change outcomes that God intends for followers of Christ individually and together. Examples of output results include the quality of a believer’s prayer life, the skillfulness in sharing the gospel, or the development of patience as one of the fruits of the Spirit.

There are hundreds of biblical phrases and concepts to capture the wonder of gospel-centered output results. Terms like “spiritual formation” and “transformed living,” to “Christlikeness,” and “full devotion to Christ.” I have never met a church without some banner, slogan or mission that points to output results. Output language shapes the primary intent of all the pastors I have ever met.

While many Scriptures speak directly to the output results, three passages are noteworthy for how they bring clarity, direction, and specificity to our understanding of output results.

In the first passage, Matthew 22:37, an expert lawyer tries to trap Jesus in his words. The hope of this trickster is that the right question will trip a wrong response leaving Jesus tangled in technicalities. But our Savior masterfully eludes the verbal snare by cutting through the complexity of Jewish laws with a stunning simplicity. With a brilliant synthesis that we know as the Great Commandment, Jesus replies: “Love...” The text clarifies the singularity of love—loving God and loving neighbor—as the ultimate outcome of life in Christ.

The second passage points to the prime directive of the church. Although the Great Commission is articulated differently in all of the Gospels, the evangelical favorite is Matthew 28:18-20. In this passage, the output results of the church are preserved through the mandate to “make disciples.” This mission is pervasive in two ways: it permeates the entire globe in geographic scope and it demands a full scope of obedience to “all that Jesus commanded.” Jesus’ disciples are to fill the entire planet and Jesus’ teachings are to fill the entire disciple.

The third passage is Galatians 5:22, where nine amazing attributes, known as the fruits of the Spirit, expand our imagination as a beautiful picture of Christ-like character. In this classic “output verse” we see a wonderful specification of total transformation. We are not left with glittering generalities. The Spirit’s desired end with us and in us is so clear and specific that its attraction and accountability is inescapable.

The output results of the church are black and white in Scripture. Most importantly, the living output that God requires of each one is satisfied by Jesus the One. That’s good news! In other words, in our talk about “results” in general we must never allow legalism to slip in. Through the cross, Jesus’ perfect life is credited to our account, so that our progress toward better “output” is centered and enabled in Him.

IMPACT RESULTS

Impact results capture the broader effect of the church in the surrounding city or community. Think of it as the positive difference that is made from the sum of believers influencing a region or pursuing a specific kind of social impact together. An example of an impact result would be lowering the number of homeless people or reducing the percent of teenage pregnancy or increasing the high-school graduation rate in an area.

The key to distinguishing impact results is that they are not a direct measure of the church’s mission but a by-product, so to speak, of the mission’s accomplishment. Using our example, we can be reminded that Jesus did not command his disciples to decrease teenage pregnancy in a particular geographic area. Therefore impact results may be the positive but the “not-necessarily-designed” results of good disciple-making.

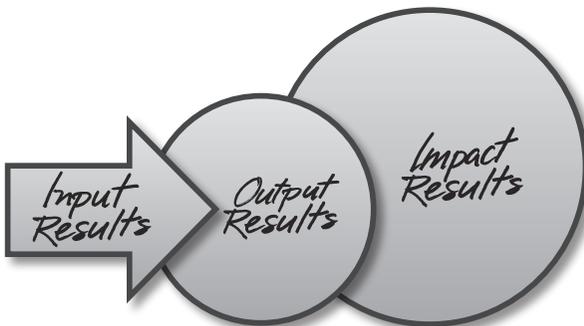
For example, the mission of the Upward Sports is to “Introduce children to Jesus Christ by creating opportunities to serve through sports.” When I asked Upward leader’s to share their “best-of” stories, they recounted several impact results. For example, a father came to Christ while serving in Iraq. At the last minute before departing overseas, his son slipped an Upward Bible into his dad’s military duffle bag. The dad found it, read it, and trusted Jesus with his life. Another story was told of recently separated parents who reconciled after a halftime devotion at their child’s basketball game. While these results are wonderful moments to celebrate, they are not output results for Upward. The ministry does not exist to save dads or redeem marriages. These are broader impact results.

Other times, the impact results come with focused energy toward a specific vision. For example, Christ Fellowship in Miami launched a separate non-profit named “Caring for Miami.” Among several social initiatives, they have rescued over one thousand babies from abortion through two women’s centers. Again, this noble accomplishment represents an impact result, not an output result. Because the church has made and matured disciples (output), the presence of these disciples has saved the lives of unborn children in the city (impact).

Therefore, when we cast vision for specific kinds of impact beyond making disciples, or if we find the “salt and light” influence of our congregation noticeably changing the community, we call this an impact result.

If you want to have a whiteboard collaboration about results, here’s how I like to draw it.

Three Types of Results



A tree is a useful analogy to relate input, output, and impact results. Let's imagine a Florida orange tree soaking in the sun and drinking in gallons of rainwater. We could actually measure exposure to light and absorption of water as input results. After all, you can't have healthy citrus without them. Output results reflect the total number of good oranges produced. Impact results are the happy faces and healthy bodies of little Joey and Suzi as they guzzle down fresh OJ with their scrambled eggs.

Three Types of Results

Organization	Input	Output	Impact
Orange Juice, Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gallons of water• Days of sunlight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oranges per tree• Pounds per acre• Juiciness and sweetness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enjoyable breakfasts are more enjoyable• Vitamin C intake• More smiles for kids and moms
Upward Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kids attend sports league• Churches host leagues• Parents pay for participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children hear the gospel• Children see Christ-inspired servanthood• Children trust in Jesus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in family member salvations• Lower divorce rate from participating families
Local Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worship attendance• Weekly giving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engaged prayer life• Skillful at articulating the gospel• More patient	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced homelessness• Saved lives of unborn babies

Our chapter conclusion statement is simple: **There are only three kinds of results: input, output and impact.**

Understanding these definitions will help us with Decision #1: Is our vision to have more of the same results or some new result?

Before we leave this question, let's consider one more dynamic that will help us make this vision decision.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3: ROI or IRO?

[1 + 2 vision decisions + 4 + 16 = ∞]

When I have heard of large congregations gathered together by the music of a fine choir, I have remembered that the same thing is done at the opera house and the music hall and I have felt no joy.

- Charles H. Spurgeon

Now that we have looked at three kinds of results, it's important to wrestle with a singular observation: **Despite the importance of input results, they do not provide a necessarily positive indicator of mission achievement.** More attendance and more giving don't necessarily mean more and stronger disciples.

The bottom line is that input results are not the church's bottom line. Disciples who obey Jesus are the church's only genuine product. Therefore churches can have fantastic input results and be mission impotent.

Every leader must decide where they will look to determine their success. I want to suggest two strategies for validation: ROI - Return on Investment or IRO - Input Results Only. Scripture reveals a God who expects a return on investment. But experience shows that too many leaders are satisfied with *input results only*.

INPUT RESULTS ONLY

Strong desire for, and careful attention to, input results are never the problem. The problem is when that's all we focus on. Over time with exclusive focus, input results become the pastor's *motivational bottom line*.

But a pastor will quickly push back. “Don’t we focus on output results all of the time?” In a manner of speaking, yes. You see, pastors speak and teach and preach toward output results frequently. We traffic in loving God lingo and making disciples mantra. Our challenge then, more specifically, is that we allow generic output language to validate our intent while we use input data to *validate our success*.

Craig Groeschel dives into this dilemma in his book, *IT*: “If you ask most church leaders, “What’s your ministry about?” they’ll give you a predictable response: “We’re about loving God and loving people” or, “We’re about reaching up and reaching out.” If you look at what the ministry is doing and measure it against their claims what you would find is often inconsistent.”

The most important question to now address is “What drives our functional reliance on input results to validate mission success?” I believe there are eight key reasons.

1. **Input results are obvious.** Most preachers get up every week and immediately feel the fullness of “the house.”
2. **Input results are tangible and therefore easy to measure.** It doesn’t take much effort to get a headcount. And money is not only easy to count; our banks make us do it to make the weekly deposit.
3. **Input results pay the bills.** When I was a college student, I remember thinking, “It really doesn’t matter how I spend my time, as long as my grades are good.” The same is true at church. If more people and money are coming in, everyone in leadership including the pastor feels the day-by-day relief that, “all is good.”
4. **Input results are legitimate output results in the business world.** Our elder boards and deacon teams are filled with lay leaders who sweat it out for high-expectation money outputs. Is it possible that the legitimate money metric of 9-5 also makes it onto the agenda for the evening church meeting?

³ Groeschel, Craig. *It: How churches and leaders can get it and keep it*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2008, pp. 42-43.

5. **Input results provide the basis for recognition among peers.** We have all been to the local pastors gathering where people either love or hate to discuss church attendance. Whether it actually comes up or not, it lives large on our conscious.
6. **Input results alone are more than adequate for highly visible recognition.** Have you noticed the list you have *not* seen from Outreach Magazine? How about the Top 100 Most Prayerful Congregations or the 100 Best Sending Churches in North America.
7. **Input results reinforce what the average church attender prefers as a definition of personal spiritual success.** Think about this vicious cycle for a minute. Most church attenders would actually prefer to define spiritual growth the easy way. Does God desire a radical transformation in my heart or can I enjoy great worship and teaching once a week and call it good? To the degree that a pastor is satisfied with just attendance and giving, people can live with lower standards of Christian maturity. Why would either the attender or the pastor break the comfortable, low-bar reciprocation?
8. **Input results enable less personal accountability for the leader.** This is not about ill motives per se, but more about a fluctuating energy level to stay disciplined with real outputs. There are stretches in my own leadership where a season of funk, or weeks of weariness leave me disinterested in real output results. All I really care about is whether the bills got paid!

These eight reasons give an IRO validation strategy a lot of horsepower. It's hard for input results to *not* be the motivational bottom line. The IRO posture is so deeply rooted in some of our churches that I have been tempted to loose heart. But, then I am reminded that Jesus will build his church. No consulting insight or fine persuasion can convince a leader not to focus solely on input results. It's a spiritual issue that the Holy Spirit can adequately handle.

Let's now drill down a little bit deeper on the most legit reason we get fixated defining success on the input side of the equation—inputs are just so dang easy to measure!

CAN WE REALLY MEASURE SPIRITUAL OUTPUTS?

Between 2004 and 2011, Willow Creek Community Church initiated a comprehensive spiritual growth survey with over 250,000 people from over 1,000 diverse congregations. Of their eight significant discoveries, the first is, “It is possible to measure spiritual growth.”⁴

I can’t tell you how many conversations I’ve engaged where a team starts wrestling with the question, “**Can we really measure life-change?**” **The answer is yes.** Even though it is not as easy as measuring inputs, it is very doable! Keep in mind that before my consulting ministry I was a spiritual formation pastor. At heart, I am a mystic. So measurability does not imply that we can fully measure the holistic, expansive view of life in the way of Jesus.

Let’s illustrate. Can you tell me how many people you could call at 2:00 a.m. if you really needed to talk? Sure you can, and that’s one way to measure Christian community. Can you tell me on a scale of 1 to 5 how confident you are at articulating the gospel? Sure you can, and that’s one way of measuring evangelistic readiness.

It really is that simple.

Let’s walk through all the places a leadership team can get hung up on measuring the church’s outputs.

The three common barriers to measuring outputs are:

The clarity barrier: The output results have never moved from intention to definition. Having clarity begins with a shared definition and articulation among leadership starting with the top 3-6 output results that the church is designed to produce. If outputs are unclear we always measure inputs. Imagine a leadership community of people who all know and share a passion for everyone in the church having at least five “2:00 a.m. friends.”

The capture barrier: There is no current system to retrieve output information. Measuring spiritual outputs requires basic feedback processes and listening systems in the context of relationship. Tools might include questions, self-assessments, interviews, and surveys. Measuring

⁴ Move, Greg L. Hawkins & Cally Parkinson, pg. 18.

nickels and noses requires almost nothing in comparison, so we settle for inputs. Imagine a bi-annual assessment conducted in small groups where people discuss and track progress in having “2:00 a.m. friends.”

The comprehensiveness barrier: The impossibility of measuring spiritual progress *comprehensively* can keep us from measuring spiritual progress *truly*. It’s easy to excuse ourselves from the task. But measuring output results doesn’t require us to be God. And it doesn’t require the perfect assessment. It does require a consistent, biblical and disciplined method to establish a baseline and track progress against it. Evaluating the number of “2:00 a.m. friends” in my life is not a complete picture of the commitment to Christian community, but it is a way to track true and meaningful progress.

Jim Collins speaks to the challenging but doable practice of tracking social sector outputs. “What if your outputs are inherently not measurable? The basic idea is still the same: separate inputs and outputs and hold yourself accountable to progress with outputs, even if those outputs defy measurement.”

He even speaks to the problem of quantification, another reason so many church leaders pushback about being serious with outputs. “It doesn’t really matter whether or not you can quantify your results. What matters is that you rigorously assemble evidence—quantitative or qualitative—to track your progress.”

He illustrates how artistic excellence was tracked by the Cleveland Orchestra as a difficult output to quantify. For example, they monitored the emotional response of the audience by counting the number of standing ovations (output). They tracked invitations to festivals that correlate to an elite status (impact) and the likelihood that cab drivers would refer to the orchestra as a point of civic pride (impact).⁵

⁵ Good to Great Social Sectors, Page 6-7

BACK TO VISION DECISION #1

Now that we have discussed three kinds of results and the dilemma of IRO thinking, I'm going to knock the ball into your court. **Decision #1: Is our vision to have more of the same results or some new result?**

I hope this question produces fruitful prayers and conversations. And remember: INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP is written as a follow-up to my book, Church Unique, where I lay a broader foundation to this question with the Vision Frame.

Our chapter conclusion statement is: **Input results (attendance and giving) by themselves do not validate the accomplishment of the church's mission.**



Chapter 4

Chapter 4: Barriers to Ministry Design

[1 + 2 vision decisions + 4 + 16 = ∞]

The church world does not pay for research and development as pharmaceutical companies do when they are looking for new projects, or the government does to explore outer space. The most radical designers in the church world have always paid for their own design processes, either by being judged heretical by their contemporaries or by being unsuccessful for some period of time before their thoughts form something whole, systematic and useful.

- Linda Bergquist and Allan Karr

Now that we've covered **Decision #1** and the first huge barrier to innovation—lack of clarity about results—let's talk about the second.

Our second big barrier to innovation is a low competency in ministry design. For the average pastor the second vision decision is harder to think about than it should be.

Vision Decision #2: Is it better to use our existing ministry model or to introduce a change?

This question raises many others and really forces us to think. What really is our existing model? What are some of the kinds of changes we could make? Should we make small adjustments to our model or overhaul the entire thing?

I believe the challenge in tackling this question is not our ability as much as it is our mindset. So, let's cover some ministry model basics. My hope is to create some awareness and insight that will help you answer **Decision #2**. Are you ready for a crash course in ministry design?

Let's go.

The course begins by reminding you that many leaders can easily be more skillful in ministry design. What keeps leaders from practicing ministry design more naturally? Three mindset issues keep us stuck: category complexity, "program lock," and 2nd generation passion. Let's briefly define each one.

CATEGORY COMPLEXITY

In our current world of flux we are given countless ministry categories. These categories shape our reading, conferencing, and dialoging which in turn shape or thinking and our ministry design.

The people who create our categories are:

- **Academics** who write about theology and often times don't have leadership experience. They give us important technical categories to think about within ecclesiology and missiology.
- **Passionate practitioners** who share their models. Each story fits a category or creates a new one. All I want is an exponentially sticky, totally deep, wholly hybrid, and missionally both/and church.
- **Researchers, writers, and blog aggregators** who give us even more categories – from a catalogue of best practices to the latest research to the latest five attributes of a thriving church.
- **Prophetic voices and rock star pastors** that motivate and mutilate. If these folks don't give us new category they will at least shake up the ones we thought we understood.

All of these people are gifts from God and agents of the church's constant reform.

But so many categories about how to do church create confusion and uncertainty. Many times the categories themselves are not accessible and actionable enough to innovate from "right where we are." Therefore, category complexity overloads us and paralyzes us. As a result, approaching the task of ministry design is more daunting.

PROGRAM LOCK

The second mindset issue is what I call “program lock.” Program lock is the mental inability to see a different way of doing ministry because someone else made all of the design decisions in advance. Who would that be? The prior pastor, a denominational resource provider, the latest conference speaker, or a program-in-the-box maker. Let me clarify; a program is not a bad thing, but pastoring with program lock will get you stuck in an ever changing world.

My first car was a 1970 Olds Cutlass. I remember one day when I couldn’t start it. Thankfully my dad knew the problem, which he identified as “vapor lock.” The gasoline in my fuel line was turning to vapor, which in turn kept the liquid gasoline from flowing. With program lock a similar thing happens: a continuous stream of alternative improvement ideas is blocked from entering through the brains cells of the ministry leader. Year after year a leader keeps managing the same programs—the same “hows” of ministry—that were determined by a person in a different time and place.

Social scientists use the term “path dependence” to describe the same type of dynamic. The classic case study is the QWERTY keyboard. It was popularized in 1878, when the mechanical limitations of the typewriter played a role in determining key placement. Despite every technological advance since then, we still stay with the inferior solution because of our dependence on it.

2nd GENERATION PASSION

The third obstacle with ministry design competency is what I call “2nd generation passion.” Every ministry model was originally designed to meet a need and solve a problem. What typically drives the creation or modification of a model is a deep and personal connection to some problem. When Bill Hybels designed a seeker model, he was emotionally connected to the problem that spiritual seekers had checked out on church as usual. When the leaders of Grainger Community Church launched their 2016 “Raising the Bar Vision” they were emotionally connected to the problem that a large attractional service can be a barrier to releasing and reproducing people to “be the church.”

When a leader copies another ministry model, the emotional connection to the problem it solved doesn't automatically come with it. That's what I call 2nd generation passion. When a pastor is stuck in program lock, they are operating with 2nd generation passion. To whatever degree the "original pain" of a problem is missing, the drive and courage to shape new strategy will be missing.

Here is my brief prescription for each of these ministry design barriers:

- **Category Complexity:** Keep reading because INNOVATING DISCIPLESHIP will provide some simpler categories.
- **Program Lock:** Analyze your own "pathway dependence" by reviewing your history in ministry. Who made the decisions about the model you were leading at every chapter in your story?
- **2nd Generation Passion:** Prayerfully pay more attention to the needs of people right where God has placed you. Cultivate your holy discontent by listening to the voice of the Father as you stay immersed in culture. What drives you today? What originally drove the model you are using?

Our chapter conclusion statement is: **Thinking of new ways to design ministry is difficult because we have a truckload of ideas dumped on us (category complexity), we get stuck in an existing model for doing things (program lock), and we are not deeply in tune with the original problem that our models solve (2nd generation passion).**