

Breakout Churches

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Summary/Notes from Jeff Pearson's
SBTS class notes, Fall 2004

BREAKOUT CHURCHES – When Churches Leave Mediocrity

- *** Dr. Rainer's book by this name will be out in January 2005
- *** This is a church-growth work based on the secular book: "Good To Great"
- *** Dr. Rainer and Dr. Mohler say: "Good to Great" is one of the best books they've ever read...

- I. Start and End of Book... "It is a sin to be good when God called us to be great."
 - A. Look for all the times God uses "Great" in the Bible
 - B. God speaks in superlatives
 - C. Mediocrity is an epidemic in today's churches

- II. Data:
 - A. 400,000 churches in America
 - B. 52,333 churches for which we have data
 1. 350K churches for which no data was found
 2. PCA would not contribute their data
 3. Data verification was key... known bad data was thrown out...
 4. Independent Christian Churches are key but not well documented

- III. Criteria:
 - A. Minimum of 26 conversions in most recent year (not everyone baptizes to the standards that Dr. Rainer links to salvation)
 - B. Conversion ratio no higher than 25:1
 - C. Decline or plateau must be a part of the history
 - D. Breakout must have occurred
 - E. Growth following breakout
 - F. **All under the same senior/solo pastor**

- IV. Frustrations in Finding Data
 - A. Lack of denominational cooperation
 - B. Poor data
 - C. Unverified data
 - D. Uncertain comparison data
 - E. Misleading data

- V. 13 Churches Met The Criteria (of the 53K)
 - A. Central Christian Church, Beloit, Wisconsin (Independent Christian)
 - B. Fairfield New Life Church, Fairfield California (Nazarene)
 - C. Bethel Temple Community Church, Evansville, IN (Non-denominational)
 - D. Calvary Memorial Church, Oak Park, IL (Non-denominational)
 - E. First Gethsemane Baptist Church, Louisville, KY (SBC/National Bapt.)
 - F. Grace Church, Cleveland, OH (Christian Missionary Alliance)
 - G. Grace Evangelical Free Church, Allen, Texas (Evangelical Free Church)
 - H. Grove City Church of the Nazarene, Grove City, OH (Nazarene)
 - I. Korean Central Presbyterian Church, Washington DC (PCA)
 - J. Lenexa Baptist Church, Lenexa, Kansas (SBC)
 - K. Southwest Baptist Church, Amarillo, TX (SBC as of 10/03 – vs Indep. B.)
 - L. The Temple Church, Nashville, TN (National Baptist)
 - M. Xenos Christian Fellowship, Columbus, OH (Non-denominational)

- VI. 39 Comparison Churches...
 - A. Three churches for every “breakout church”
 - B. Each comparison church “looked like” the breakout churches 10yrs earlier

- VII. Quest of the Project = the “Chrysalis Factor” (what happens inside the cocoon when the caterpillar changes over to a butterfly)

- VIII. Breakout Factoids:
 - A. Most of the leaders WERE NOT charismatic, dynamic leadership personalities
 - B. Surprisingly slow in adapting to new methodologies
 - 1. They were “mid-adapters”
 - 2. Not typically “early-adapters”
 - C. No vision statement
 - D. Location not correlated
 - E. Church name not an issue (a full spectrum, from traditional to edgy)
 - F. No strategic plan
 - G. All were conservative, evangelical churches... (so were the comparison churches – but their churches declined as a rule)
 - *** Lesson: “unapplied theology is not enough”

SIX KEY ATTRIBUTES OF BREAKOUT CHURCHES!!!

- A. **Leadership:**
 - 1. ***Acts 6/7 Leadership:***
 - a. Modest, Humble, Quiet, Other-Centered, Deflects accolades, Open to criticism...
 - 2. There is a pyramid paradigm
 - a. Acts 1, 2, 3 leadership models represent the base
 - b. Acts 4, 5 = mid

- c. Acts 6/7 = top
3. Definitions of the levels:
- a. Acts 1 Leadership: the “called” leader
 - b. Acts 2 Leadership: the “contributing” leader
 - Are they preaching the Word
 - Spend 5X time in sermon prep. vs Acts 1 leader
 - c. Acts 3 Leadership: the “outwardly-focused” leader
 - d. Acts 4 Leadership: the “passionate” leader (see Acts 4:20)
 - e. Acts 5 Leadership: the “bold” leader
 - *** Leader attempts something that is impossible without God is in it...
 - f. Acts 6/7 Leadership: the “legacy” leader
 - *** Stephen was more concerned about what happened beyond his lifetime than he was for his immediate circumstances.
4. Percentage Of Church Leaders That Fit Each Level:
- Acts 1 membership = 98%
 - Acts 2 membership = 22%
 - Acts 3 membership = 14%
 - Acts 4 membership = 6%
 - Acts 5 membership = 3%
 - Acts 6/7 membership = < 0.5%
5. Acts 6/7 Leadership Surprises
- a. Slow progress is fine
 - b. Thin-skinned rather than thick-skinned
 - c. Reluctant to get the spot-light for their leadership
6. Eight Characteristics of Acts 6/7 Leaders
- a. Fierce biblical faithfulness
 - b. Long Tenure... willing to stick around... ave. tenure = 21.6 years
 - c. Confident humility – no arrogance, glory given to God
 - d. Acceptance of responsibility (...the buck stops here)
 - e. Unconditional love of church members (even the unlovable)
 - f. Outwardly-focused vision
 - g. Persistence (three steps forward, two steps back...)
 - h. Legacy leader

B. **The ABC Moment**

1. "A" = *Awareness*... "recognizing that something ain't right!"
 - a. Too many churches are blinded by the status quo
 - b. Too many churches today are unwilling to look at reality
 - c. One of the first signs that a church is beginning to turn around is their eye-opening awareness to their own reality
 - d. Every breakout leader had some sort of "wake-up call" experience
 - e. Breakout leaders grapple with "what is" and grow dissatisfied with it... they feel compelled to initiate change
 - f. What "should be" and "what is" just don't reconcile
 - g. Summary:
 - 1). Accept painful reality....
 - 2). "Is"/"Should Be" must be discerned
 - 3). Positive Outside Influences.... Something or someone helps the leader recognize that there is a gap between "is" and "should be"

*** **Number One Challenge to breakout...
AWARENESS! (heads in the sand)**
2. "B" = *Belief*
 - a. Confronting the brutal facts
 - b. Confronting hard facts with questions of God's possibilities
 - c. Belief that God wants more and will do more with said church
3. "C" = *Crisis*
 - a. The cost of going from good to great CREATES crisis
 - b. 2 of the 13 found breakout churches fired their breakout pastors in the process... and then they hired them back
 - c. Most pastors do not lead breakout churches because they are unwilling to take on the inherent crisis that is required to get from point A to point B

C. **Who/What Simultrack**

1. Dealing with the "People Issue" and the "Infrastructure Issues"
SIMULTANEOUSLY
2. Issues with "people" for the leaders in church; in 2 broad groups:
 - a. Paid staff
 - 1). You may need to fire people
 - Wrong person for the job
 - Bad fit
 - Even though strong relations may exist!
 - 2). You may choose to "work around" people if you choose not to fire the wrong person
 - 3). The principle is this... church dynamics are not as cut and dry as the business world... you cannot

simply fire and hire without risking MAJOR consequences in a church

- b. Laity
 - 1). The faces and particulars may change when we go from paid to laity leadership...
 - 2). But... the issues remain the same

*** **Key: Breakout leaders deal with “people” and “infrastructure” issues SIMULTANEOUSLY!!!**

- Note: the most common approach is do not address neither issue...
- Traditionally, those that do attempt to institute change almost always begin with infrastructure issues because “people” issues constitute a tougher fight

3. Infrastructure issues (know examples!)

- a. Committees
- b. Building and facilities
- c. Budgets and finances
- d. Sunday School
- e. By laws
- f. The “structures” that hold the church together

4. “Who” Lessons

- a. When in doubt, wait!
 - 1). Vacancy is better than the wrong person
 - 2). Wait on God... a great principle and life lesson
- b. Act quickly and compassionately
 - 1). When you have to make a personnel change
 - * Only in “key” positions
 - * Only if the need is significant
- c. Compatibility is as important as competency
 - * Ask “how will this person fit on the team?”
- d. Micromanagement is a formula for failure
 - * Typically a sign that the leader is the wrong guy...
 - * On the other hand, if the person needs to be micromanaged, the worker is the wrong guy

*** Create database of your people:

- Past service experience
- Spiritual gifts
- Passions/likes
- What DON'T you want to do...

5. “What” Lessons

- a. Know thy purposes
 - 1). The ONE purpose of the church is to glorify God
 - 2). What people call “purposes” are really functions...

- 3). The genius of “The Purpose Driven Church” is its simplicity. It asks two foundational questions:
 - * *What* is your business?
 - * *How* is your business?
 - Most churches don’t evaluate...
 - *** Rick Warren took these two key business questions and applied them to the Church!
- b. Facilities and location are means, not ends (but they sure are important).
 - 1). Don’t think that facilities will create attendance
 - 2). 66% of churches that have had major building programs have declined at the end of the building program
 - * Their goal was the building... representing and “END”
 - * “Ground Breaking” tends to say: “this is the beginning of something that will have an end...”
 - Communicate that all facilities are, AND WILL BE a “means vs. an end” to ministry!
- c. Small group structure is critical
 - 1). Open-ended, small groups must be available
 - 2). People must feel welcome to join
- d. Leadership groups must be clearly defined
 - 1). Many churches are confused about who does what
 - 2). The key ingredients tend to be:
 - * Pastor/Pastoral staff
 - * Elders
 - * Deacons
 - * Trustees
 - *** Commit to biblical models

*** *Simultrack Summary: A Culture of Serious Fun*

D. **The VIP Factor**

* **VIP** = *the Vision Intersection Profile*

1. **Vision** = “*God’s specific plan for a specific church in a specific time*” (Rainer)
2. VIP factor is the intersection of three major factors/issues:
 - a. Leadership passion
 - * If the leader is not passionate about something, he won’t lead it effectively
 - b. Congregational gifts and passion

- * Find out where the gifts and passions of your people are aligned
- * The answers to these questions are most likely God's roadmap to your church's vision
- c. Community needs
 - * Community needs help to illuminate context...
 - * Vision needs to end at a worthy place
- 3. VIP factor = the subset of intersection between these 3 areas
- 4. Implications/Needs for this system to work:

NOTE: * = Rainer list a,b,c = class discussion

 - * Choose what you can do best (you can't be the best at everything)
 - * Assumes leadership passion
 - * Vision must include the congregation
 - * Passion for the community must be present
 - * Vision is dynamic!
 - a. Tenure – long term commitment is key!
 - b. Information (good data) is essential regarding:
 - Your people
 - Your community (read: The Church of Irresistible Influence)
 - *** Learn! Don't assume!!!
 - Your gifts/passions
 - c. Recognize that nobody can have everything they are passionate about... however, most people will have something that most other people can agree upon and collectively they will passionately pursue them.

*** Breakout churches discovered vision!

E. **A Culture of Excellence:**

1. "Good is not good enough"
 - a. Many churches put an emphasis on excellence too early in the process... resulting in the wrong things being done excellently.
 - b. The emphasis on "doing excellence" should be prioritized once the church is healthy
2. Never satisfied... keeps looking in the mirror
 - a. Interview people after they visit the church for feedback
 - b. Some pay people to give third party feedback
3. Ministry staff (laity included) is given freedom within boundaries
4. Preaching and worship services are critical issues
 - a. Unchurched people will not return if worship and preaching is not done with excellence
 - b. Sermon preparation is key
 - c. Style is important but content is critical

5. Facilities and location need excellence
 - a. Signage
 - b. Upkeep
 - c. Etc.

*** Use the community as the measuring stick (“fit” the area)
6. All ministries, *especially small groups*
 - a. Sr. Pastor needs to be heavily invested, setting the vision for Sunday School/Small Groups ministry
 - b. Visionary leadership for small groups from the pastor is critical for success
 - * Recruits teachers
 - * Set high standards
 - * Set personal example from the leader
7. Ministries done in the community
 - a. Decide which things you can do well and do them
 - b. Do not try to do a lot of things

F. **Innovation Accelerators:**

1. Two typical reactions to innovation/fads for the church
 - a. Innovation Resisters
 - b. Innovation Embracers

*** Breakout churches did not fit either category!

 - * All 13 Breakout churches were “MID-Adopters”
 2. Innovation is “a means not an end”
 3. By contrast... the “comparison churches” of Rainer’s research saw innovation as “the” answer
 4. Breakout churches were cautious but not resistant... they checked the specific innovations against:
 - a. Bible
 - b. People
 - c. Community
 - d. Gifts
 - e. Passions
 5. Breakout churches see innovation, not as panacea, but as an accelerator
- *** Note: innovation is the last of the six keys to breakout churches

*** Conclusion of the 6 Steps to Breakout:
 Every church is in 1 of 3 positions... either they are in “Big Mo” (big time positive momentum), second: moving toward one of the two extremes, or third: a “Blind Erosion.”

- **90+ % are in blind erosion**
- **Less than 1% are in Big Mo**
- Most of those in transition are heading south

COMMON BARRIERS TO EVANGELISTIC GROWTH

Barrier #1: “Comfortitis” – (Big Barrier)

- People or staff desire NO change
- Due to poor work ethic, money issues, inward focus...
- People fear loss of ownership
- “in a world that has been characterized by rapid change, the church is perceived as the last place where things have remained the same”
- “Bastions of stability”
- Right approach
 1. Tell them what won’t be changing
 2. Communicate well
 3. Honor things of the past
 4. Be respectful

Barrier #2: Participatory Democracy

- Micro-decision making “can be” a barrier
- Congregational gov. does not mean you vote on everything, it means accountability rests with the congregation
- Solution:
 1. Less frequent meetings
 2. Plurality of leadership

Barrier #3: Power Group Syndrome

- Small group exert control...
- Solution:
 1. Confront them in love
 2. Be patient
 3. Get more people involved from the congregation
 4. Consider the “mountain analogy” – around it is best...

Barrier #4: “Not Like Us Malady”

- Typically sounds like... “new members are coming into MY church
- Solution:
 1. Confront them...
 2. Prepare in advance for the problem
 3. Biblical preaching is the best approach

Barrier #5: Ministry Misplacement (most common malady mentioned in consults.)

- Not enough people in ministry (not enough available???)... OR
- Wrong people in ministry positions (not knowing or just mismatch gifts)
- Established people not letting new people into ministry positions...
- Solution:
 1. Teach people what ministry is supposed to be
 2. Do spiritual gifts inventory and match to personal passions

3. Communicate “high expectations”

Barrier #6: Pastoral Care Pastor (can be Pastor’s choice or people’s choice)

- Inward focus...
- “Pastoral care/inward focus combo limits most churches to 90 members
- Root problem: power/control issue
- Mercy is used to disguise job security issues... everyone loves the guy...
- Solution: there needs to be a biblical balance between pastoral care and evangelism

Barrier #7: Biblical Blindness

- Most prominent reason conservative churches grow = they believe in the Bible and think people need to Jesus for salvation!
- Sign of the problem... 1 of 7 SBC members reject John 14:6 (in principle)

Barrier #8: Small Church Mentality

- Only okay if you stay small because you intentionally continue to plant more churches before you get very big...
- Any other excuse equates to you being willing to tell lost people to “go to hell”
- This type of “single cell affinity” mentality usually limits church to 60-90
- Solution:
 1. Preach evangelistic sermons
 2. “Go around the mountain...”

Barrier #9: Stepping Stone Pastor

- “Greener grass” or CEO expectations
- Greener grass always looking for the next larger job
- CEO expectations is really a laity problem... they perceive all church problems being pastor/CEO issues... get rid of him when problems surface... the laity never accepts “heart responsibilities”

Barrier #10: Staff Shortage

* General rule of thumb = 1:125 (one staff for every 125 in attendance)

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Barrier #11: The Mission/Purpose Predicament (Rick Warren is right here...)

- Genius of Purpose Driven Model (PDM) is it drives churches to evaluate themselves
- Too many churches do not know what they are supposed to do
 1. Improper purposes:
 - a. “Survival”
 - b. Take care of each other

2. Solution:
 - a. Preach and teach biblical principles
 - b. Pray... ask God to show you and others what is wrong
- 2/3 of churches that have a building program decline afterwards... because the attitude of the congregation is that “it is done”
- Too often our churches are “crowd driven” – it is not about the quantity...
- Many churches are financially driven
- ***** Warren makes it clear and simple... (using Peter Drucker’s key questions: “What is our core business?” and then, “How is our business?”)

Barrier #12: The Ex-Neighborhood Church

- When the community does not match the church
- “White flight” from urban centers is the stereotypical example

Barrier #13: Finite Facilities Syndrome

- Shortage of space: the 80% rule really does apply
 - Parking is the biggest problem area in the 80% rule arena
 - It applies in all aspects of the church
 - 80% full is a psychological barrier!!!
- Churches are building too quickly without enough forethought and finances up front
- Building rates are up 1100% since 1984, while overall attendance is down 2%
- SHT = “Skinny, Hiney Theory” church architects assume people have 20” needs per person, and they also tend to assume “cheek to cheek” spacing when building...

Barrier #14: Fundingitis...

- Both the lack of funds AND influx of additional funds creates challenges and in-fighting
- It is amazing what God can do without money

Barrier #15: The Dissenting Minority

- These people are typically the “ex-power group” people
- Long enough tenures typically outlive existing power groups (by building credibility and new alliances)
- These people are like spiritual snipers... just because you have won the war don’t think that you are free and clear of battles

- Too many leaders spend too much time with these folks... thereby giving them a rejuvenating second breath

Barrier #16: Ghost Town Disease

- Where have all the people in the town gone?
- Overall population declines rapidly, thereby limiting the ability to draw people... they simply are not there to draw in

Barrier #17: An A-Hell Theology (BIG ISSUE)

- Too many pastors do not have an orthodox theology of a literal hell
- Unchurched people have the same % of acceptance of a literal hell as the church (on average)
- This theology is killing evangelism amongst the SBC and other denominations
- Without hell, the motivation for evangelism is gone
- This is a problem with more evangelicals than we would like to admit
- Hell is almost non-existent in “mainline” churches

Barrier #18: Busyness

- ...When the “good” replaces the “best”
- Too many churches get too busy to do evangelism... too bad!
- If this is a challenge for church leaders, how much more of a challenge is it for the average church member

Barrier #19: The Absent Role Model (BIG ISSUE)

- This is where the pastor’s example in personal evangelism is key
- Don’t even think of building an evangelistic church if you are not personally committed to personal evangelism!!!

Barrier #20: The Teaching Church

- Soaking but not going...
- Teaching is good but it needs to be a means to an end, not an end in itself
- Sometimes churches use the teaching model as an excuse for a lack of doing...
- Beware the title of a “teaching church” – if it cannot be coupled with baptisms, and evangelistic discipleship fruits
- The PROBLEM is rooted in FALSE DICHOTOMY between discipleship and evangelism
- Dr. Rainer does not know of any effective hybrid program that combines discipleship and evangelism training...

*** Seek out Ceder Creek’s new Pastor Eurick (spelling) who developed the R.E.A.C.H. program that attempts to do this! (see Personal Evangelism notes)