

# *A Leadership Study Guide*

for *Canoeing the Mountains*  
by Tod Bolsinger

*Prepared by*



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## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE FLOURISH SAN DIEGO TEAM

### *The Church in Uncharted Territory*

#### "Seminary Didn't Prepare Me For This!"

This is not only the cry of many church leaders today, it's also the title of chapter one of *Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod Bolsinger.

The early twenty-first century is a far cry from the mid-twentieth century, especially as it relates to the church. In 1950, the church was at the center of society. It was a time in which "if a man didn't come to church on Sunday, his boss asked him about it at work on Monday."<sup>1</sup>

Today, the church is no longer at the center of society. Rather, the church is simply one of many options—religious, social, and cultural—available to people today. Not only do far fewer people engage in church these days, when they do it's less frequent.

What can the church do about this new reality?

Tod Bolsinger uses Lewis and Clark as an apt metaphor for our time. In 1804, Merriwether Lewis and William Clark set out to find a water route to the Pacific Ocean. They travelled the Missouri River to its source, expecting to find another river they could calmly canoe to the Pacific Ocean. What they found was the Rocky Mountains.

Lewis and Clark could have turned around and said, "We didn't prepare for this. Let's go back." But they didn't. They set off on a journey they hadn't expected. They had to set their canoeing skills aside for the moment and learn along the way (relying on friends like Sacagawea) to navigate the mountains.

It was uncharted territory for Lewis and Clark. Likewise, the church today finds itself in uncharted territory. What should the church do? Should we give up? Turn back? Try to get back to the "glory days"?

Or... Perhaps we should face this uncharted territory with resolve, trusting that God is already ahead of us. Perhaps we should look at the reality of our circumstances and ask, "What can we learn here? How might God want to shape us in this new place? Does God want to expand our imagination for who we are called to be today?"

#### Using the Study Guide

This study guide is designed to do two things:

1. Facilitate deep reflection for you and your team on the concepts presented in the book.

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<sup>1</sup> Bolsinger, Tod. *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*, p. 11.

2. Help your leaders begin the process of transformational leadership by engaging in team exercises.

Each chapter is divided into three parts: key points from the chapter, questions for discussion, and exercises to help you dig deeper. Don't feel like you need to ask every question or complete every exercise. Be sensitive to your team.

But it is recommended that you do at least one of the exercises in each chapter of the study guide. This will help you get the most out of both the book and the study guide

## A Word About the 2x2 Matrix

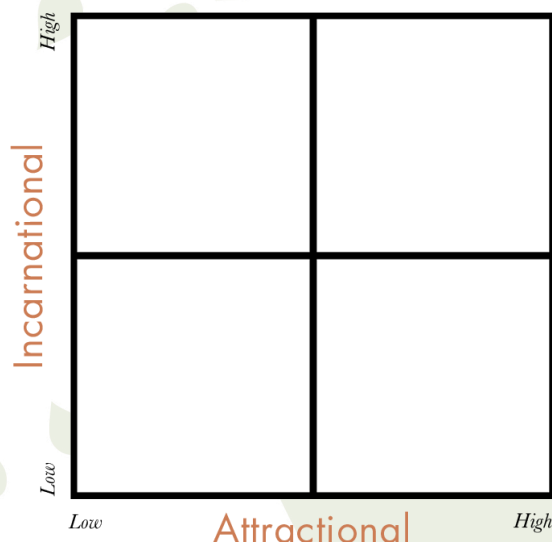
You will notice that several chapters invite you and your team to create a 2x2 (two-by-two) matrix as one of the exercises. What does that mean?

We human beings tend to see issues on a spectrum. For instance, we might see a continuum with liberal/progressive on one end and conservative/evangelical on the other end. Or perhaps traditional on one end and contemporary on the other.

The problem with seeing issues in a binary way is that it limits our creativity. We end up with very simplistic solutions to problems that we understand simplistically. We try to decide if we should be "this" or "that" without digging more deeply into more creative possibilities.

A 2x2 matrix is a problem-solving tool that is designed to help lead a person or team into a deeper exploration of an issue. It is meant to help one get beyond *either/or* thinking and into *both/and* thinking. For instance, rather than saying our church must be *either* incarnational *or* attractional, a 2x2 would help uncover what it might look like to be *both* incarnational *and* attractional.

A 2x2 for this question would look like this:



Team members would together fill in the boxes. What would a church look like that is neither incarnational nor attractional (probably not very good!)? What if the church only emphasized being incarnational? What if it was only attractional? And what if both qualities were exhibited?

Use the 2x2 exercises to explore possibilities for your congregation that you may have never before considered!

For more information about the 2x2 Matrix, see:

- *The Power of the 2x2 Matrix* by Alex Lowy and Phil Hood
- “The 2×2 Matrix: Discover Ministry Possibilities You’ve Never Considered” from the Flourish San Diego blog:  
<http://flourishsandiego.org/the-2x2-matrix-discover-ministry-possibilities-youve-never-considered/>

## Here We Go!

The world has changed. The church is in uncharted territory. Meanwhile, church leaders look at one another and say, “Seminary didn’t prepare me for this!”

As you work through *Canoeing the Mountains* and this study guide, may you be challenged, may you be encouraged, and may you find yourself transformed into the kind of leader who, with fear and trembling, is willing to step courageously into the uncharted territory into which God is calling us.

Blessings on your journey.



## Further Information

Dr. Tod Bolsinger is the Vice President of Formation and Vocation at Fuller Theological Seminary ([www.fuller.edu](http://www.fuller.edu)).

If you'd like to order a copy of *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*, you can do so here:

[https://smile.amazon.com/Canoeing-Mountains-Christian-Leadership-Uncharted/dp/0830841261/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490726409&sr=8-1&keywords=canoeing+the+mountains](https://smile.amazon.com/Canoeing-Mountains-Christian-Leadership-Uncharted/dp/0830841261/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490726409&sr=8-1&keywords=canoeing+the+mountains)

*Note: This "Amazon Smile" link yields a small donation to Flourish San Diego.*

You can also check out Tod's blog here:

<http://bolsinger.blogs.com>

For more information about Flourish San Diego, please visit us at:

<http://www.flourishsandiego.org>



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 1: "SEMINARY DIDN'T PREPARE ME FOR THIS"

#### Key Idea

*The Church today finds itself in unfamiliar territory.*

#### Main Points

1. There was a time when churches functioned primarily as vendors of religious goods and services. All a pastor needed to do was provide for Christian education, lead Christian worship services, and offer Christian counsel and support.
2. People today are not particularly interested in receiving religious goods and services. This makes the church seem essentially obsolete.
3. The church is faced with an *adaptive challenge* — a challenge that goes beyond the technical solutions of resident experts or best practices, or even the organization's current knowledge.
4. Leadership is key as the church faces this uncharted territory.
  - a. Leadership is essential. But leadership is not about titles or authority. It is about a way of being that "[mobilizes] people to tackle tough challenges and thrive."<sup>1</sup> Leadership is about personal and corporate transformation.
  - b. Leadership is expressed in behaviors. Real leaders do not blame anyone or anything. They look to what they themselves can *do* — how they can *act* — differently.
  - c. Leadership is developed. Any person who is willing to take responsibility, convene a group to work on a tough problem and persist in the face of resistance is a leader. Leadership is learned in the doing and by reflecting on the doing.
5. The church is at a crossroads. This moment requires those in positions of authority to embrace an *adventure-or-die* mindset, and find the courage and develop the capacity for a new day.

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. In what ways have you seen your church serve as a vendor of religious goods and services? Why is this way of being church no longer adequate?
4. Which of the three leadership qualities listed above resonates with you most? Why?
5. What kind of leadership is required for the unfamiliar territory — that is, the adaptive challenge — the church is facing today?

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<sup>1</sup> Heifetz, Ronald A., Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, Kindle ed., loc. 4894-97.



## Chapter 1 Exercises

1. It's not that providing teaching, liturgy, and pastoral care are no longer important, but they no longer seem to be sufficient.
  - a. Divide your group into two teams. One team will come up with a list of reasons why these three tasks are (or ought to be) the primary task of the church. The other team will list the reasons these tasks are insufficient to the work of the church.
  - b. After a few minutes of list-making, stage a debate in which each team makes the case for their position.
  - c. Did one of the teams "win" the debate? Did anyone change their mind about anything? Did anyone become more secure in their position? How might understanding the other position help when it comes to leading the church in uncharted territory?

*Leader's note: The point here is to help your group see why some people may want to hold on to the old, reliable practices of the church. This may also help those who do hold on to old practices begin to see why they are no longer sufficient.*

2. Compare the best and worst leaders you've known.
  - a. Think of the best leader you've ever experienced. Share what qualities made that person such an effective leader.
  - b. Think of the worst leader you've ever experienced (not someone in the room!). Share what qualities made that person an ineffective leader.
  - c. Did passing blame or taking responsibility play a role in their level of effectiveness?

*Leader's note: One of the themes of Canoeing the Mountains is that leaders need to take responsibility for their own behavior in leading the church. This exercise is meant to help people see that the best leaders don't blame other people or circumstances; they take responsibility and adjust their own behavior in order to address challenges.*

3. Create a 2x2 matrix using the categories of traditional/contemporary, outreach-oriented/fellowship-oriented, and/or quality of worship service/quality of pastoral care.
  - a. What does it look like, for instance, when your church's focus is low in outreach orientation and low in fellowship orientation; low in outreach orientation and high in fellowship orientation; high in outreach orientation and low in fellowship orientation; high in outreach orientation and high in fellowship orientation?
  - b. Are there other 2x2's you can come up with?

*Leader's note: Churches often think of traditional and contemporary as being at opposite ends of a spectrum (often with "blended" somewhere in the middle). The same goes for categories like outreach-oriented vs. fellowship-oriented, and quality of worship service vs. quality of pastoral care. This exercise is important because it can help us recognize that these things are not necessarily at opposite ends of a spectrum. Perhaps we can live into both at the same time. This will, of course, require imagination and a willingness to step into uncharted territory.*





## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 2: "ADVENTURE OR DIE"

#### Key Idea

*The way forward for the church is not by working harder at what we already do.  
The church needs to strike into uncharted territory with a new imagination.*

#### Main Points

1. The world has become VUCA: volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. This world will require all leaders to learn new skills.
2. The mission field is no longer far away on another continent. In the 1970's, Lesslie Newbigin said, "England is a pagan society and the development of a truly missionary encounter with this very tough form of paganism is the greatest intellectual and practical task facing the Church."<sup>1</sup>
3. Leadership and leadership development must be dramatically different than it was during Christendom.
4. The answer to finding our way through uncharted territory is not to try harder but to start a new adventure — an adventure that requires adaptive capacity.

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. Do you agree with Newbigin's statement that our world now consists of a new form of paganism? How have you seen this "very tough form of paganism"?
4. What leadership practices in the church might no longer apply in this new world we find ourselves in?
5. How have you seen churches "try harder" at the things they already do in order to address this new culture?
6. On a scale of 1-10 (1 = not at all ready, 10 = totally ready), how ready is your church to "adventure or die"?

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<sup>1</sup> Newbigin, Lesslie. *Unfinished Agenda*, 2nd ed., p. 236.

## Chapter 2 Exercises

1. Make four columns on a sheet of paper.
  - a. At the top of the first column, write “Volatile.” At the top of the second, write “Uncertain.” Then write “Complex” at the top of the third column, and “Ambiguous” at the top of the fourth.
  - b. In each column list the ways you have observed the world becoming more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.
  - c. Then discuss the degree to which the church is prepared to deal with these issues.

*Leader’s note: It is important for people to understand the reality of our situation. This exercise is designed to help people come to an awareness that the church is not prepared for the multitude of challenges we see in the world today.*

2. If we think of adventuring as being on a spectrum, we might put “adventure” on one end of the spectrum and “safety” on the other end. But let’s think of these two poles as a 2x2 matrix.
  - a. Create a 2x2 with “adventure” on one axis and “safety” on the other end.
  - b. What would it look like to be:
    - low adventure, low safety
    - low adventure, high safety
    - high adventure, low safety
    - high adventure, high safety

*Leader’s note: Lots of people expect their church to be a “safe place.” They like the familiarity of their church’s facilities, programs, practices, and worship services. These folks aren’t interested in adventure. Other folks just want to shake everything up and do nothing but adventure. Both have their pros and cons. Use this exercise to discover the value of both adventure and safety, as well as what it might look like if your church were to pursue both qualities.*



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 3: "A LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR UNCHARTED TERRITORY"

#### Key Idea

*Leadership is energizing a community of people toward their own transformation in order to accomplish a shared mission in the face of a changing world.*

#### Main Points

1. Leadership is about the transformation of a congregation so that they, collectively, can fulfill the mission they, corporately, have been given.
2. Leadership for a people on a mission into a new, rapidly changing world requires more than proclamation. It requires new actions, new ways of functioning and, therefore, new learning.
3. Technical problems are those where the solutions are available to and “within the repertoire” of the community.
4. Adaptive challenges are those that “cannot be solved with one’s existing knowledge and skills, requiring people to make a shift in their values, expectations, attitudes, or habits of behaviour.”<sup>1</sup>
5. The transformational leadership model consists of: technical competence, relational congruence, and adaptive capacity.
6. Leadership into uncharted territory requires and results in transformation of the whole organization, starting with the leaders.

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. What is the difference between a technical problem and an adaptive challenge?
4. Why is it so important for church leaders to recognize that leadership is connected to transformation of a community? What happens if the church is not transformed?
5. Why is it important for the leaders to be transformed first?

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<sup>1</sup> Heifetz, Ronald A. *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, p. 18.

### Chapter 3 Exercises

1. Make a list of technical problems your church has faced in recent years (e.g., furnace broke, not enough parking, under budget). How did your church address each of these problems?

*Leader's note: This will not be too difficult for the group members to do. Most problems that churches have faced over the decades and even centuries will be technical problems.*

2. Name one or two adaptive challenges (e.g., changing neighborhood demographics, church members attending with less frequency). How has your church tried to address these challenges?

*Leader's note: It is important for people to understand the difference between technical problems and adaptive challenges. You may have to help group members think through possible adaptive challenges.*



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 4: "COMPETENCE AND CREDIBILITY"

#### Key Idea

*The first thing a transformational leader needs is competence in regard to what the organization already does.*

#### Main Points

1. Stewardship precedes leadership. Biblically, stewardship is about faithfully protecting and preserving what is most important, about growing and developing the potential of everything and everyone under one's care.
2. Usually before a community of faith will even consider undergoing costly change, there must be a sense that leadership is doing everything within their power and their job description to be as effective as possible.
3. There are three basic tasks that leaders must exercise with technical competence before they have the credibility to go off the map into uncharted territory.
  - a. *Competent stewardship of Scriptures and tradition.*
    - i. If shared values are not "protected and passed down" then the organization ceases to be.
    - ii. For pastors who want to lead a congregation in change the most important thing to remember is that the first step is getting clear on what will never change.
  - b. *Competent stewardship of souls and communities.*
    - i. Before we can lead our people into uncharted territory, they have to believe that we will spiritually protect and personally care for them along the way.
  - c. *Competent stewardship of teams and tasks.*
    - i. Pastors must have the ability to competently manage the organization or institution given to our charge.
4. Be willing to fail quickly in order to learn. But we must still be competent. "We can fail, but we can't suck."

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. What are some skills pastors and other ministry leaders must be competent in?
4. Why is it so important to be competent in the "technical" aspects of ministry before moving into transformational leadership?

5. What's the risk of taking on adaptive challenges before conveying competence in the technical areas of ministry?
6. How does self-awareness contribute to a leader's level and quality of competence? For example, what if a leader falsely believes they are competent in one area of ministry, while everyone else recognizes that their true competence is in a different area? How might that leader grow in self-awareness?

### Chapter 4 Exercises

1. Make a list of all the technical competencies a church requires. Think of all the areas of ministry—worship, children and youth, administrative, facilities, etc.
  - a. On a scale of 1-10, how is your church doing in each of these areas?
  - b. Are there any areas where your church needs to become more competent (keeping in mind that you don't have to be perfect, but you can't "suck")?
2. Sometimes we think of our technical responsibilities as being in conflict with our adaptive challenges.
  - a. Identify some seemingly conflicting technical and adaptive issues (e.g., worship style vs. changing culture, programs for the elderly vs. a younger community, etc.).
  - b. Create a 2x2 to help you discover new possibilities that may include both.

*Leader's note: This is an opportunity to acknowledge the technical competencies required for leading and running a church. These are important. And perhaps this exercise will help your team verbalize an area that is deficient in competence.*

*Leader's note: Both Canoeing the Mountains and this study guide will emphasize the importance of creativity and experimenting. Let this exercise be an exercise in creativity. You don't necessarily need to act on what you learn (but maybe you will!). The important thing is to begin to be more creative in your thinking.*



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 5: "PREPARING FOR THE UNKNOWN"

#### Key Idea

*Along with establishing credibility the leader must build a shared corporate culture of deep trust.*

#### Main Points

1. Even *if* we agree that we are in an adapt-or-die moment, the urgency of the situation is not enough.
  - a. When given that particular choice (adapt or die), *90% choose dying.*
2. "Adaptive processes don't require leadership with answers. It requires leadership that create *structures that hold people together through the very conflictive, passionate, and sometimes awful process of addressing questions for which there aren't easy answers.*"<sup>1</sup>
3. Relational congruence is the ability to be fundamentally the same person with the same values in every relationship, in every circumstance and especially every crisis.
4. Relational congruence is more than consistent behavior; it is *constancy* that comes from genuine affection, warmth, and indeed love for followers and colleagues.
5. Only "meaningful work together" develops the kinds of relationships that will endure into uncharted territory.
6. The goal of the Christian faith is not simply to become more loving community but to *be a community of people who participate in God's mission* to heal the world by reestablishing his loving reign "on earth as it is in heaven."

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. What are some skills pastors and other ministry leaders must be competent in?
4. Do you believe your church is in an "adapt-or-die" moment right now? Why or why not?
5. Describe "relational congruence" in your own words. On a scale of 1-10, how well do your leaders (elders, clergy, staff, etc.) exhibit relational congruence? Is there "genuine affection, warmth, and...love" among your leaders?
6. What kinds of "meaningful work together" have your leaders engaged in? On a scale of 1-10, how "meaningful" was that work? How "together" was that work?

<sup>1</sup> Heifetz, Ronald A. "Leadership, Adaptability, Thriving," *Faith and Leadership*, November 18, 2009, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSZId1VYxc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSZId1VYxc).



## Chapter 5 Exercises

1. Have each team member anonymously write down on a slip of paper how much trust (on a scale of 1-10) they believe your leadership team has. Then collect their responses and share them with the group. Reflect together on what the responses mean for your group. Do they truly reflect the amount of trust your group shares? What kinds of things could your team do to build trust?

*Leader's note: The first step to building trust is to diagnose the current level of trust. If nothing else, this is a conversation starter about a topic that likely has not come up in the past. Use this conversation to help your team get a sense of where they are and where they need to be in terms of trust.*

2. In order for a team to succeed at adaptive change, there must be trust. For there to be trust, team members must know one another's stories. Take some time to share some or all of these stories with each other.
  - a. Start with easy-to-share stories:
    - i. Tell us about the kinds of things you love to do. What hobbies do you have? What kinds of vacations do you like to take? What do you love to do on your day off?
    - ii. Where did you grow up? How long did you live there? Did you live in one place or move around a lot? Describe your hometown?
    - iii. Tell us about your best friend growing up. What was he or she like? What kinds of things did you do together? Were you "good" or were you "mischievous" when you were together? Share one story about you and your best friend.
  - b. Then share deeper stories, which will require more vulnerability:
    - i. How did you come to faith in Jesus? Were you a child or an adult? Was it through your family or someone else? Was it a slow process or a fast process?
    - ii. Share one story of a difficult time in your life. What were the circumstances? How did it affect your relationship with God? How did that experience shape you as a person?

*Leader's note: Building trust is critical for taking your team on a journey of adaptive transformation. But building trust is not easy. Some members of your team will have a difficult time opening up. Most likely, they will be men. Building trust requires a fine balance between not pushing someone to share and encouraging them to share. A leader's job is to turn up the heat, but not so hot that people get burned. If there is someone on your team who simply refuses to open up, thus making trust, and, thereby, adaptive transformation, impossible, your team may have to consider whether or not to ask that person step down from your team.*



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 6: "EATING STRATEGY FOR BREAKFAST"

#### Key Idea

*The most critical attribute a congregation must have to thrive in uncharted territory is a healthy organizational culture.*

#### Main Points

1. Culture is the combination of “the *language* we live in, the *artifacts* that we make use of, the *rituals* we engage in, our approach to *ethics*, the *institutions* we are a part of and the *narratives* we inhabit [that] have the power to shape our lives profoundly.”<sup>1</sup>
2. *Organizational* culture is the “group norms of behavior and the underlying shared values that help keep those norms in place.”<sup>2</sup> It is “the way we do things around here.”
3. Creating healthy culture with the capacity to experiment, innovate, take risks and adapt is one of the primary preparatory tasks of a leader.
4. A *healthy* culture is aligned, cohesive and clear. It is a culture where there is “minimal politics and confusion, high degrees of morale and productivity, and very low turnover among good employees.”<sup>3</sup>
5. Organizational health is among the most important qualities of a successful organization.
6. Three critical elements are necessary in a leader’s own functioning for contributing to a healthy organizational culture:
  - a. *Clarity*: An organization’s values must be, not only clear, but also shared across the organization.
  - b. *Embodiment*: The organization’s values must be lived out in terms of the leader’s and people’s behavior.
  - c. *Love*: Love drives us to hold on to what is dear and life-giving, and it is because of love that we are willing to change.

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. Describe, in your own words, what organizational culture is.
4. What does the expression, “culture eats strategy for breakfast,” mean?

<sup>1</sup> Woodward, J.R. *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Kotter, John. “The Key to Changing Organizational Culture,” *Forbes*, September 27, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Lencioni, Patrick M. *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*, p. 5.

5. What are some key characteristics of your church's organizational culture? What kind of language do you use to describe your church? What kinds of rituals or processes are important to your church (not only in worship services, but in all areas of how your church operates)? What are some important stories in your church's history that capture who your church is?
6. Why is organizational health so important for transformational leadership?

## Chapter 6 Exercises

1. On a scale of 0-10 (0 = completely unhealthy, 10 = total health full of trust, clarity, love, embodiment of values, etc.), how would you rate the health of your church's culture?
  - a. Have each group member anonymously write down on a slip of paper how healthy they believe your church's culture is. Then collect their responses and share them with the group.
  - b. Reflect together on what the responses mean. Do you see any common themes? What are some first steps your church might take toward developing a healthier organizational culture?

*Leader's note: This exercise will not definitively answer the question, "How healthy is your church?" But it will give you a starting point for conversation and help your team begin to see areas of health and unhealthy within your church's culture. Don't let the responses make you defensive. Invite openness and safety.*

2. Sometimes churches will think of love and clarity as being on opposite ends of a spectrum. For instance, if we're truly loving we won't force people to live out the values we profess. Or if we hold people accountable to living out certain values, we may risk being less loving.
  - a. Create a 2x2 matrix with love on the vertical axis and clarity on the horizontal axis.
  - b. What would it look like to have low love and low clarity; low love and high clarity; high love and low clarity; and high love and high clarity?

*Leader's note: This exercise will help your people see that clarity and love are not exclusive of one another. They may, in fact, discover that love and clarity in an organization are not only beneficial, but even amplify one another.*



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 7: "NAVIGATING THE 'GEOGRAPHY OF REALITY'"

#### Key Idea

*When our old maps fail us, something within us dies.  
Replacing our paradigms is both deeply painful and absolutely critical.*

#### Main Points

1. When a mental model dies, a painful paradigm shift takes place within us. It is disorienting and anxiety making. It's as if the world as we know it ceases to exist.
2. Adaptive leadership helps people become aware of the gap between our aspired values and our actions, between our values and the reality we face.
3. Adaptive leadership sheds light on the *competing values* that keep a group stuck in the status quo. Competing values (e.g., caring for longtime members vs. reaching out to the unchurched, giving pay raises vs. bringing on a new hire, assuring control and unity vs. collaboration and innovation) often result in conflict about things of equal or near equal value.
4. Adaptive leadership requires adaptive capacity—the capacity “to engage in problem-defining and problem-solving work in the midst of adaptive pressures and the resulting disequilibrium.”<sup>1</sup>
5. When we get to moments of deep disorientation, we often try to reorient around old ways of doing things.
6. At the core of adaptive work is clarifying what is precious, elemental—even essential—to the identity of an organization.
7. Adaptive leadership requires reframing, that is, a shift in *values, expectations, attitudes, or habits of behavior* necessary to face our most difficult challenges.
  - a. However, a reframe itself is only a new way of seeing and describing the problem. This is as far as many missional congregations get.
8. At the heart of adaptive leadership is learning. If you are not learning anything new, it is not adaptive work.

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. Have you ever experienced a paradigm shift in your thinking? Have you gone through an experience in which you finally realized there was a “new normal” you had to get used to? What was that like?
4. Describe in your own words what “adaptive capacity” means.

<sup>1</sup> Heifetz, Ronald A., et. al. *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and World*, p. 22.

5. What are some values, qualities, programs, ministries, that are essential to the identity of your church? (No need for everyone to agree at this point. It's helpful simply to name them.)
6. What might be some new learning that your church needs to engage in?

## Chapter 7 Exercises

1. Spend some time thinking about your church's aspired values.
  - a. Make a list of them. Examples might include: reaching the unchurched, overseas missions, excellence in worship, loving our neighborhood, focus on children, political engagement, and so forth.
  - b. Have each person vote on the ones they think are the church's top three aspired values. Tally the votes and determine the top three values.
  - c. Now discuss how well your church is doing at *actually living out* these values. Is there a gap? If so, why? What actions (or inactions) are missing in your church's practice that are keeping you from living out those values?

*Leader's note: This might be helpful to do with a large whiteboard or blank paper flip chart. Some will want to immediately fix things, but you don't need to solve the problems right now. Just begin to become aware of the gaps in your church's values and practice.*

2. What are some competing values in your church? Caring for longtime members vs. reaching out to the unchurched? Giving pay raises vs. bringing on a new hire? Assuring control and unity vs. collaboration and innovation?
  - a. Rather than plotting them on a spectrum, put them on a 2x2 matrix and see if there are ways that both values can be honored?

*Leader's note: A 2x2 is helpful to think more deeply about the issues involved in competing values. However, be careful not to let your team assume that every issue can be fully resolved by putting it on a 2x2. Simply engaging in a 2x2 exercise—even when an issue can't be fully resolved—can be helpful to expand the team's thinking on the issue. Also, keep in mind that there are times when an organization will need to let go of one value—or at least put less emphasis on it—in order to live more fully into another value. In adaptive transformation there will always be some experience of loss.*



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 8: "MY ITALIAN GRANDFATHER WAS KILLING ME"

#### Key Idea

*The church is the body of Christ.  
It is a living organism, a vibrant system.*

#### Main Points

1. Leadership for uncharted territory is a shared, corporate learning process that enables the community to *thrive and fulfill its mission* in a new context, when the outside environment changes.
2. In a Christendom world, vision was about seeing possibilities ahead and communicating excitement. In uncharted territory—where *no one* knows what's ahead—vision is about accurately seeing ourselves and defining reality.
3. Because the church is the *body* of Christ, in order to lead it a leader must be able to *see and lead the church as a living system*.
4. "A system is a set of things—people, cells, molecules, or whatever—interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behavior over time."<sup>1</sup>
5. A local congregation is not just a collection of individual people but *also* the love, commitment, values and mission they share.
6. A church's DNA or code is neither healthy nor unhealthy in itself, but the culture that comes from a church's code can be either positive or destructive.
7. Three key questions:
  - a. What DNA is essential and must be preserved?
  - b. What DNA is not essential and can be discarded?
  - c. What DNA needs to be created through experimentation?

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. In what ways is a body (of a human or animal) a *system*? What are some characteristics of a system? What are some other examples of systems (organic, ecological, political, etc.)?
4. What happens in a system when one part stops functioning in a healthy way?

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<sup>1</sup> Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal, *How Great Leaders Think: The Art of Reframing*, Kindle ed., loc. 89-90.



5. In what ways is a local church a system? Why is it important to understand a local congregation as a system?
6. Why is it important to understand a local church's "code" or "DNA"?

### Chapter 8 Exercises

1. Select one program or ministry or department in your church. Make a list of all the activities this ministry area runs.
  - a. Now list all the people involved in this ministry—staff, volunteers, participants, supporters, family members, etc. Brainstorm all the ways that these people help to make this ministry happen.
  - b. Discuss how this ministry is a system. How is it a part of the church's overall system? How do the people contribute to the system of this ministry area? How do the relationships between the people affect the system of this ministry area?

*Leader's note: The point of this exercise is not to beat up on or elevate a particular ministry area. The point is simply to help your team recognize that a ministry's effectiveness—and a church's effectiveness—has to do with a lot more than just how well-run the program is. It has to do with the entire system.*



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 9: "DON'T JUST DO SOMETHING, STAND THERE... THEN DO SOMETHING"

#### Key Idea

*Developing an adaptive capacity is a process of learning and adapting to fulfill a missional purpose, not to fix the immediate issues.*

#### Main Points

1. Adaptive leadership is about *leading the learning process* of a group who must develop new beliefs, habits or values, or shift their current ones in order to find new solutions that are consistent with their purpose for being.
2. It is critical to get a larger, systemic perspective of your congregation, what Heifetz and Linsky call "getting up on the balcony."
3. When a leadership team is on the balcony, their first task is to *get as many different observations that are as objective as possible* about the situation.
4. In the observation stage, the group must intentionally withhold interpretations or interventions in order to gather as much data as possible.
5. After gathering as many objective observations as possible, begin to invite consciously *subjective* responses by looking for personal interpretations of the data. The goal is to get as many divergent interpretations as possible, all the while listening for the common thread.
6. Avoid the tendency to talk the problem to death.
7. The eventual solution will be a healthy adaptation of the church DNA. Interventions must be aligned with the church culture and reinforce the church core ideology; they must be *expressions* of the church's values, mission and primary strategy.
8. Interventions should start out modestly and playfully. However, they also need to signal that more significant change is coming.
9. Be aware that innovative interventions will always be resisted.

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. Why is adaptive leadership primarily a *learning* process?
4. What does it mean to "get up on the balcony"? In what ways does your leadership team do this well? In what ways does your team need to improve?
5. Why is it important to understand a local church's "code" or "DNA"? What happens if changes are made or new ministries are developed that don't fit with the church's "code" or "DNA"?

## Chapter 9 Exercises

1. This exercise is done in three parts. Part (a) involves making observations. In part (b), the team will offer interpretations. And part (c) will yield potential interventions.
  - a. Select a specific challenge that your church is facing. Now take ten minutes to simply make observations about the challenge. Who is involved? How long has it been going on? When did it begin? Where is it happening? And so forth.
    - i. Write your observations down on a white board or large paper pad.
    - ii. Do not try to explain the observations. This is a time simply for making observations.

*Leader's note: It is critical that the group not begin to offer interpretations or try to explain the observations. It may be helpful to have a buzzer or a bell and if someone begins to try to explain or interpret, buzz them!! It's a light-hearted way to keep the group focused on making observations. You may also want to set a timer for ten minutes. Try to fill the entire ten minutes. If you need more time, feel free to add time.*

- b. Take another 10-20 minutes to begin offering interpretations. Why might the things observed be taking place? What's going on? What does the problem and the observations tell us about our church, our neighborhood, and our society?

*Leader's note: The goal of this part is to try to understand what's going on, not to come up with a solution—that comes next. You may want to use a buzzer again in case the group starts to try to solve the problem. The goal here is to begin to understand.*

- c. Now, take 20-30 minutes to brainstorm possible solutions. See if you can come up with one simple experiment to try. It should not be a major program or effort. Keep it small and doable. (You can try larger experiments as you build trust with the congregation.)

*Leader's note: Ideally, the experiment will fit the DNA of your congregation. But it's possible that you won't know if it fits your church's DNA until you've carried out the experiment. So be open to experiments that seem to be outside the box. You may be surprised by the results! Or the results may reveal that the experiment was too far from your church's DNA. All of this is valuable learning for the transformation that is to come.*



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 10: "THE MISSION TRUMPS!"

#### Key Idea

*The focused, shared, missional purpose of the church or organization will trump every other competing value.*

#### Main Points

1. Leadership isn't so much skillfully helping a group accomplish what they *want* to do (that is *management*). Leadership is taking people where *they need to go and yet resist* going.
2. Often the very people who called us to lead them are disappointed when we do.
3. Transformational leadership is always a two-front battle: On one side is the challenge of a changing world. On the other side is the community that resists the change necessary for survival.
4. Experimental innovations are the key to surviving in a changing world.
5. The first question about leading into uncharted territory is not about change but about what will *not* change.
6. In transformational leadership the central pivot point for any discussion is the church's own clear missional purpose.
7. Before acting on conviction we have to *have* a conviction.
8. The leader in the system must be committed to the mission when no one else is.
9. What makes a leader a real leader is what we do when the followers start having opinions about our convictions. When we hear the grumblings, the criticisms, the second-guesses. When we see the rolled eyes or read the disappointment on faces, that's when the leader is truly being pressed into service.

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. Why are experimental innovations the key to surviving in a changing world?
4. What does this statement mean: "Before acting on conviction we have to have a conviction"? Does your church or organization have a conviction?
5. What are some ways your team can help your leader(s) stay committed to the mission when grumblings, criticisms, and second-guesses begin to emerge?

## Chapter 10 Exercises

1. Having worked through ten chapters of this book, you are hopefully beginning to get a sense of your church's missional purpose.
  - a. Take some time to discuss why your church exists. What is its purpose? What is its mission?
  - b. If your church has a mission statement, does it accurately reflect your church's mission?

*Leader's note: If you don't have a clear sense of your church's missional purpose, you may want to consider hiring a consultant—someone outside your system—to help your church get clarity on that. The purpose of this exercise is to begin to put into words why your church exists.*

2. Make a list of 3-5 ministries or programs in your church. Discuss the extent to which these ministries fulfill the missional purpose of your church.
  - a. Make a list of the ways they succeed at fulfilling your church's mission.
  - b. Make a list of the ways they fall short of fulfilling your church's mission?

*Leader's note: This exercise might be difficult, especially if some of your team members are stakeholders in any of the ministries you discuss. Remember, "The Mission Trumps!" This exercise will help your team begin to get a sense of which ministries actually help to fulfill your church's mission, and which ones don't.*



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 11: "TAKE A GOOD LOOK INTO THE COFFIN"

#### Key Idea

*It is critical for a leader to monitor his or her own emotional reactivity when the anxiety of the church or organization rises.*

#### Main Points

1. The first step in adaptive change is “start with missional conviction”; the second is to “stay calm.”
2. The minute we accept the call to adaptive leadership that brings transformation, we should expect most of the cheering to stop.
3. When we enter the realm of adaptive work—working in uncharted territory—win-win often becomes lose-lose.
4. “People do not resist change, per se. People resist loss.”<sup>1</sup>
5. A leader’s job is to regulate the heat. The leader is like the thermostat on the Crock-Pot, keeping enough heat in the system so things begin to change, but not enough that individual parts get scorched.
6. Leaders need patience to let an issue “ripen.”<sup>2</sup> This creates “true urgency” in the organization, a heartfelt sense of the importance, opportunity and necessity of the challenge before them.
7. It is important for leaders to stay calm, not so that they feel better, but so they make better decisions. People who are overly or chronically anxious don’t make good decisions.
8. To stay calm is to be so aware of yourself that your response to the situation is not to the anxiety of the people around you but to the actual issue at hand.
9. If the system is too cool and needs more heated urgency to change, then the leader’s own heat (passion, truth-telling, conviction, actions) begins to get things cooking. But when the system gets too hot and people are in danger of burning each other or bailing out of the change process, the very presence of a calm, connected leader cools the system down so people can tolerate staying on course.

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. Why should a leader expect the cheering to stop when the work of adaptive leadership begins?
4. “People do not resist change, per se. People resist loss.” What does this statement mean?

<sup>1</sup> Heifetz, Ronald A., and Marty Linsky. *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Heifetz and Linsky, 146.

5. Why is it difficult to stay calm when leading adaptive change? What steps could a leader take to improve their own self-awareness so they know when their response is coming from a place of anxiety or insecurity, rather than from a place of calm conviction?
6. What are some ways a leader can turn up the heat in the process of adaptive change? What are some ways a leader can turn down the heat?

## Chapter 11 Exercises

1. Identify one area of ministry that your team agrees needs to experience adaptive change.
  - a. Brainstorm a list of ways the leader can turn up the heat on that particular ministry. Which ones would be effective? Which ones would be ineffective? Which ones might turn the heat up too far or not enough? Why?
  - b. Now brainstorm a list of ways the leader can turn down the heat if people begin to get overly anxious about the adaptive change that is happening. Which ones would be effective? Which ones would be ineffective? Which ones might turn the heat down too far or not enough? Why?
  - c. Are there any ways the leadership team could join the primary leader in regulating the heat?

*Leader's note: The ability to be a thermostat in the midst of adaptive change is critical to transformational leadership. Use this exercise to help your team think, first, about the need to regulate the heat around a particular ministry, and, second, how to actually go about regulating the heat.*





## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 12: "GUS AND HAL GO TO CHURCH"

#### Key Idea

*Because leadership is always relational, leaders must stay connected, eschewing the idea of the "lone ranger" leader.*

#### Main Points

1. Leaders need to "think politically." That is, they need to consider the larger relational dynamics and multiple constituencies to which every influencer in a system answers.
2. There are six "teams" leaders need to consider in order to bring transformation to the whole organizational system:
  - a. *Allies*: Anyone who is convinced of the mission and is committed to seeing it fulfilled.
  - b. *Confidants*: People who care more about the leader than they do about the mission of the organization. Often someone outside the system.
  - c. *Opponents*: Stakeholders who have markedly different perspectives from the leader's and who risk losing the most if the leader's initiative goes forward.
  - d. *Senior authorities*: The authorized leader(s) of a system, especially in the case where the one leading change is not the senior authority.
  - e. *Casualties*: Those who will experience the change most personally and dramatically.
  - f. *Dissenters*: Those who disagree with and resist the adaptation. Early naysayers will help the leader see how opposition will take form and will raise the arguments that eventually will come to full volume.
3. A great idea needs at least two groups of people to see it through:
  - a. *The mission maintaining group*: This group has authority and is committed to giving safety, time, space, protection and resources to the project. This is usually a board of elders or other senior leadership team.
  - b. *The transformation team*: Must be those with the most creativity, energy, credibility, personal maturity and dogged determination. They must be enthusiastic for the idea, resolute about seeing it through, and willing to expend relational capital to bring genuine culture change.

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. What does it mean to say that leaders need to "think politically"?



4. Why is it important to take into consideration all six “teams” listed in #2 above? Which “teams” are most likely to be ignored? Why?
5. Who is the *mission maintaining group* in your context? To what degree has this team empowered those who are leading change and experimenting with new ways of being?

## Chapter 12 Exercises

1. Identify one area of ministry that your team agrees needs to experience adaptive change. It may be the same ministry area your team identified in the Chapter 11 study guide.
  - a. On a whiteboard, identify individuals who fall into the various “teams” mentioned in #2 above. Who are the allies, confidants, opponents, senior authorities, casualties, and dissenters?
  - b. Discuss how to relate to and stay connected with the people in each of the categories.
  - c. Identify who the *mission maintaining group* is for your church or organization. Write down the names of the people in that group.
  - d. Identify the *transformation team* for the area of ministry you’re discussing in this exercise. Is there a transformation team? Who are the people on that team (write down their names)? If there is no transformation team, why not? Is it because there is no one who actually desires transformation for this ministry area? Is it because no one has the capacity, time, or energy to bring transformation to this ministry area? Is it because the mission maintaining group has not empowered a team to lead transformation for this ministry? Is it another reason?
  - e. What steps could your mission maintaining group take to empower a transformation team to experiment with adaptive change in this area of ministry?

*Leader’s note: This is an exercise in which you “name names,” so you may want to covenant with your team that everything in this discussion remains confidential. By the end of this exercise you’ll have a very definite list of people, their relationship to the ministry and potential transformation, and how to stay connected and in relationship with them. You may also discover that the reason transformation has not yet happened is because there is no transformation team. Or because the mission maintaining group isn’t protecting and empowering the transformation team. Use this exercise as an opportunity to get clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the mission maintaining group and the transformation team.*



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 13: "ET TU, CHURCH?"

#### Key Idea

*Sabotage is to be expected anytime a leader courageously engages in transformational leadership.*

#### Main Points

1. The key to staying the course is wisely and calmly responding to sabotage. Note the verb here: not *reacting*, but *responding*.
2. Saboteurs are usually doing nothing but *unconsciously supporting the status quo*.
3. When dealing with sabotage:
  - a. Expect sabotage.
  - b. Embrace sabotage as a normal part of an organizational life.
  - c. Don't take it personally. It's really not *you* they are sabotaging, it's your role as leader.
  - d. Focus your attention on the emotionally strong, not the saboteurs.
4. A healthy system makes decisions that further the mission. A leader must choose principles over personal need.
5. Transformational leaders must learn to lead with courage in a way that is calm and contagious.
  - a. Leaders must act. When the heat is on, leaders don't shy away.
  - b. When sabotage or opposition appears, leaders *continue* to calmly stand on conviction in the face of it.
  - c. Leaders inspire. When a leader can maintain calm and demonstrate courage in the midst of opposition or sabotage, others find the strength to act on their own convictions.
  - d. Leaders don't act alone.
6. The key capacity: Does the leader have the capacity to hang in there when reactivity is at its highest?

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. Why should sabotage be expected when engaging in transformational leadership?
4. What's the difference between *reacting* to sabotage and *responding* to sabotage?
5. Why would someone sabotage a leader who is leading adaptive change?

6. Why is it important for the leader to “continue to calmly stand on conviction” in the face of sabotage? What does it look like when a leader does this?

### Chapter 13 Exercises

1. Take some time to think about how to respond in a healthy way to sabotage.
  - a. Brainstorm 5-10 ways someone might sabotage the leader or leadership team of your church or organization. Keep in mind that the saboteur may not be doing it intentionally; sabotage is about maintaining the status quo. Be aware that sabotage can range from mild forms, such as refusing to participate in an experimental ministry, to more extreme forms, like making false accusations that are intended to damage the leader’s reputation.
  - b. Now discuss ways that the leader and leadership team can respond in a healthy way with courage, calmness, and conviction to each of the sabotage scenarios you came up with.

*Leader’s note: As your team brainstorms sabotage scenarios, don’t worry if some of them seem ludicrous or extraordinary. Extreme forms of sabotage are possible. This exercise will help your team become aware of sabotage as it arises, as well as help them practice responding—rather than reacting—in a way that is calm, courageous, and rooted in conviction in regard to your church’s mission.*

## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 14: "HOW A NURSING MOTHER SAVED AMERICA"

#### Key Idea

*Those who had neither power nor privilege in the Christendom world are the trustworthy guides and necessary leaders when we go off the map. They are not going into uncharted territory. They are at home.*

#### Main Points

1. As we head into the future, those on the margins are ahead of those who were dominant figures in the older world.
2. The reality of being trained for Christendom means that most of us won't recognize the value of a "Sacagawea" when she is sitting in front of us.
3. We need to be exposed to the diversity of the world. If we aren't, our default mental models will create a "single story" of the world, a narrative to help us make sense by making simplistic assumptions that make us comfortable and keep us from having to change.
4. With a single story, we make assumptions about people who are different from us that allow us to keep them marginalized.
5. For those of who have been trained with the mental models of military, business or organizational life of the twentieth century, it's hard to even think about a different style of leadership.
6. Christian leaders in a post-Christendom world need to engage, encourage and even *insist* that discernment and decision making begin with making a broader number of voices heard.

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. Who are "those on the margins"? In what ways are they "ahead of those who were dominant figures in the older world"?
4. Why is it difficult for us to recognize the value of the "Sacagaweas" we encounter?
5. In what ways have you experienced the tendency to live by a "single story" in your life? In your church?
6. How might your church leadership begin to make a broader number of voices heard at the leadership table?

## Chapter 14 Exercises

1. It's helpful to get some clarity on which leaders represent "dominant figures in the older world" and who "those on the margins" or the "Sacagaweas" are in your church and community.
  - a. Make a list of the leaders who are "dominant figures in the older world." Odds are this will include much of the senior staff and lay leadership. It is not a negative thing to fall into this category. These are potentially the "Lewis and Clarks" who engage the process of transformational leadership.
  - b. Now make a list of people that your team thinks may be the "Sacagaweas" in the transformational leadership process. They may be lower-level staff or volunteers (perhaps in youth or music ministry). Or they may not be actively involved in the church at all, yet; they may be attracted to the community of the church, but not have found a faith home that engages their giftedness and passions. Or they may be outside the community of the church. Perhaps they are friends or neighbors who are uncomfortable in the church, but very comfortable in the culture.

*Leader's note: Be sure to stress that there is no good or bad in regard to which list someone falls into. Transformational leadership requires "older world" leaders with an openness to adaptive change, as well as "those on the margins" who can help navigate the uncharted territory of this new culture.*

2. Considering the "Sacagaweas" you listed in Exercise 1, think about how you might bring their voices to the leadership table at your church.
  - a. What kinds of gatherings should they be invited to?
  - b. Which people in particular need to be invited?
  - c. How willing are the leaders to listen to the "Sacagaweas"?
  - d. What kind of tension or resistance do you feel about inviting them to speak freely and openly?

*Leader's note: It's important for your team to get specific about how the "those on the margins" will be invited to the leadership table. Pay attention to the willingness of the "older world" leaders to welcome new voices to the table. If there is resistance, explore why that might be.*



## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTER 15: "THE END OF OUR EXPLORING"

#### Key Idea

*The true discovery of exploration is that we begin to see the world and ourselves differently from the way we had before.*

#### Main Points

1. Discovery and exploration do not so much answer all our questions as they help us to *raise and consider new questions*.
2. Reframing or “an ability to think about things in more than one way” is perhaps the most critical skill for adaptive leadership.
3. Reframing allows leaders to see possibilities where others see dead ends; it offers us the tools to break the imaginative gridlock of our situation by considering alternative perspectives.
4. Reframing is more of an *emotional* capacity than a function of intelligence.
5. Differentiation is the ability to have a sense of self that is distinct from one’s role, one’s relationships and the family or organizational system we are part of without having to disconnect relationally.
6. Differentiation enables the leader to stay *with* the group in the most difficult moments even when the group is blaming the leader for the difficulties.
7. Exploration so challenges our illusions of competence, so triggers strong reactions of others and so often leads to enough conflict that it *requires* differentiation to psychologically endure as a leader.
8. When facing an adaptive challenge of learning and being transformed, the congregation, company, or even family will decide to elect an expert to do the work for them. This creates the illusion that something is being done.
9. Leaders can escape the expert expectation by becoming an expert experimenter, an expert question asker instead of answer giver.
10. Don’t focus on whether your church is dying; keep your focus on being transformed into the leader God can use to transform his people for his mission.

#### Questions

1. What encourages you in this chapter? What gives you hope?
2. What challenges you in this chapter? What increases your anxiety? What sounds difficult?
3. Why is reframing—raising and considering new questions—so important for adaptive leadership?
4. Why is reframing primarily an emotional capacity rather than a function of intelligence?

5. Describe *differentiation* in your own words. Why is it important for adaptive leadership?
6. Why is *expertise* insufficient for navigating uncharted territory?

### Chapter 15 Exercises

1. Reflect on the ways your team's thinking and focus has changed over the course of this study.
  - a. What key insights have you gained from this study?
  - b. How has your understanding of leadership changed?
  - c. Describe the kind of leadership the church needs for this uncharted territory.
  - d. What are the essential qualities of adaptive leadership?
  - e. How is leadership in the post-Christendom world different from leadership in a Christendom world?
  - f. Share what you've discovered about the importance of learning in the process of transformational leadership.
  - g. What have you learned about listening to new voices?
2. Take some time to pray for your leaders, your congregation, your community, and the mission to which God has called your church.
  - a. Pray for the "Sacagaweas" that God is inviting to your table.
  - b. Pray for humility as you lead adaptively.
  - c. Pray for courage and conviction in the face of sabotage.
  - d. Pray for the Spirit of God to indwell your people as you pursue God's purposes for your church, your community, and the world.





## CANOEING THE MOUNTAINS STUDY GUIDE CONCLUSION

### *The Adventure Ahead*

Thanks for using this discussion guide for your group study of *Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod Bolsinger. We hope both the book and this guide have been helpful as you have discerned new ways God may be leading you and your church to navigate the uncharted territory in which we find ourselves.

Following Jesus is an adventure. Living into the mission of God is an adventure. It requires risk and faith as we step into the unknown. The good news is that we serve a God who has promised never to abandon us.

As you move into the future God has for you, may you find yourself trusting God more and more. May you find your place in God's story. And may you be drawn ever more deeply into the loving arms of our Savior.

Blessings on your adventure,

The Flourish San Diego Team