Excerpts: Chapters 10, 9, 8 & 7
(not for reprint)

SPIRITUAL WAYPOINTS
Helping Others Navigate The Journey

© by Bob Whitesel

With Interviews and Personal Stories from ...

Tony Campolo
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Bil Cornelius
Mike Franzese
Tim Keel
Dan Kimball
Scot McKnight
Sally Morgenthaler
Larry Osborne
Richard Peace
Ron Sider
Mike Slaughter
Len Sweet
Al Tizon
Stan Toler
and Lauren Winner
Acknowledgements

“Anyone who sets himself up as ‘religious’ by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.”

- James 1:26-27 (The Message)

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INTRODUCTION:
WAYPOINTS, GPS AND GEOCACHING.

U.S. government satellites have created a Global Position System (GPS) that allows users of hand-held GPS units to track their position within 30 feet. In addition, increasingly smaller GPS units now allow hikers, bikers, commuters and tourists to individually track their journeys with remarkable precision.

When using a GPS unit, a location that a traveler wants to remember can be designated a “waypoint.” The GPS unit will assign a precise longitude and latitude coordinate to this waypoint. This location can then be shared, so that others with GPS units can find the exact location too.

As an avid hiker, I find the capability to designate and share a waypoint a useful metaphor for marking one’s spiritual journey. When a person on a spiritual journey encounters a special place on their route, they can designate it as a waypoint and share it with others. Through marking and sharing spiritual waypoints, fellow travelers can share the joys as well as note the similarities in their journeys.

In addition, in the sport of “geocaching,” hikers post waypoints (in GPS coordinates) to lead other inquisitive trekkers to a hidden stash or “cache.” While the stash may include any combination of valuable and odd paraphernalia, the enjoyment lies in the ability to follow waypoints to a treasure. In similar fashion, the waypoints on our journey lead to a cache where immeasurable good fortune awaits.
FOREWORD:

WAYPOINTS: Two Complementary Books

In this book you will encounter the spiritual waypoints of leading thinkers such as Sally Morgenthaler, Tony Campolo, Shane Claiborne, Dan Kimball, Len Sweet and others. And, the reader will personally know many people who are on this spiritual quest. To help all travelers navigate the journey, I have written two complementary books:

Book 1:
SPIRITUAL WAYPOINTS: Helping Others Navigate The Journey
• Topic: This is the book you are reading which introduces and explains “Spiritual Waypoints,” and includes the stories of well-known leaders.
• Purpose: Written for the “helper” who wants to assist other travelers.
• Style: Longer, including an exploration of each “waypoint.”

Book 2:
WAYPOINTS: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey.
• Topic: A short companion booklet.
• Purpose: Written for the “seeker” (first half) and the maturing disciple (second half).
• Style: A self-help book, it helps travelers understand their spiritual quest. Shorter and inexpensive, it can be given away

BONUS:
THE WAYPOINTS COURSE

Book 2 includes a schedule and agenda for a 17-week “Waypoints Course” allowing readers to join together in groups to share their travel experiences and encourage fellow trekkers. Churches and religious organizations have told me that they want a weekly course that can help their leaders better understand their spiritual journey and how they can help others. In addition, travelers new to the journey can take this course as an introduction to the basics of Christianity.

START WITH THE BOOK YOU ARE READING...

But, if you are new to the idea of “Spiritual Waypoints” start with the book you are reading. This book is an introduction and explanation of each of the spiritual waypoints that lie behind ... and ahead.

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WAYPOINT 10:
PERSONAL PROBLEM RECOGNITION

The day you take complete responsibility for yourself, the day you stop making excuses, that’s the day you start your move to the top.

- O. J. Simpson

*If you’re going to do some good today, you’ll have to do it yourself.*

Al was an athlete, an A-student and a popular student on campus. Perhaps because so many students looked up to him, Al felt that he could only rely upon himself to get things done. Thus, his friend Jane was surprised when Al responded to her invitation to join her at a church meeting.

Al had shown little interest in church; in fact, he viewed the church with disdain. A Filipino-American growing up as a nominal Roman Catholic he rarely attended church. “Easter and Christmas, and even that was spotty” remembered Al. And when his parents eventually divorced and both remarried within a year, at age fourteen Al began a journey of reckless and dangerous behavior. “I decided that there was no god,” recalled Al. “I believed that we’re basically on our own and circumstances in my life were bearing that out.“

Al immersed himself in the drug culture of his school. To everyone that knew him, Al was an enigma. He remained a good student, participated in athletics, and even supported worthy causes. As a quasi-member of Greenpeace, he helped in various environmental consciousness-raising activities such as “Walk for the Whales” and “Skate for the Seals.” Still Al recalled “there was still a restlessness, a hopelessness … in the midst of all of this I knew there had to be something more to make sense of life. Not a rational God thing, but something. Drugs were the first option to still that restlessness.”

It was during a drug induced conversation, that Al and a friend created an alternative to fill this restlessness, their own religion. “A friend and I decided we should create a personal religion. The center of our religion was us. Basically, our religion was that it was up to us to make life meaningful. I would pray to a mirror every morning and say “You’re it. If you’re going to do something good today, you’ll have to do it yourself.”

These episodes highlighted Al’s dilemma. In a world of chaos and disorder, Al had come to depend only upon himself. And though he was outwardly brimming with self-reliance, inside Al knew his problem was bigger than one young man could tackle.

To Jane, Al’s eccentric behavior made his openness to her invitation all the more surprising. Al went with her that night to a community of faith gathering where he began to see that he no longer needed to chaff under the weight of self-reliance, for there was another who could help.

“I still remember the message,” recalled Al. “There were three points. Point one, God is real. The pastor didn’t justify it or try to support it. He just said it. And deep down inside I knew that God or something was out there, that this God was here to help me. I didn’t need to be totally self-reliant. Then the pastor said, ‘Point Two: God can be
known through the person of Jesus.’ It didn’t make intellectual sense, but it made sense that God would try to help humans by being touchable, relatable. I realized that God can be talked to, learned from, and He could help me make a difference. Then the pastor said ‘God loves you, He laid down His life for his friends’ and I could relate to that, I really cared for others. And Jesus cared the same way, even to the point of dying.”

Al’s personal problem came into view, that since childhood he had been overly self-reliant. Now, he realized he was not alone in his struggle to be a better student, better athlete or to make the world a better place. God was there to help him and empower him. “In Christ, I began to see myself as part of the solution to life’s problems. Today’s problems are too big for humans. God’s participation is needed. Though this insight started that day, God had to reconfirm this a few years later.”

Later Al’s passion for the needy intensified as God opened his eyes to the enormity of the need. “I was in Central America as a student working with street kids and slum dwellers,” remembered Al. “And again, the need overwhelmed me. But, then I remembered that God did not want me to be overly self-reliant. He reminded me that if I partner with Him, anything is possible. I decided right then and there to partner with God to impact people who are in great need. My wife and I eventually became missionary development workers in the Philippines, first in Metro-Manila and then in Zambales province.”

“I think many of us can relate to a chronic problem with self-reliance. For me, God has to remind me constantly that I am not the savior of the world, He is. The job is much bigger than Al. But by God’s grace, I can be part of making a difference in Christ’s name.”

Waypoint Characteristics:

**Signs of Travelers at Waypoint 10**

*Feelings of rejection or despondency that can result in depression and/or excessive self-reliance.* At this juncture the personal failings of a wayfarer can become so overwhelming that the traveler suffers from one or a combination of four maladies: rejection, despondency, depression and/or excessive self-reliance. Let us look at each of these characteristics that often accompany travelers at Waypoint 10.

**Rejection** arises from lack of acceptance. A person may feel that they are not accepted due to background, personal habits, status, lifestyle etc. Though people usually yearn to be accepted, they may view themselves as not living up to community standards, and thus see themselves as unacceptable and an outsider. Subsequently, they often feel they must rely only upon themselves for survival.

**Despondency** signifies a hopelessness about the future. Psychologist William McDougall coined the classic definition that “despondency drives out hope.” A person suffering from this malady will view the future as uncontrollable, bleak and unwelcoming.

From rejection and despondency can result two debilitating reactions: depression or self-reliance.
Depression is a sadness, helplessness and hopelessness. A depressed person sees little chance for change in their failings or in their outsider status. Thus, the person gives into despondency, gloominess and/or mood swings. Because the magnitude of these outward behaviors makes the person socially unacceptable, depression is often easier to spot than the underlying forces of rejection and despondency.

Excessive self-reliance is another reaction that can arise from feelings of rejection and/or despondency. While moderate self-reliance is laudable, excessive self-reliance can be dangerous. An excessively reliant person may feel they can tackle unreasonable tasks, and will set about to do so with frenzied energy. Excessive self-reliance eventually leads to grand failures, which can devastate the exceedingly optimistic traveler. O.J. Simpson’s quote that began this chapter may be an example of over self-reliance.

Actions That Help W10 Travelers

Action 10.1: Good News From Fellow Travelers.

Biblical stories of optimism and divine accompaniment can provide a starting place for helping travelers experiencing rejection, despondency, depression and/or excessive self-reliance. Let us just look at a few illustrations that can provide a introductory understanding.

Excessive self-reliance.

Others have felt like you.

The story of Samson (Judges 13-16) yields a powerful story of a failed leader, who once was brimming with leadership potential. Peter Northouse says that leadership is made of our five elements, let us look how each is manifest in the life of Samson. Leadership traits are inherent and natural qualities with which a leader is endowed according to Northhouse. Samson was given enormous strength to deliver Israel from their enemies (Judges 13:5, 14:5-6). Leadership abilities are aptitudes developed by experience. Samson political savvy was developed by his keen understanding of ancient customs and politics (Judges 14:12-20). Leadership skills are the means and methods of carrying out leadership responsibilities. For example, “a skilled leader in a fund-raising campaign knows every step and procedure in the fund-raising process.” Samson too knew every step in the process of leading Israel (Judges 15-16), though he subverted the process for his own gain and sensuality. Leadership behavior is what leaders do with the traits, abilities and skills they have been given. Here we see Samson’s shortcomings, as his great skills, abilities and traits were squandered by a behavior of excessive self-reliance. His self-centered and self-reliant behaviors were exhibited in his peevish demands to marry a forbidden Philistine woman (Judges 14:1-7), to frequent prostitutes (Judges 16:1-3)
and to marry an alluring, yet avaricious Delilah (Judges 16:4-22). Samson’s end came while captive by his enemies, where in a final act of protection of Israel, he brought down the Philistine temple upon his captors (Judges 16:23-31). Samson's story is a Biblical tale of self-reliance that evolved into selfishness, self-serving, and ultimately shame.

You are not alone, God promises help.

The story of Samson’s failings is dwarfed by Biblical examples of women and men who overcame their temptation to be self-reliant. Paul was a great example of this, noting that his elite religious status was compost in comparison to the benefits of knowing Christ.

You know my pedigree: a legitimate birth, circumcised on the eighth day; an Israelite from the elite tribe of Benjamin; a strict and devout adherent to God’s law; a fiery defender of the purity of my religion, even to the point of persecuting the church; a meticulous observer of everything set down in God’s law Book.

The very credentials these people are waving around as something special, I’m tearing up and throwing out with the trash—along with everything else I used to take credit for. And why? Because of Christ. Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I’ve dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him. Philippians 3:4-9 (The Message)

Depression

Others have felt like you.

Even in small doses, depression is a part of the journey of life. F. F. Bruce says describes the bitterness and difficulty of Biblical life, even beyond what most modern readers can comprehend.\textsuperscript{xi} The Biblical times were not an idyllic time of tranquility, but times of oppression, starvation, abuse and depravity.

You are not alone, God promises help.

The Scriptures promises:

- “The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all” Psalm 34:17-19.
• “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” Romans 15:4

• “...we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” Romans 5:5

• “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” Hebrews 6:19.

Despondency

Others have felt like you.

Jonah was a prophet called by God, who wallowed in racial prejudice to the point that he wanted the Assyrians in Nineveh to die. So disappointed was Jonah with God’s love, mercy and forgiveness toward Nineveh that Jonah protested, “I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live” (Judges 4:1-3). In despondency over a loss of racial pride Jonah sat down to die. Here he exhibited the first of two characteristics that often accompany despondency: thoughts of death. Yet, God would not let him die, reminding Jonah of God’s love, mercy and forgiveness (Judges 4:5-11). A second sign of despondency is to withdraw and even run from responsibility. Jonah’s exemplified this as he set sail to Tarshish to avoid going to Nineveh, only to find God chasing him first through a storm and then through the belly of a whale (Judges 1:4-2:10). English poet Francis Thompson has called God, the “hound of heaven” for God sees our potential and chases His offspring with love and call.iii

You are not alone, God promises help.

Scriptures that explain God’s assistance in battling despondency include (but are not limited to):

• “When I said, ‘My foot is slipping,’ your love, O Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.... But the Lord has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge.” Psalm 94:18-19, 22.

• “He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the Lord was my support.” 2 Samuel 22:17-19.
• Especially helpful for envisioning how God helps when things look bleak is the story of Abraham. The writer of the Book of Romans retells the story:
  “We call Abraham ‘father’ not because he got God’s attention by living like a saint, but because God made something out of Abraham when he was a nobody... When everything was hopeless, Abraham believed anyway, deciding to live not on the basis of what he saw he couldn’t do but on what God said he would do. And so he was made father of a multitude of peoples. God himself said to him, "You’re going to have a big family, Abraham!" Abraham didn't focus on his own impotence and say, "It's hopeless. This hundred-year-old body could never father a child." Nor did he survey Sarah's decades of infertility and give up. He didn't tiptoe around God's promise asking cautiously skeptical questions. He plunged into the promise and came up strong, ready for God, sure that God would make good on what he had said.” Romans 4:17-22 (The Message)

Rejection

Others have felt like you.

Jesus experienced rejection as the throngs that shouted “Hosanna ... blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! (Matthew 21:9) would soon shout “all the louder, ‘Crucify him!’” (Matthew 27:23).

You are not alone, God promises help.

Rejection is best addressed by a community of love and acceptance. The Scriptures describe the faith community as a new kind of extended family (Ephesians 2:19) where inter-reliance, cooperation and clemency are hallmarks (Acts 2:42-47). The community of Christ is the abode of imperfect humans where affronts and failings still occur. But it is also a community which reflects God’s love, mercy and forgiveness. To understand this, Luke chronicled the expansion of the Good News in the Acts of the Apostles. This is another good starting place to help those feeling rejected recognize that God can reform and transformation ordinary and fallible fishermen, tax collectors, Pharisees and contentious siblings into tenacious leaders who will adventurously spread the Good News across the world.

Action 10.2: Three Lanterns to Illuminate the Route

Al's view about self-reliance changed the night a church leader explained three simple, yet weighty lines of reasoning. Al had felt all along that there must be “something more to make sense of life,” but he felt outside forces, such as God or others, were unable to navigate him in his plight. He thus sought to become self-reliant, even though within him there was a thorny feeling that help was available.
At Waypoint 10, where a personal problem is recognized, three foundational principles will illuminate our path. These are the three philosophical lanterns that illuminated Al’s life that night.

**Lantern 1: God is real.** The leader Al heard did not seek to rationalize or confirm this statement, he simply stated it. Too often Christians spend inordinate amounts of time validating God's existence, but my experience of over twenty years studying evangelism is that most people deep inside sense God's presence. Most people by the time they have reached Waypoint 10 are not questioning God's existence, but like Al are wondering what that existence means for them. By stating the certainty of God's existence, the church leader affirmed what Al had already been feeling inside. And, then the leader began to take Al to the next step: what does this mean for Al?

**Lantern 2: God can be known, in the person of Jesus Christ.** God sent His son Jesus Christ to be the supernatural yet personal guide and rescuer for humankind. The relational nature of Christ, who experienced every temptation that humans have experienced (Hebrews 4:15) creates a unique and compelling bond between God and humans. And, with the empowerment and inner accompaniment of His Holy Spirit in each believer (Acts 1:8), God has created the ultimate relationship. This relationship is so dynamic, celestial and supernatural that it can only be described as birthing a new “being.”

**Lantern 3: God loves you, and in Jesus Christ laid down His life for all humankind.** Sacrificing oneself for others may not a popular action. But travelers sense that assistance is needed, as did Al. Thus, the church must help wayfarers understand that though humans can’t solve life’s problems, God can. The magnitude of God’s sacrificial action must be carefully explained to the wayfarer. The community of faith must recapture in word and deed the enormity of Jesus’ death and resurrection where graves opened, departed saints reappeared (Matthew 27:51-53), and Sheol spewed forth her wrath and eventually her captives (Ephesians 4:8-10).

Christ’s regeneration of Al did not supplant his passion to help the needy, but empowered it. Al’s sensitivity to the oppressed had been a pre-conversion characteristic. Though Northouse would call this a “trait,” it can also be thought of as a God-given gift. The New Testament lists approximately 26 gifts which are given by God to bring a focus to ministry. One of these is the gift of mercy, which has been described as:

“The gift of mercy is ... to feel genuine empathy and compassion for individuals (both Christian and non-Christian) who suffer distressing physical, mentor, or emotional problems, and to translate that compassion into cheerfully-done deed which reflect Christ’s love and alleviate the suffering.”

There is no Biblical reason why these gifts could not be given in some measure before conversion, awaiting the regenerative experience for them to then...
be supernaturally empowered and expanded. Thus, God did not supplant Al’s gift of compassion for the poor, but after regeneration He empower it. In the following interview we will look at Al’s current ministry and see how God is using Al Tizon to infect thousands of people with a passion to share the Good News in word and deed.

An Interview With Al Tizon
Director of the Word & Deed Network of the Evangelicals for Social Action
And Assistant Professor of Evangelism and Holistic Ministry,
Palmer Theological Seminary

Whitesel: As the director of the Word & Deed Network, which integrates the Good News with good deeds, you seem to have combined your heart for the needy that you exhibited in school with a heart to share the Good News of salvation. What happened?

Tizon: I came to realize that personal and social transformations are inseparable. True change needs to happen from the heart to socio-political structures. So if I was going to be a true agent of change, I had to be about good works and Good News.

Whitesel: You talk about a refocus that occurred in Central America as being a second conversion. Was it the same as your salvation experience?

Tizon: No, it wasn’t another spiritual salvation, but I do half-jokingly call it my born again, again experience. I describe it as a conversion because it was an eye-opening experience that radically changed, or converted both my understanding of God and my ministry direction. It reminded me that the task of helping the needy is a huge part of what God is doing in the world, and that I must participate in that as a bearer of Good News. I came home from that trip feeling like I had encountered God amid the poor and the oppressed. The Good News was no good at all unless it dealt with the needs of the oppressed and needy. Within this new understanding, God completely destroyed my feelings of self-reliance. We won’t be able to change the world without God.

Whitesel: So, it wasn’t selfishness that your mirror-facing religion exemplified, it was self-reliance. God had to remind you that you couldn’t change the world alone. Is that the problem you recognized?

Tizon: Exactly. Yes, that was much of the problem with my former view of things. As my worldview slowly but surely conforms to Christ’s, I see the world and its needs differently. I see great possibilities that we can accomplish … with Christ’s help.

Questions for Group and Personal Study

1. What does your church do when you encounter people suffering from dejection, despondency, depression and/or excessive self-reliance? Do you have trained professionals that you can recommend to help them? Are these trained professionals part of your local faith community? If not, how will you train and prepare local congregants to be part of this task so that you can make local connections with people suffering from rejection, despondency, depression and/or excessive self-reliance.
2. Describe two Biblical stories that would illustrate each of the following principles:
   i. God is real.
   ii. God can be known in the person of Jesus Christ.
   iii. God loves you, and in Jesus Christ laid down His life for all humankind.

3. Do you recall examples of people who had pre-conversion passions, that after conversion Christ supernaturally empowered? Give two examples. What does this tell you about people you know today who are non-Christians? What does this tell you about God’s love, concern and potential for them? Do you now see them in a new light?

4. Look to modern history to recall a person who exhibited excessive self-reliance. What was their life like in their early years? What was their life like in later years? What does this tell you about travelers with excessive self-confidence? Do you know one? Anonymously share a personal encounter.

Footnotes:

ii  Psychological research on rejection is still in its infancy. However, the most exhaustive look at this malady is in an edited volume by Mark R. Leary titled Interpersonal Rejection (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
v  Despondency often manifests itself via one of two avenues. First it can bring on social withdrawal. This is because the person feels the future is so bleak that they can only count on themselves for survival. This will often result in running away from friendships and responsibilities. Secondly, the person may become suicidal, seeing no potential gain or improvement in their situation.
vi  Though depression often results from rejection or despondency, depression can result from a host of other maladies as well. The reader should not infer that because a person is depressed the reason is solely rejection or despondency. Thus the reader should probe further with a depressed individual and assist him or her to seek professional help. Depression is mentioned here to acquaint the reader with possible behaviors that wayfarers at Waypoint 10 might exhibit.


WAYPOINT 9:  
DECISION TO ACT

“I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life.”  

- Jesus

Of Soldiers and Solidarity

Jim joined the Army for financial reasons, and thus may not have been prepared for the spiritual clash he was about to experience. The rigors and pressures of Book Camp fostered in Jim a deepening connection to Christ. “One day while marching in formation Jim began to feel an extraordinary weight to the rifle he was carrying,” recalled Shane from a letter he received from Jim. “He knew right then that he was not suppose to be there. But when he told his leader the reaction was not what Jim expected.” According to the letter, the officer embarrassed and derided Jim before his squad. This humiliation had followed closely on the heels of Jim’s deepening relationship with Christ.

Yet, in the midst of the humiliation Jim grew stronger in his decision to act and follow Christ, not weaker. “Jim felt in that moment, that he could understand what Christ had felt by being rejected by his friends, being denied by Peter and the others. Jim right then made a decision to act and fully follow Christ, because Jim at last knew what Christ had undergone for him.”

“This is the story he wrote in that letter,” remembered Shane. “And, it accentuates what happens when a person is ready to act. They often identify with the suffering Christ. They see in Christ someone who understands their pain and humiliation. We all need to understand that.”

The purpose of this story is not to debate the moral rectitude of the soldier’s action, but to emphasize the identification with Christ’s redemptive action that often occurs among travelers at Waypoint 9. At this juncture the traveler often realizes that Christ has undertaken an amazing feat of identification and rectification ... and this fuels the traveler’s decision to act.

The recipient of this letter, Shane Claiborne, is an author, speaker and advocate for the poor. A member of “The Simple Way,” a faith community in inner city Philadelphia that helps birth and connect faith communities around the world, Shane states one of his goal is “to follow Jesus to the margins of the empire in which we love and to become friends of the poor.”

Waypoint Characteristics:

Signs of Travelers at Waypoint 9
Caught in a gap. One of the most common sensations at Waypoint 9, is a feeling of hopelessness and suspension between two lives, two worlds, two monarchies and two calls. Interestingly, church altars in the Middle Ages were often painted with scenes of Heaven and Hell, with many people perched precariously between both.\textsuperscript{xix} This may have been an attempt to portray sensations of being caught in the middle. But, once the person who is tussling in this gap grasps a glimpse of their rescuer in Christ, they have an uncommonly strong urge to identify and escape. And, this leads to the second sign that can accompany travelers at Waypoint 9, an urge to act without delay.

An urge to act immediately. At this waypoint the traveler often has a strong desire to do something, though what that something is can be vague and foggy. Still, the traveler feels an overwhelming impulse to act. Engel describes this as “a firm intention to act one way or another.”\textsuperscript{xx} This compulsive urge has been brought on by the many waypoints that have led up to this juncture. The traveler now feels that he or she is on the cusp of a new awakening, a new life, a new destiny ... and they are. But, if the traveler rushes too quickly into this decision they can do so without full understanding what they are embracing.

Vacillation due to the magnitude of the gap. At the same time a traveler can also be intimidated by the magnitude of the gap that separates the traveler from an all powerful God. And, if the traveler is accustomed to having others make decisions for them, they may reel from moving forward, being brought to a standstill by the magnitude of the gulf. The community of faith must help the traveler see that God understands this gap, and that God, Himself, has erected a bridge to span it.

Therefore, it is important for the faith community to gradually, yet steadily, help the traveler perceive the gap, the one bridge, and the necessity of a decision to cross it. The following actions that will examine this assistance in detail.

Actions That Help W9 Travelers

Action 9.1: Understand the Trekker’s Feelings

The feeling of being caught in the middle.

As the soldier in Shane’s story came to grasp, Christ understands the travels and travails His offspring have experienced. Jesus experienced both the wayfarer’s frailty and defenselessness:

- “We don’t have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weakness and testing, experienced it all—all but the sin. So let’s walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.” Hebrews 4:14-16 (The Message).
• “The soldiers assigned to the governor took Jesus into the governor’s palace and got the entire brigade together for some fun. They stripped him and dressed him in a red toga. They plaited a crown from branches of a thornbush and set it on his head. They put a stick in his right hand for a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mocking reverence: "Bravo, King of the Jews!" they said. "Bravo!" Then they spit on him and hit him on the head with the stick. When they had had their fun, they took off the toga and put his own clothes back on him. Then they proceeded out to the crucifixion.” Matthew 27:27-31 (The Message).

Yet, in many Protestant churches the image of Christ that is portrayed is that of a victorious and/or everyday Christ. There is nothing wrong with such imagery, but the images within Catholicism of a Christ on the cross may be more helpful for the traveler at Waypoint 9. Often before arriving at this waypoint, the traveler has undertaken an arduous journey, and before they make a decision to act, the traveler needs to know that Christ understands the traveler’s predicament and journey. Thom Rainer’s research discovered that most people visit a community of faith because a crisis in their life has driven them there. When they visit our churches because of a crisis, they may be looking for a Christ (as well as His followers) who can identify with their calamities and afflictions. The community of faith must understand that although for many mature Christians the image of a victorious Christ overcoming all enemies is exhilarating, for the traveler at Waypoint 9 who is often pleading for help to overcome their own inadequacies, the images of a Christ who suffered as they are suffering is obligatory.

The Feeling That They Must Act Immediately

A traveler at this juncture will have a resolute determination that they must act. But, the seemingly impulsive and rash nature of this act, is really due to this being the culmination of a long process. This does not mean however, that a person should be rushed through this stage. On the contrary, the faith community must let the traveler know they appreciate and understand their impetuous feelings and that they are normal. It is important that the community of faith does not chide them for this impulsiveness, but rather acknowledges it as a natural part of the process, and to slowly lead them to the next area of assistance.

The Feeling of Vacillation Due to the Magnitude of the Gap

Because many travelers will find this decision intimidating, the community of faith must help the traveler move forward neither in haste, nor delay. This is a decision of eternal destiny, and thus a choice cannot be put off indefinitely even if it needs to be slowed down. The community of faith will want to take into account each traveler’s predicament and then help them navigate Waypoint 9 at the pace that is right for them.
**Action 9.2: The Gap, the Only Bridge and the Decision**

Subsequently, the community of faith will want to let the trekker know that there are three important works of God that must be grasped to fully understand the importance of the act they are about to undertake. These three understandings will be discussed in each of the following two chapters. But, here it will be important for the traveler to be introduced to an overview of three critical Scriptural truths: the *gap*, the *only bridge* and the *decision*.

- **The gap**: There is a gap that separates humankind from God. The community of faith must slowly help the wayfarer grasp that every person who travels this journey makes mistakes, and falls short of God’s ideal. In theological terms, every trekker is a sinner. Scriptures that emphasize this gap include, but are not limited to:
  - “There’s nothing wrong with God; the wrong is in you. Your wrongheaded lives caused the split between you and God. Your sins got between you so that he doesn’t hear.” *Isaiah 59:2* (The Message).
  - “If we claim that we’re free of sin, we’re only fooling ourselves. A claim like that is errant nonsense. On the other hand, if we admit our sins—make a clean breast of them—he won’t let us down; he’ll be true to himself. He’ll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing.” *1 John 1:8-9* (The Message).
  - “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” *Romans 3:23*.

- **The only bridge**: The traveler must also understand that a sympathetic and compassionate God has erected a bridge to span their gap. And, the traveler must grasp that this is the *only* bridge that can cross this chasm. The following are some representative Scriptures:
  - *A Bridge was built by one who understands and has experienced the traveler’s anguish and suffering:*
    - “This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn’t go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted...” *John 3:16-17* (The Message).
    - “Since we’ve compiled this long and sorry record as sinners (both us and them) and proved that we are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives God wills for us, God did it for us. Out of sheer generosity he put us in right standing with himself. A pure gift. He got us out of the mess we’re in and restored us to where he always wanted us to
be. And he did it by means of Jesus Christ.” Romans 3:23-24 (The Message).

- “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8
- “But God’s gift is real life, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master.” Romans 6:23 (The Message).
- “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.” Hebrews 2:9-11.

  - There is only one bridge. Sometimes travelers wonder if there is another bridge spanning the same chasm. They wonder if perhaps Buddha, Mohammed or Shiva has built a bridge. While other religious personages may claim to have spanned the chasm, Jesus clearly states that though others may claim else wise, no other bridge exists.

    - “Jesus answered, ’I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” John 14:6.
    - The Message translation adds traveler imagery: “Jesus said, ‘I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him. You’ve even seen him!’” John 14:6. (The Message).

• The Decision. Yet, with all of the usefulness and convenience of the bridge, some find such a decision daunting. For some it seems easier to stand on the cusp of the gap and gaze at the future from afar, than to actually cross the bridge and reach it. Thus, the community of faith must help the traveler cross this span not in haste, but not in delay either. Remaining perched on one side of the gap is not crossing it, nor getting the traveler any closer to their designation. The scriptures accentuate the importance of decision:

  - “But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve…. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15.
o “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” Revelation 3:20.

o “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13

o “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God…” John 1:12


It is important the community of faith introduce, discuss, and receive questions about these three truths in an unhurried manner. These are world changing truths that take time to digest and absorb.

An Interview With Shane Claiborne
Author, advocate, circus performer, and founding member of the Potter Street Community, a New Monastic community.

Whitesel: How did the story of Jim turn out?
Claiborne: Jim left the military base. But, because a relationship with Christ had been deepened by this experience, Jim eventually realized that he must owe up to his departure, and return. He did and was discharged.

Whitesel: What does this say to you about the waypoint where a person decides to act upon their understanding of Christ.
Claiborne: As many people are, Jim was really in a place of uncertainly about Jesus. That is the place where many find themselves. When God was calling the Israelites out of Egypt, there was uncertainly of where they were going, what would it mean. That place of decision and identification with Christ is the very place where faith is born. Jim didn’t even know the path that was before him. But he sensed that Jesus had been down that road, and Jesus would guide him.

Whitesel: Is there a political or spiritual message in this?
Claiborne: Both. But, the message for Waypoint 9 is that Jim had a life-changing identification with Jesus. God used it to hit Jim with the magnitude of the decision he was making to follow Christ. It was a confirmation that God could make a way for Jim.

Questions for Group and Personal Study

1. How do you feel when comparing yourself to an all-powerful God? Do you feel deficient, imperfect, inadequate and/or embarrassed? How does this affect your relationship with God? Do you feel more in need of His assistance and love? Or do you feel more estranged and unable to live up to His expectations because of your misdeeds? Look up biblical scriptures that address each of these feelings:
a. Do you feel deficient, imperfect and/or inadequate? Look up three biblical scriptures that tell how God feels about our inadequacies. Here are two to start your list:
   i. “Don't panic. I'm with you. There's no need to fear for I'm your God. I'll give you strength. I'll help you. I'll hold you steady, keep a firm grip on you.” Isaiah 41:10 (The Message).
   ii. “But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (The Message).
   iii. _______________________
   iv. _______________________
   v. _______________________

b. Do you feel estranged and unable to live up to God’s expectations because of your misdeeds? Look up three biblical scriptures that tell how God feels about His imperfect creation. Here are two to start your list:
   i. “Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway. We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him.” Romans 5:6-8 (The Message).
   ii. “So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? ... Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ’s love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture... None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I’m absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God’s love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us. Romans 8:38-39 (The Message).
iii. ________________________________
iv. ________________________________
v. ________________________________

2. How did you navigate the gap, the bridge and the decision? Write a paragraph about:
   a. How you experienced the gap: (write one paragraph)
   b. How you experienced the bridge: (write one paragraph)
   c. And how you experienced the decision: (write one paragraph)

Share your three paragraphs with two friends. Gain their input and then rewrite each paragraph. Place these rewritten paragraphs in your Bible at John 3:16.

3. How do you picture Christ: as a victorious leader or a suffering servant? How did you picture Him when you first came to know him? Has the picture changed and in what way? What will you do to help others understand the picture of a suffering Christ who is also triumphant?

Footnotes:

xvii A pseudonym for an actual soldier who communicated with Shane Claiborne.
xv Rainer’s research found that “a significant number of the unchurched told us that their first reason for visiting a church was a crisis,” *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001), 169.
xxii “A person who is captive to self navigating ... can never please God.” Engel, *Contemporary Christian Communication*, 211.
WAYPOINT 8:
FAITH AND REPENTANCE IN CHRIST

There are only two kinds of people in the end, those who say to God ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’

– C. S. Lewis, novelist and lay theologian.

Of Bands and Brothers

“I was baptized at age 12 because of peer pressure, not passion,” recalled Bob. “I was in the church youth choir, and my teacher asked me if I had been saved? I knew I wanted to go to heaven, but beyond that I was spiritually naïve. So I didn’t reply. When it came time for the next baptism service I signed up. At a meeting with the pastor I was asked when I was saved, so I gave him the date I signed up for baptism. I guess I was saved from peer pressure, not my sins.”

Needless to say, Bob’s life changed little. “I grew interested in music, joined a rock-and-roll band, and played music though out High School and college. I joined the largest and most prestigious fraternity at my college, and on the outside it looked like that I was living the successful college lifestyle. I studied psychology and became a political activist so I could make the world a better place. But deep down inside I felt powerless to really, and permanently change the world.

“A sense of intolerable discomfort that compels the individual to make a choice.”

While Bob lived his college dreams, Fern prayed fervently for her child. Slowly Fern’s prayers were answered through Barb. Though they had never been romantically involved, Barb and Bob shared a passion for rock-and-roll and marijuana. “You can imagine my surprise when Barb declared she was no longer going to do drugs with me,” recounted Bob. “She said, 'I've become a Christian and I'm not doing drugs anymore. Jesus changed me, and He wants you to change you too!” That was something Bob had never heard from someone in his rock-and-roll culture. Not wanting to lose a friend, Bob protested, “I’m a Christian too, because I believe in God.” To which Barb responded with a Scripture he had never heard before, stating, “Agreeing with you mind is not enough. You have to follow too. James 2:19 says ‘you believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.’ “Suddenly it dawned on me,” remembered Bob, “believing was not enough. I had to live a life consistent with that belief.”

Christ is who he claims to be and is the only way to God,
For “no one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6.
Barb’s words haunted Bob that entire week. On Thursday night, before a big psychology test, Bob was studying late at night. “I’d found an old Bible my mom had sent with me to college. And I had been carrying it around all week. When I got bored studying that night, I flipped it open and in the back was something called ‘The Romans Road.’ It led me through Romans 3:23, 6:23 and 10:9. Suddenly, it was clear to me! I was miserable, because I was not who God wanted me to be. And, I had made myself that way! I saw that Jesus died for my sins and to give me a new lease on life. I made a decision right there, in the library, to accept Jesus’ salvation and to turn my life over to him. I had no idea the hardest part, a declaration, was still coming!

“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

(Romans 10:9-10)

“I’d been a political activist,” remembered Bob. “But now I was ready to be an activist for Christ. On the way back to my fraternity I told God I would go wherever He sent me. ‘I’ll go to India, to Africa, to wherever you want me to go,’ I declared. And God replied, ‘Go to your fraternity, and minister to your brothers there.’ This was the worst possible scenario! I had no problem telling strangers about Jesus, but my fraternity brothers were another matter entirely. I had worked hard to be accepted into this large and prestigious fraternity. My fraternity brothers looked up to you because of your social standing. Religion was not looked upon favorably … partying and drinking were. I pleaded with God to send me overseas. But, He kept telling me, ‘Go to your fraternity brothers. That is your mission field.’”

As Bob drove back to the fraternity house, God made His expectations even clearer. “…Declare your love for Me when you arrive,” He said. I sensed what that meant. There was a large 4 by 8 foot blackboard next to the main entrance where bothers would post messages, such as someone had a couch for sale, or there was a party on third floor. God told me, ‘Write Jesus is my Lord on that blackboard and sign it.’ Again, I pleaded with God to send me to some nondescript alien culture, where my declaration for Christ would only be witnessed by those I did not know. But, He persisted and I relinquished as I pulled into the parking lot. ‘After all,’ I reasoned, ‘the blackboard is usually filled with notices and there will probably only be a small gap near the bottom were I can scrawl ‘Jesus is my lord’ in tiny lettering. Imagine my surprise upon entering the fraternity and seeing the blackboard had been wiped clean with a wet towel! Not a chalk mark was on it! It lay there empty, ready for me to proclaim my allegiance. And I did, writing in large letters ‘Jesus is my Lord, Bob Whitesel.’ I’ve never looked back.

Later I became an author and professor of Christian leadership and evangelism. But, I’ve never lost my passion for my fraternity brothers. I realized that to have an impact upon the people I lived with, I had to live a Godly lifestyle. I led Bible Studies in my fraternity and always tried to be authentic and loving. I was respected by my brothers because I daily lived out my Christian faith. Eventually I was elected president of my fraternity alumni association, serving the second
longest tenure as chapter alumni president in Phi Kappa Theta history. But, it was not just repentance I experienced that night in the library, though I am grateful for that. But, I also experienced a new understanding of Jesus Christ, that he would use me to tell others about His Good News, and that it starts with right living, and it starts right where you live.

Waypoint Characteristics:

*Signs of Travelers at Waypoint 8*

_A traveler mistakes belief with following._ As a youth, I had been confused into thinking that mental assent was all that was needed to go to heaven. Living a changed life seemed optional. But, as a fuller understanding of God’s words emerged, I began to understand that God requires holy living to emerge as well.\textsuperscript{xxv} Scriptures that underscore this include, but are not limited to, the following:

- “As obedient children, let yourselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God’s life, a life energetic and blazing with holiness. God said, ”I am holy; you be holy” 1 Peter 1:15-16 (The Message).
- “For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” 1 Tim. 4:8
- “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” James 4:7-10.

_A traveler is struggling with surrendering their will to God._ C. S. Lewis once wrote “there are only two kinds of people in the end, those who say to God ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says in the end, ‘Thy will be done’.”\textsuperscript{xxvi} The traveler at this waypoint may be struggling with the thought of relinquishing control of their life. They may have grown up in an environment that required they be self-sufficient. Regardless of the genesis, they now find the thought of relinquishing control to an unseen Deity unnerving. Yet, Jesus reminds us:

“What is required is serious obedience—doing what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, ‘Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects had everyone talking.’ And do you know what I am going to say? ‘You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don’t impress me one bit. You’re out of here.’” Matthew 7:21-23, The Message.

_A self-centered aspiration for impersonal ministry._ The Good News travels best over what Donald McGavran called the “bridges of God” or the natural relationships that God has brought into our lives.\textsuperscript{xxvii} While is seemed to me somewhat romantic and impersonal to be called to a mission field far away, God knows that we can best reach out to those around us. For example, it must have
been embarrassing for Peter to preach his first sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Many in the crowd would have known the hot-headed fisherman, and some would have heard about his swearing and denials only 50 days before. Yet, preaching in Jerusalem, the social center of his world, was where Peter would have the greatest impact. A key to understanding the life changing magnitude of the Good News is to understand the role of the heart, the seat of the emotions, and the mouth, through which we proclaim our emotions. As Paul says “For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved” Romans 10:9-10. Thus the journey into the Good News is a public excursion, because God wants more people to join the journey.

Actions That Help W8 Travelers

This waypoint, and the following Waypoint 7, address conversion which is a topic of great interest to both religious and secular scholars. Among such scholars, psychologist and philosopher William James’ definition remains one of the most accepted:

(conversion is) ...the process, gradual or sudden, buy which the self hitherto divided and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy becomes united and consciously right, superior and happy in consequence to its firmer hold upon religions realities.

Let us briefly recap the three most recent waypoints that have led up to this definition. They are:

Waypoint 10: Problem recognition with “a sense of intolerable discomfort that compels the individual to make a choice.”

Waypoint 9: Christ is who he claims to be and is the only way to God. As Jesus says in John 14:6, “No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Waypoint 8: In Engel’s words, the Holy Spirit now works to “intensify the perceived gap between what is and what might be, thus leading to a firm intention to act one way or another with respect to Christ. No human persuasion enters into this process.”

To understand how this process unfolds at Waypoint 8, let us look at four actions that communities of faith can undertake to help travelers at this juncture.

Action 8.1: Embrace the Supernatural

Much of the research on conversion by psychologists and philosophers has ignored or downplayed a supernatural connection. Yet, Scripture makes it clear that a supernatural intersection is at the heart of this experience, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship” (Ephesians 2:8-10). The Message Bible paraphrases this passage to make God’s participation even more blunt:
Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It’s God’s gift from start to finish! We don’t play the major role. If we did, we’d probably go around bragging that we’d done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing. Ephesians 2:8-10.

Therefore, a faith community helps wayfarers by allowing the supernatural to participate and to guide the process. Yet, this does not mean sanctioning spiritual anarchy. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, a church struggling with spiritual disorder and chaos, emphasizes that God works in a logical and reasonable manner, stating “But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

**Action 8.2: Authenticity and Relevance**

*Human manipulation should not enter into this process.* As seen above, human manipulation is inauthentic and ultimately fruitless. God’s Holy Spirit is working, and only an all loving God could ensure that this process is free of manipulation and coercion. The process is organic, with dialogue and intersection with a loving Heavenly Father guiding the process. Christians must pray, support and aid, but let the Holy Spirit guide.

*Relevance and free will are involved.* Though there are different theological options regarding the degree to which choice is involved in human decisions, free will *does* exist at the point of decision.xxxiii The Scriptures make it clear that a human must make an individual decision regarding the relevance to them of God’s declarations (*Romans* 3:23), their personal estrangement from God (*Romans* 6:23) and a willingness to accept God’s rescue plan through Jesus Christ (*John* 3:16).

**Action 8.3: 3 Fallen, Imprisoned & the Ultimate Solution**

The Holy Spirit now works to “intensify the perceived gap between what is and what might be, thus leading to a firm intention to act one way or another with respect to Christ. No human persuasion enters into this process.”xxxiv This takes place as the traveler grasps three “realities.”xxxv

**REALITY 1: Fallen** - the wayfarer has fallen short of God’s expectations. The traveler at this point is coming to the conclusion that he or she has fallen short of God’s expectation and is a sinner. Below are foundational verses for understanding this:

- “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23.
- “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” Isaiah 59:2

**REALITY 2: Imprisoned** - the wayfarer, imprisoned by self-seeking, can thus never please God and will ultimately experience spiritual death. Below are a few foundational verses:
• “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23
• “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...” Ephesians 2:1

REALITY 3: The Ultimate Solution - the wayfarer becomes willing to go in a new direction, seeking the ultimate solution through an act of will to accept Christ’s salvation. Foundational verses include:

- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” John 3:16.
- “And this is the real and eternal life: That they know you, The one and only true God, And Jesus Christ, whom you sent.” John 17:3

Action 8.4: Cultivate Declaration.

Paul wrote, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved” (Romans 10:9-10). Here Paul is emphasizing that faith and repentance result in a conversion, “a turn around ... a change of mind ... (to turn) from something to something (else).”\(^{xxxvi}\) In addition, Paul emphasizes that such a turnaround should be conspicuous.\(^{xxxvii}\)

Thus, this declaration should be in public behavior, and not just words. Engel notes that when Paul says, “For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified,” (Romans 10:9) he is emphasizing that this is more than mental agreement.\(^{xxxviii}\) The reference to the heart means a decision “that penetrates to the very core of one’s being.” Engel notes that this is “betting your life” on the route you are taking.\(^{xxxix}\) A public statement or action verifies this bet.

Faith communities must provide relevant, authentic and appropriate circumstances for such declaration and community accountability. Such proclamations in word and deed are not Biblically optional (Romans 10:9-10), but they must be culturally relevant. For example, for me an appropriate venue for declaration was the 100+ men who lived in the same fraternity with me. The common bonds, experiences and inter-reliance we shared had created bridges of God which I crossed for the next 35 years.

An Interview With Bob Whitesel
Author, speaker and professor.

(The following was conducted by Rebecca Whitesel, my wife of 33 years and a professional journalist.)
Rebecca Whitesel: Your life changed that night on the way back to your fraternity. Why was this different from the baptism you experienced at age twelve?

Bob: When I was baptized at age 12, I bowed to peer pressure. When I wrote my declaration on that fraternity blackboard, I stood up to peer pressure. In a secular college you are under a lot of pressure to live the excesses of a college-lifestyle. But, Christ made it clear right from the start that I must declare that change and be a testimony to my fraternity brothers in not just word, but also deed.

Rebecca Whitesel: How did you change?

Bob: On the outside I quit smoking, drinking, cursing and partying. I still played music, but I became a leader at a Christian music café. But on the inside even more profound changes took place as I became more compassionate, sympathetic, thoughtful, loving and honest.

Rebecca Whitesel: Didn’t this ostracize you from your fraternity brothers?

Bob: There is a lot of pressure in a fraternity to be like everyone else. But, I let my brothers know that I had a calling to serve Jesus. They respected that, and they saw changes in me for the better. I think deep down in side many of them needed a change too. Seeing that I could do it with God’s help, gave them hope.

Rebecca Whitesel: How would you sum this up?

Bob: My desire was to let my brothers see that God had made me a better person in word and deed. In response, they honored me by electing me to the second-longest term ever as alumni president.

Questions for Group and Personal Study

1. “Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus...” Colossians 3:17a. What does this mean to you? Is there a warning here? And if so, why is this warning given?

2. The Good News in common dress: In this chapter we saw the three “realities” that a wayfarer must grasp to move onward on their journey. Read each of the realities below, and then write a paragraph about how you encountered each. Some readers may have experienced some of the realities at a datable time, while for others it will be an unfolding process. To note the different ways God works, share your three paragraphs with two friends and compare and contrast how God has been working.

   b. REALITY 2: Imprisoned - the wayfarer, imprisoned by self-seeking, can thus never please God and will ultimately experience spiritual death. Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:1.
   c. REALITY 3: The Ultimate Solution – the wayfarer becomes willing to go in a new direction, seeking the ultimate solution through an act of will to accept Christ’s salvation. John 3:16, John 17:3.

3. How would you translate Ephesians 2:8-10 into modern language that a neighbor might understand?
a. Think of a friend, co-worker or relative that has not made a commitment to Christ. With one of these persons in mind, take the following Scripture and translate it to make it understandable to them. Before you begin your translation, write a short descriptive paragraph about this person. Without giving their name, explain who they are and why you will translate Ephesians 2:8-10 the way that you will.

b. Translate for this person Ephesians 2:8-10: “Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It’s God’s gift from start to finish! We don’t play the major role. If we did, we’d probably go around bragging that we’d done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing”

4. Recount the first time you declared your faith in Jesus Christ. What were the circumstances? What were the outcomes? Was it important for you? Was it important for others?

5. How do you regularly declare your faith? Are you more effective, or less effective today? And, what will you do about this?

Footnotes:


xxiv Engel, Contemporary Christian Communication, 211.

xxv An excellent book that examines biblically and historically the rationale and requirements of God’s holiness is Keith Drury’s aptly titled Holiness for Ordinary People (Indianapolis: The Wesleyan Publishing House 1983). See especially the chapter “It’s Everywhere” for a Biblical examination of the scope of holiness.


xxviii For a concise and helpful overview of the three primary approaches to exploring conversion, psychological, sociological and physiological, see Engel, Contemporary Christian Communication, 206-210.


xxx Engel, Contemporary Christian Communication, 211.

xxxi Engel, Contemporary Christian Communication, ibid.


xxxiii Engel, Contemporary Christian Communication, 211.

xxxiv Engel, Contemporary Christian Communication, ibid.

xxxv Faith means “to trust, to (have) confidence in God” (Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957],
668-670). And repentance indicates “the idea of turning” to be in line with these realities (Peace, “Conflicting Understandings of Christian Conversion,” 8). I touch on these in more detail in Waypoint 7, yet here it is important to note that faith and repentance regarding REALITY 1 and REALITY 2, will result in faith in REALTIY 3.


xxvii Various forms of declaration are often exhibited at this juncture. And, declaratory actions that accompany conversion are as diverse as cultures. On one hand in modernist societies shaped by education, a testimony might be expected. While on the other hand, in postmodern environs influenced by action, serving others might be anticipated. For more on the behavioral differences between modernist/postmodernist cultures and their impact upon explaining the Good News see Whitesel *Preparing for Change Reaction*, 49-71, *Inside the Organic Church*, xxiii-xxxiii, and Hunter and Whitesel, *A House Divided*, 13-81.

xxxviii Engel, *Contemporary Christian Communication*, 211.

xxxix Ibid.
WAYPOINT 7:
NEW BIRTH

“So don’t be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be 'born from above’—out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it's headed next. That's the way it is with everyone 'born from above' by the wind of God, the Spirit of God.”

- Jesus Christ

Under the Oak Tree

“Let’s wait until your father gets home,” was the loving reply to Scot’s request. “But I can’t wait, what if I die before Dad gets home,” came the five year-old’s retort. Scot had returned from an evening service at his church, and the hell-fire and brimstone message had made an impression. Yet Scot’s decision that night was more the result of his wish to avoid damnation, than it was to embark upon a new life. “That’s probably why it didn’t have much effect on me,” remembers Scot. “I got baptized perfunctorily at age 12 because we were suppose to get baptized. It wasn’t until I was seventeen that the avoidance of the penalty of my sins, caught up to my desire to serve God sacrificially.”

Repentance: “the idea of turning, but focuses on the inner, cognitive decision to make a break with the past.”

Scot was an avid athlete, and in the summer of this seventeenth year he was impressed by the spiritual depth and athlete prowess of his camp counselor, Duane. “I wasn’t impressed by him, so much as I was impressed about how he could be a good athlete and also live out his faith in Christ. I saw a new direction I wanted to go. I was tired of being thought of a Christian, when really I was putting myself first and God way down the list. I saw an example of how a Christian lives out their life and can be an athlete too. I had a change of mind and wanted to turn from the way I have been living, to something else... the way I saw Duane living.”

Faith: “to trust, to (have) confidence in God”

“We began talking about the Bible all night in our cabin,” remembered Scot. “And out of that grew a new understanding of the Holy Spirit and a new confidence in God. I sensed He had a plan for my future. I had wanted to be an athlete, and I was being courted by what today we call Division 1 colleges. But all of that changed. All of my passions changed. I wasn’t as interested in sport, for now I confidence in
God’s handling of my future. Before I had been full of pride and doing what I wanted to. All of a sudden I wanted to do what Christ wanted me to do.”

*Conversion* to “turn around ... a change of mind ... (to turn) from something to something (else).” xliii

“I didn’t know if I wanted to be a pastor, a professor or a missionary” continued Scot. “I just knew I wanted to serve God, and not me. It happened the next day while sitting under an oak tree. No longer did I care about getting into a Division 1 school. Now I just wanted to serve God. I was ready to go where He called me.”

Scot McKnight grew up to become an author, professor and widely-recognized authority on the New Testament and conversion. Today his witty teaching style and probing insights guide students in his Religious Studies courses at North Park University in Chicago.

Waypoint Characteristics:

Waypoint 7 may be the most important, and misunderstood, juncture in the journey. Subsequently, the reader will notice some overlap with the previous chapter, and this is intentional. The intersection of the Holy Spirit with the human soul is so critical that this is best observed from several perspectives. Thus, to understand this event, it will be necessary to look at several aspects.

What Kind of Conversion Are We Talking About?

Conversion to Christianity. I will limit this present discussion to conversion to Christianity. There is an abundance of literature dealing with different types of conversion and the author is indebted to Richard Peace for classifying these varieties.xliv There are secular conversions, where a drug addict might be transformed from drug dependence to a drug-free lifestyle. There are manipulative conversions, where coercion is used by a cultxlv or a government.xlvi There is conversion between religious worldviews, for instance the conversion from Sikhism to Hinduism that is taking place in India. And, there is conversion from one Christian denomination to another, for instance when popular Catholic priest Rev. Alberto Cutie (nicknamed “Father Oprah”) converted to the US Episcopal denomination. Though all of these areas are of interest to scholars and researchers, we will limit this discussion to conversion to Christianity.

“To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, interior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.”

- William James
What is conversion?

A look at Church History reveals that there are a wide range of experiences, tempos and progressions associated with conversion. However, there are common characteristics and elements that run through all of these conversations. Philosopher William James best summed up these common aspects when he defined conversion as:

“To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, interior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.”

The Bible uses several Greek words to describe this conversion process. Each of these terms will help us more accurately understand conversion.

- **Epistrophe** is the most basic term, and means to “turn around … a change of mind … (to turn) from something to something (else).” Peace notes this is a “reversing direction and going the opposite way.”

- **Metanoia** often appears with epistrophe, and is the Greek word for repentance, which “conveys the idea of turning, but focuses on the inner, cognitive decision to make a break with the past.”

- **Pistis** is the Greek for “faith, trust, confidence in God” and conveys a reliance and assurance in God that can lead to conversion.

Combining these three terms is important to understanding the matrix of conversion. Peace sums this up stating, “Metanoia (repentance) must be combined with pistis (faith) in order to bring about epistrophe (conversion).”

How and When Does Conversion Occur?

Does conversion occur in a flash, with miraculous transformations and heavenly encounters? Does conversion take place over time? Or perhaps conversion is a stumbling process, where the conversionary experience takes place in what Richard Peace calls “fits and starts.” Richard Peace, Scot McKnight and others have looked at the New Testament record and conclude that the answer is “all of the above.” Let us look at three basic categories.

**Sudden Conversion.** Sometimes conversion takes place “in a flash … a sudden point-in-time transformation based on an encounter with Jesus.” This is the experience of Saul/Paul in Acts 9, and has become the standard way the evangelical church looks at conversion. At the altar sudden and dramatic responses are often expected, door-to-door visits lead to a “prayer of commitment,” and mass rallies end with an appeal to come forward for conversion. While this may be required to facilitate a person on the verge of a sudden conversionary experience, not all conversions happen in this manner. Psychologist Lewis Rambo, in an exhaustive look at religious conversion, concludes that “for the most part it (religious conversion) takes place over a period of time.” Thus, the evangelical church may
be limiting the number of wayfarers she can help by focusing too exclusively on sudden conversion.

Progressive Conversion.¹ ix A closer look at the Gospel of Mark reveals that Mark was describing a different, more gradual paradigm of conversion. As Peace notes: “What Mark sought to communicate in his Gospel was the process by which these twelve men gradually turned, over time, from their culturally derived understanding of Jesus as a great teacher to the amazing discovery that he was actually the Messiah who was the Son of God. In showing how the Twelve turned to Jesus, step-by-step, Mark was inviting his readers to undergo the same journey of conversion.”² lxii Peace concludes that “what happened to Paul, and what happened to the Twelve was identical in terms of theological understanding, though quite different experientially.”³ lxii

Scot McKnight describes how progressive conversion can take place in churches that practice infant baptism. McKnight states, “for many Christians conversion is a process of socialization,”⁴ lxii meaning that nurture is confirmed later by personal affirmation. For example, an infant baptism or an infant dedication can be seen as a public affirmation that the church community and parents will nurture that child (i.e. via spiritual socialization). After growing up in this environment of spiritual socialization and religious community, the grown child will be expected to ratify this effort via further instruction (i.e. catechism) and confirmation.

Liturgical Acts and Conversion. McKnight also notes that in some liturgical traditions, such as the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, while conversion is experienced, the sacraments are more involved. Thus, baptism, the Eucharist and “official rites of passage” are where conversionary experiences often take place for “liturgical converts.”⁵ lxiv There is nothing to preclude that God can use such spiritual rites as touchstone experiences where metanoia (repentance) is combined with pistis (faith) in order to bring about epistophe (conversion).

Signs of Travelers at Waypoint 7

Travelers at W7, the New Birth, are usually experiencing three growing yet competing feelings: metanoia (repentance), pistis (faith) and epistophe (conversion). Let us look at signs the traveler is wrestling with each.

Wrestling with repentance (metanoia). Travelers at W7 experience an inner, mental decision to make a break with their past. Mental gyrations are going on where memories of the positive attributes of the past are being superseded by visions of what an ideal future can contain. The traveler will often be vacillating between anticipation (of the future) and guilt (over the past). The church must be
prepared to gracefully and gradually help the traveler make sense of these polar forces and to focus on God’s design for their future.

Wrestling with faith (pistis). At this juncture travelers often feel a new inner certainty and confidence in God and His Good News. Sometimes Christians are taken back by such passionate belief. This may be especially hard to understand if the observer has experienced a liturgical or progressive conversion, and the traveler is experiencing a sudden conversion. And the converse is true, if a person experiences a progressive conversion then this can often mystify and confuse the sudden convert, because that has not been her or his experience. We will talk more about overcoming this confusion under Action 7.1: The Church Must Recognize That Conversion is a Mystical Matrix of Forces.

Wrestling with conversion (epistrophe). Travelers at Waypoint 7 are on the cusp of reversing course and setting about in a new direction. Phrases such as a new outlook, a new beginning or a new lease on life occur in their vocabulary. The traveler is encountering a powerful sensation that a new direction is warranted. But as noted above, this feeling can be lived out in a slow, sudden or even sacramental encounter. Regardless of the venue or the pace, the key to repentance is in William James’ words “...by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, interior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy.”

Actions That Help W7 Travelers

Actions 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 will deal with helping the traveler wrestle with repentance (metanoia), faith (pistis) and conversion (epistrophe).

Action 7.1: Helping Those Wrestling with Repentance (metanoia)

Repentance is the process of turning that focuses on the inner, cognitive decision to make a break with the past. Here the church assists the traveler through prayer, support and by getting out of the way and allowing the Holy Spirit to work. The church’s job is not to convict of sin, for that is the Holy Spirit’s role (John 16:8-9). Usually at this stage the traveler is so riddled with shame and guilt due to the Holy Spirit’s working, that any additional derision lumped on by the unaware Christian, can thwart the process.

Also the church must help the traveler see that others have experienced similar remorse for the past. And, the church must help the traveler see that Christ can create a new creature “and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, The Message).

At this waypoint the traveler is summing up all he or she has known of the past and is now comparing that to an emerging understanding of God’s future for their life. The reality of the past is now being compared to the hope of the future, and overcoming the concreteness of the past will take some support.
Action 7.2: Helping Those Wrestling with Faith (pistis)

At this waypoint the traveler is often in the final gestation of a faith development leading to conversion. Thus, the traveler will be inquisitive, confused and befuddled because they are growing in faith, trust and confidence in God.

The church can thus help the traveler at this waypoint see God’s promises as reflected in Scripture. The Scriptures are filled with examples of stories, poems and songs given to a people or person that was struggling with trusting God in the midst of calamity. I have often found that at this juncture Psalm 23 and its emphasis upon trust in calamity is appropriate, for it emphasizes the positive future of God’s assistance, even over the calamity of the present.

Action 7.3: Helping Those Wrestling with Conversion (epistophe)

Travelers at Waypoint 7 will be ready to experience a “turn around ... a change of mind ... (to turn) from something to something (else)”\textsuperscript{lxvi} (i.e. conversion, Greek \textit{epistophe}). The traveler will seek help in reversing direction and going the opposite way, and this may require significant effort by the church.

For example, the church may need to help an abused spouse find a new place to live, if that spouse is to reverse their direction and go in a direction away from an abusive relationship. Or a church may need to provide housing, counseling, a job, and a host of other assistance. While this type of ministry was described as a congregational action at Waypoints 14, 15 and 16, it must be offered again here. At the conversion stage, the traveler is making a lifestyle change along with their spiritual decision. The traveler is deciding to turn in a new direction, that will be of such radical nature that the traveler will need significant help to reverse course.

Action 7.4: Conversion Is a Mystical Matrix of Forces.

Many churches today focus on one of the three variations of conversion. McKnight says that “each is aligned with a major component of the church and each appears to be allergic to the others.”\textsuperscript{lxvii} Let us look briefly at each in Figure XX: A Comparative Look at Conversion.

Figure XX: A Comparative Look at Conversion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Conversion</th>
<th>Personal Decision</th>
<th>Socialization</th>
<th>Liturgical Acts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customary Context</strong></td>
<td><strong>Evangelicals,\textsuperscript{c e}</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mainline Protestants\textsuperscript{c e}</strong></td>
<td><strong>Roman Catholics,\textsuperscript{c e}</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denominational Context</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pentecostals\textsuperscript{c e}</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td>Radical departure from the past.</td>
<td>Point of conversion does not require a sordid past.</td>
<td>Mystery and encounter with the supernatural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
<td>In some studies</td>
<td>The work of</td>
<td>Liturgy has to be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
only 10 percent of these decisions “resulted in long-term changes in personal behavior.”
Mechanical tools can replace community.

conversion can “drift from the center of one’s ecclesiastical vision.”
Faith can become a matter of duty and obligation.

learned, as well as how to participate in it before conversion.

Adage
“Conversion is an individual experience that can be dated exactly.”
“Belonging before believing.”
“To arouse the sleeping faith in the nominal Christian.”

Customary participants.
Raised in a secular environment.
First generation Christians

Raised in a Christian home.
Second generation Christians

Second generation Christians

c. Scot McKnight, *Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels*.

As noted in this chapter, the New Testament and experience tells us that conversion takes place in several ways and with different cadences. Scot’s story that began this chapter mirrors many of the people I have met over the years, as well as this author’s personal experience. While it seems tidy to categorize into neat categories the different types of conversion, the Holy Spirit appears irked to behave in such categorical fashion. Scot’s experience was a combination of personal decision and socialization. For Scott, this was a culmination of three personal encounters (ages 5, 12 and 17). God had been connecting with Scot for some time via the influence of friends, family and the Holy Spirit.

*An Interview With Scot McKnight*
Author, speaker and Karl A. Olsson Professor in Religious Studies
at North Park University, Chicago, Illinois
Whitesel: Tell me about your story as it relates to a “turn around ... a change of mind ... (to turn) from something to something (else).”

McKnight: What awakened in me under that oak tree at age 17 was a devout and sincere passion to give my life to Christ. That was a radical change of mind for me. I was an athlete. Suddenly, I had no interest in that anymore. I wanted to go to Christian college and do theology. And, I didn’t know what I wanted to do, but it was something like a pastor, professor and missionary rolled into one.

Whitesel: Where there three parts to your conversion, one at age 5, another at age 12 at baptism and another at age 17 at camp?

McKnight: It was not so much three parts, but three segments of a journey. I look at my conversion at age 5 and 12 as a very typical decision as a child. But, when I was 17 I experienced an individuation of faith. For me it was an awakening of my faith as a result of an encounter with the Holy Spirit. I think conversion is an ongoing experience, and very much so for kids that grow up in Christian homes. I became a adult Christian that day underneath that oak tree. I accepted the implications of the Good News as an emerging adult. I was 17 years old, independent minded, and I became an adult at that moment. My life had meaning purpose, and new direction from now on.

Whitesel: Would you sum up your experience as conversion through socialization or conversion through personal decision?

McKnight: Both. You cannot get away from conversion as a process of socialization if you grow up in a Christian home. It is the combination of the personal decision and a socialization process. I didn't see what happened to me as a 17 year old as a decision to receive Christ. In my mind, I had already done that. This was a decision to let Christ have his way in my life.

Whitesel: What resulted?

McKnight: My experience at 17 was a conversion, a turning around, a change of mind from one way, to a new way. It was regenerating, purifying, and a complete change from the inside out. People who knew me saw dramatic changes in my life. I received new life at that point. It was the convergence of the decisions I made as a child. There were influences coming from my parents that were at work in me, which I've called conversion through socialization. But that was only part of it. There was also a personal decision at 17 too. It was all part of a unique, personalized and God-ward process.

Questions for Group and Personal Study

1. Was there a time when you had a significant non-religious change of mind accompanied by a mental decision to make a break with the past? When was this? What happened? Did it last?
2. Was there a time when you had a reversing of some non-religious actions and went in the opposite direction? Was there a significant turning from something to something else? When was this? What happened? Did it last?
3. Do you recall a time when you increased in your faith, trust and confidence in some person? How did your reliance and assurance in them change? When was this? What happened? Did it last?

4. Now answer from a religious point of view the following variations of Questions 1, 2 and 3:
   a. Was there a time when you had a significant religious change of mind accompanied by an inner, cognitive (i.e. mental) decision to make a break with the past? When was this? What happened? Did it last?
   b. Was there a time when you had a reversing of some spiritual actions and went in the opposite direction? Was there a significant turning from something to something else? When was this? What happened? Did it last?
   c. Do you recall a time when you increased in your faith, trust and confidence in God? How did your reliance and assurance in God change? When was this? What happened? Did it last?

5. Sharing your personal story can be a helpful to travelers at Waypoint 7. Write out in three (3) paragraphs your personal story of conversion. Use the following structure.
   a. Paragraph 1: Tell about how you mentally turned from your past and decided to make a break with the past (repentance).
   b. Paragraph 2: Tell about how you increased in faith, trust, confidence, reliance and/or assurance in God (faith).
   c. Paragraph 3: Tell about how you reversed direction and went in the opposite way.

Footnotes:

-xl John 3:7 (The Message)


Ibid.


Scot McKnight, Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels.


Donald Miller’s analysis of the results of crusade evangelism in the Harvest Crusades with evangelist Greg Laurie discovered that only about 10 percent of the decisions for Christ resulted in long-term changes in personal behavior (Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the new Millennium, Berkeley: University of Calif. Press, 1997), 171-172. However, Sterling Huston’s earlier research on the Billy Graham Crusades suggested the results were six times this (Sterling W. Huston, Crusade Evangelism and the Local Church [Minneapolis, Minn.: World Wide Publishing, 1984]). Whether these discrepancies were the result of tactics, cultures, samples or eras remains to be researched. The answer may lie somewhere in between. The ambiguity of these results begs further analysis by researchers.

Rambo, Understanding Religious Conversion, 165.

Charles Kraft introduced terminology to distinguish the different types of people that experience sudden conversion or progressive conversion. On the on hand, Kraft saw people who undergo radical and sudden conversion as usually “first generation Christians” who previously had only been moderately influenced by Christian principles. On the other hand, Kraft saw “second-generation Christians” as those who were raised in Christian homes and in which “there may be little or no behavioral change evident as a result of the conscious decision to personally affirm one’s commitment to the Christian community in which one has been practicing since birth” (Charles Kraft, Christian Conversion As A Dynamic Process,” International Christian Broadcasters Bulletin, 8.) While the terms “first” and “second generation Christians” have been widely used, these terms cause some problems. First, Paul’s conversion was certainly radical and sudden (Acts 9), yet he had been practicing a devout lifestyle (Acts 23:6), so in Kraft’s paradigm he should have had a more
progressive experience. In addition, McKnight’s story does not fit with Kraft’s paradigm, for in the interview that concludes this chapter McKnight states that he underwent a radical behavioral change in a progressive sequence. Thus, the value of Kraft’s insights may be that there are numerous ways that conversion is encountered and that whether a person is a first- or second-generation Christian has some, though limited, affect. Instead, the emphasis should be upon the fluid role of the Holy Spirit in individualizing conversion to each traveler, for as John 3:7 states, “So don’t be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be 'born from above'—out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it's headed next. That's the way it is with everyone 'born from above' by the wind of God, the Spirit of God” (The Message).

lxI Ibid., 10. Some may argue that progressive conversion as described in Mark was necessitated because the Holy spirit had not yet been given at the Day of Pentecost. While this is a valid critique, Lewis Rambo’s research suggesting that most conversion is progressive (Rambo, Understanding Religious Conversion, 165) may indicate that both examples are valid.

lxIII Scot McKnight, Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels, 5.
lxIV Ibid., 7.
lxVII Scot McKnight, Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels, 1.
AFTERWORD:
ARRIVAL ...AND BACK AGAIN

“Anyone who sets himself up as ‘religious’ by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.”
-James 1:26-27 (The Message)

As the reader has noticed, the journey of the Good News never ends, it just leads to more responsibility. Successfully traversing a waypoint only affords the trekker an opportunity to help others navigate that same waypoint. My friends and colleagues have contributed their personal stories for this purpose.

A companion book:
WAYPOINTS: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey
by Bob Whitesel

To provide a clearer map of this route I have written an important companion book titled: Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey (The Wesleyan Publishing House, 2010). The companion volume is designed to help the person who is presently struggling with the obstacles, challenges and detours of this spiritual road. This companion book is for non-Christians, new-Christians and Christian-leaders alike. If you know of someone on this journey, Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey is the roadmap they have been seeking.

THE WAYPOINTS COURSE
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Additionally, to help people come together and traverse this route, I have written a 17-week course that can be used in Sunday School classes, home groups, Bible studies, small groups, leadership committees and home fellowships. The companion book, Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey, provides an agenda for each of the 17-weeks. In this course travelers will share their experiences, help others, make an impact on their community. Weekly agendas of the WAYPOINTS COURSE are included in the companion book: Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey.

For more information on either the companion book or the course see: www.Waypoints-Book.com