

RECAP OF THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER

This chapter we will look at “how” an uncommon church fosters newness. In the previous chapter we looked at “why” this newness is important, discovering that:

- God:
 - loves his offspring,
 - wants to restore his relationship with them
 - and desires to meet their physical *and* spiritual needs.
- One of humanity’s most widespread needs is for a physical *and* spiritual change (this has been described as conversion, being born again, being saved spiritual/physical transformation and/or emergence of new people).
- God has made it clear that only through Jesus Christ can such a complete transformation take place.
- Turning from our wrong actions (repentance), knowing that with Jesus Christ’s power we can change (faith) and then going in a new direction

with God's help (spiritual/physical transformation) is God's desire for every person.

- God designed the church to explain this Good News.
- God designed the church to welcome this transformation.
- Spiritual and physical transformation is the *pivot point* for the uncommon church (balancing the other three cures).

Therefore, let us look at "how" an uncommon church fosters *spiritual* and *physical transformation*.

SITTIN' ON THE DOORSTEP WITH JERRY

"I know how to survive in the streets," Jerry told me. "It's here among Christians that I was not at home." Jerry had been the manager of a local grocery until the store was purchased by a large chain and Jerry's job eliminated. Financial problems and a divorce soon sent Jerry from the church he had attended since a youth. "I grew up in that church," Jerry recalled. "But my ex-wife and kids go there, and I wanted to give them some space." And so began Jerry's church shopping that now was at an end.

As we sat on a doorstep on a gritty urban street Jerry opened up about the spiritual journey that brought him there. "When I left that church I grew up in," Jerry continued, "I started attending Main Street Church a few blocks north. It was an old, established church and I figured they would have ministries that could help me deal with my marital problems and get me a job too. It sure didn't happen." Jerry continued to tell of a church that seemed more concerned about his bad habits than his soul. "I always felt guilty around them. And, they were pretty good about reminding me of my faults. I guess they had a reason for treating me that way. I was still doing some pretty bad things and that really riled them up. I'm not even sure I was a Christian back then. I guess I needed to change, really change like I'd never changed before. I was just trying to find people that would give me the time and the help to make it happen."

Jerry's next stop was Trinity Church. "At Trinity, they helped me find housing, got me a job interview and even gave me a suit to wear to it. I'd say they helped up to a point." "Up to what point?" I asked. "The point to where I needed to change more than just on the outside. I had a part-time job, an acceptable place to live, but I really needed a whole new start. I needed to understand my relationship with God. I needed to ask Him to forgive me. Ask him what he wanted me to do with my life. Ask him to help me overcome the addictions that I couldn't overcome myself." "Did you ask Him?" I interjected. "I asked them, the church leaders, but they said that was really between me and God. I remember the pastor saying, 'Jerry, you've got to decide for yourself what you believe about God. What I believe may not be what you need to believe.' I was more confused than ever," summarized Jerry.

"So, I kept visiting churches, because I needed to find people that were reconnecting to God and who could show me the way." Jerry visited church after

church, until at last he found a Christian community that seemed balanced in its focus on helping him physically *and* spiritually.

“They told me they understood where I was coming from. They didn’t rush me, but made me feel like I could be a part of their fellowship as long as I continued to grow in my understanding. It really came together when they told me about a road to Jesus. A ‘Roman Road’ they called it. I became a new Jerry not long after. And, people say they can see it, too. But, it didn’t stop there, those people stuck with me. I had some setbacks, but a group of them kept helping me get my life back on course. I guess they traveled the road with me.”

With that, Jerry disappeared up the steps into the front door of a fellowship that had become his new spiritual family. This community of Christians had helped him get back on his feet financially *and* spiritually. I looked up at the sign above the door and realized that the Salvation Army continues to provide a good example for the uncommon church, for the Salvation Army does good work the common church misses or overlooks. As Jerry disappeared up the stairs, I whispered a prayer “Lord, please make more churches like the Salvation Army, ready to stick with people like Jerry so they can become healthy physically and spiritually.”

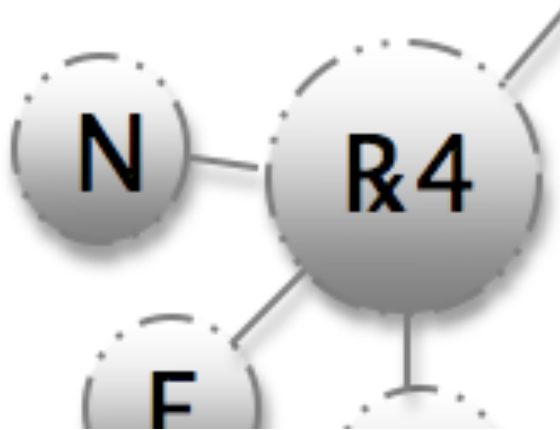
CONCLUSIONS **R_x4** FOR THE COMMON CHURCH = GROW N.E.W.

R_x4 for the common church = Grow N.E.W. With this final cure, as in all the cures in this book, the prescriptions spell out the name of the cure:

CUR_xE **N**: **N**on-judgmental atmosphere.

CUR_xE **E**: **E**xplore the newness the person craves.

CUR_xE **W**: **W**alk the bridge to newness with them.



CUR_xE N =
NON-JUDGEMENTAL
ATMOSPHERE

Who Judges?

Everyone has a natural tendency to analyze the actions of others. And, this tendency to judge can come from a good reason, such as a desire to help others overcome their faults and avoid pitfalls. Whether it be a parent trying to guide a teenager away from temptation, or a seasoned Christian trying to help a fledgling new churchgoer, judging actions and offering advice can be helpful.

But judging can be harmful too, especially if it is insensitive or comes from someone who does not have a relationship with the person receiving the advice. Too often in our churches this is the case. We so desperately want to help new churchgoers that we pepper them with cursory advice from people they don't yet know. This was the problem that Jerry encountered at Main Street Church.

Does the Church Judge?

Religious people know a person's eternal destiny hangs in the balance. Subsequently, religious people tend to create laws and regulations in hopes of keeping errant disciples from going astray. There is nothing wrong with the motivation, but when executed through an impersonal system of laws and rules, judging can actually drive people away. People need guidelines, but they also need those guidelines to be explained by a mentor who they can trust and question.

During Jesus' time a judgmental atmosphere had plagued Judaism for many years. Religious leaders had created an impersonal system of rules that went far beyond the laws God had put forth in the Old Testament. Not surprisingly, Jesus had some of his harshest criticism for the judgmental attitude of the religious community, saying:

“Two people went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself with these words, ‘God, I thank you that I’m not like everyone else—crooks, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of everything I receive.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He wouldn’t even lift his eyes to look toward heaven. Rather, he struck his chest and said, ‘God, show mercy to me, a sinner.’ I tell you, this person went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up.” *Luke 18:10-14*

Why a Mentor Judges

But as we saw in the beginning of this chapter, judging for the right reasons and in the right manner can be helpful. It can help a person see that what they are doing is harmful to their physical and spiritual lives. Paul writing to Timothy reminds him that training, correction and even censure have an important place in a Christian community. Paul stated: “Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good” 2 *Timothy 3:16*.

Paul had a close, almost father-son relationship with Timothy. Paul was a mentor to Timothy, and Timothy would have understood Paul’s admonition in light of Paul’s model of close personal mentoring. Let’s look at some ideas below for creating a non-judgmental climate of mentorship in your church.

Fostering a Non-judgmental Church Climate

Welcoming Spiritual Travelers

What should we call these people who seek to make sense out of their lives? They are often non-churchgoers, but this only describes their actions. Deep inside there is something more motivating them. They have an inner urge to seek stability and meaning in their lives.

Some authors call them “spiritual seekers,” but many seekers many not yet know there is a spiritual component to their quest and the term seems pejorative. Plus, they may only be seeking physical change. Historically they have been called “spiritual pilgrims,” but in North America this brings up images of early American colonists.

Therefore, I shall just describe them as “spiritual travelers,” for they are on a spiritual quest, seeking answers to their spiritual and physical needs from new friends and mentors. The key here is for the uncommon church to become aware of those who are in such quests and to be prepared to help them in their journey.

Allow Mentors to Show Mistakes

Too often it is the casual observer who feels beckoned to correct and censure such new churchgoing persons. Even when such advice is valid, it may fail to be received when it comes from a person without a personal and trusted relationship. And so, the uncommon church will have structures in place to help spiritual travelers quickly connect with a mentor who can then “show mistakes” to the seeker via a trusted, ongoing relationship.ⁱ

Figure 8.1 lists ideas that churches have used to connect newly transformed people to a mentor and a discipleship group.

Figure 8.1 Ideas for Establishing Mentor-mentee Relationships

Spiritual traveler sponsors	These are mature Christians who agree to “sponsor” (i.e. mentor) new churchgoers. The sponsor is usually someone who has a similar lifestyle to the spiritual traveler in culture. ⁱⁱ
Spiritual traveler small groups	These are small groups focused around the needs of new churchgoers. Led by two or more mature Christians, this group allows open questions about faith, history and needs. I have used a model that includes a five-week seeker’s class that continually restarts at the end of five weeks allowing non-churchgoers to jump in at any time. ⁱⁱⁱ
Spiritual traveler retreats	This involves a retreat weekend where new churchgoers are invited along with mature Christians to begin to foster either a mentor-mentee relationship or connect them to a small group.
Spiritual travelers invited to social “clusters” of 3-5 small groups	Mike Breen, the former rector of one of England’s fastest growing churches, found that once a month combining 3-5 small groups into a social gathering, often allowed spiritual travelers and potential mentors to get to know each other in a causal environment. They call these gatherings of 3-5 small groups “clusters.” ^{iv} Sometimes called “Matthew’s Parties” after the gathering the tax gather Matthew threw for his friends, this clustering allows spiritual travelers to experience people from 3-5 small groups at a time and connect to the small discipleship group that is right for them.

But, it is also important to remember that a mentor is not afraid to delicately, but decisively address character issues. Mentors must take their duty seriously. Accountability does not arise if the mentor is shy, timid or intimidated. Remember, *1 Timothy 3:16* states, “Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training in character...”

Allow messy people in your church

The late Mike Yaconelli penned an insightful book with the unlikely title, *Messy Spirituality*.^v In this book he stressed that because the church is a place where

hurting people come to be helped, we should expect the church to have some messiness, scruffiness and untidiness in its atmosphere and in the behavior of its people.

I remember visiting an inner-city ministry center that was having a positive impact upon its urban neighbors. I also noticed cigarette ash-trays outside the front doors, and a disheveled group of men welcoming people into the auditorium. Later that day I visited another church a few blocks away that was declining. I noticed their well-manicured lawn and well-kept church façade and how this contrasted with the gritty and growing urban ministry center just blocks away. The congregants of the tidy church wondered why urban residents who visited their pristine facility usually left in a few weeks. One member of the tidy church said to me, "I guess we expect cleaned-up Christians to visit us in search of help, but really in this area it is like Jesus said, 'send me the poor, the lame, the blind...'"

The verse wasn't quoted exactly by my friend, but the meaning was correct. In contrast to the religion of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus was emphasizing that Christian community was to be a place where hurting people felt at ease and authentically welcomed, when he stated

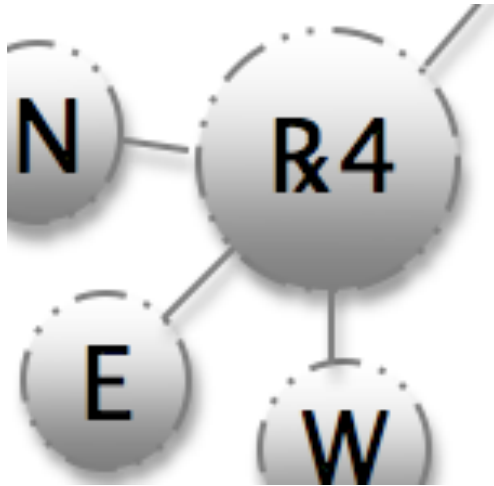
"When you host a lunch or dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers and sisters, your relatives, or rich neighbors. If you do, they will invite you in return and that will be your reward. Instead, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. And you will be blessed because they can't repay you. Instead, you will be repaid when the just are resurrected." *Luke 14:13*

Therefore, the uncommon church is a place where people who are recently separated from their old way of life may for a while, still be hanging onto bad habits, bad language, bad behaviors and general spiritual untidiness. Certainly, destructive behaviors and harmful attitudes should be addressed by mentors, but they also must be expected by all.



For More Information Read:

- *Appendix 8:A: How Non-churchgoing Spiritual Travelers Enter The Mentor-Mentee Cycle.*



CUR_xE E = EXPLORE THE NEWNESS THE PERSON CRAVES

Discovering What Newness a Person Needs

In *Chapter 2* we looked at “how” the uncommon church goes out to discover and meet the needs of people outside of the church.^{vi} But our need-meeting does not end in just the first cure, for it plays a key role in this cure too. In fact, identifying the change needed and then showing how Christ can meet that need is even more critical.^{vii} Here is why.

People usually sense a need for change immediately prior to the point of spiritual transformation. They feel something in their life is not right and they want to change it. Usually they have tried to change it themselves, but have been powerless to do so. It can be an addiction, destructive habits, egoism, insensitivity, lonesomeness, and a host of other maladies. Before spiritual and physical transformation there is usually a realization that one is not satisfied with one’s life and she/he wants to change it. This can involve several areas, including the following:

1. *Problems with self-image.* This means a person considering spiritual transformation is usually unhappy and dissatisfied with how one has come to be viewed by others. He/she may be profane (using sexualized and/or bigoted language), insensitive (to family and children), dishonest (a compulsive liar), prejudiced, having low self-esteem, self-loathing, etc.
2. *Problems with uncontrolled behavior.* Here a person has a habit, reaction, addiction and/or compulsion that one is unable to control. It can be addiction to sexuality, destructive behavior, substance abuse and a host of other compulsions.
3. *Problems with relationships.* These are interpersonal problems that arise from damaged or flawed relationships. People often feel they need supernatural intervention to restore such relationships. And, the Bible is full of examples of God supernaturally bringing this about, including the remarkable story of how God reunited an outcast named Joseph with the brothers who had tried to kill him (*Gen. 37-50*).

4. *Problem with spiritual destiny.* Most people also feel an acute sense of hopelessness and/or lostness about why they have been created and where their destiny lies. This problem usually occurs with the above problems too. This is the most common newness that humans yearn for. Humans crave to understand why they were born, what is their purpose and where their destiny lies.

To meet these yearnings for newness, God replies, “I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the LORD ; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope. When you call me and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. When you search for me, yes, search for me with all your heart, you will find me.” *Jer. 29:13.*

Crises and Need for Transformation

Researchers^{viii} have long understood that people usually seek change in their life while going through a crisis.^{ix} *Figure 8.2* shows how different crises create varying degrees of a need to change.^x The more severe crises (listed toward the top of the left column) create more motivation to change. Therefore, to help people change, an uncommon congregation will seek to first understand what crises a person is going through and what change she or he needs.^{xi}

The middle column of *Figure 8.2* offers questions they may be asking and in the right column are suggestions for meeting their needs. But, this scale is not a definite list of need-based miniseries, but rather a guide toward helping Christians find and meet the spiritual newness a person craves.

Figure 8.2 Crises and Need-meeting Ministries

<i>Crisis</i> <i>that foster a desire for change</i> <i>(most serve at the top)</i>	<i>Questions</i> <i>being asked</i>	<i>Need-meeting</i> <i>ministries</i>
1. Death of a spouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they go to heaven? • What will I do now? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grief-recovery group/course • Course/study on refocusing life
2. Divorce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did my behavior contribute? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divorce recovery group/course
3. Marital separation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I prevent divorce? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course/group on marriage
4. Jail term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will others say? • Who will help with my behavior? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion route for ex-offenders • Addiction recovery groups
5. Family member death	<i>(see death of a spouse above)</i>	
6. Personal injury /illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will I pay my bills? • Can God heal me? • Who will help me through this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benevolence program • Parish-nurse program • Prayer/healing opportunities
7. Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we truly compatible? • What kind of social environment will keep my marriage strong? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly married group/course • Marriage enrichment groups • Marital counseling ministry
8. Fired from work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I find a new job? • How will I pay the bills? • Who will help me w/ new skills? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume writing course • Job-placement counseling • Benevolence program
9. Marital		

reconciliation	(see <i>divorce & separation</i> above)	
10. Retirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does God has in store for me? • Does my life still matter? • What should I do with my time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second-career programs that help retirees enter the ministry. • Mentoring programs comprised of seniors.
11. Change in family member's health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why does God allow suffering? • How can I help a sufferer? • Is there a purpose in suffering? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course/group on problem of pain. • Course/group on grief recovery.
12. Pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will help raise my child? • Is abortion ethical? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for new mothers • Adoption options
13. Sex difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I unattractive to my spouse? (see <i>divorce & separation</i> above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course/group on self-image (see <i>divorce & separation</i> above)
14. Addition to family	(see <i>pregnancy</i> above)	
15. Business readjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I support my family? • How will I stretch my budget? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job skill training • Course/group on finances
16. Financial status change	(see <i>business readjustment</i> above)	
17. Death of close friend	(see <i>death of a spouse</i> above)	
18. Number of marital arguments changes	(see <i>divorce & separation</i> above)	
19. Mortgage or loan over \$75,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will I pay for this? • Is this good stewardship? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget planning class/course • Financial seminar/course
20. Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	(see <i>\$75k + mortgage or loan</i> above)	
21. Change in work responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I get along w/ a new boss? • How do I take on these new responsibilities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring by those w/ good business relationships • Course/study on ethical decision making
22. Son or daughter leaving home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will I do with my time? • How will my child do? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministries for empty-nesters • Small groups for empty-nesters
23. Trouble with In-laws	See <i>divorce & separation</i> above	
24. Outstanding personal achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will this success change me? • What are my obligations to God? • What platform does this give me? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group/course on servant leadership • Christian ethics in business
25. Spouse starts work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we raise our kids? • Will we still spend time together? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-wage earner Course/group • (see <i>divorce & separation</i> above)

Such crises, which send the spiritual traveler seeking change, can overwhelm the traveler and the a navigator, unless both consider that God may have a purpose in the crisis. God often uses such difficulties to get our attention about the importance of renewing our relationship with him. Here is how Paul describes it:

“Distress that drives us to God does that. It turns us around. It gets us back in the way of salvation. We never regret that kind of pain. But those who let distress drive them away from God are full of regrets, end up on a deathbed of regrets.” *2 Cor. 7:10* (MSG)

Discovering the Needs of Others

If God intends spiritual reconnection to be a reaction to crises, then how do we help people in the midst of crisis? And, how do we know exactly which crises they are experiencing? There are two natural and organic ways to help those in crisis.

1. *Be a friend.* Becoming a friend and traveling along with a person on his/her spiritual journey in the role of a companion is the first and most beneficial step. Though we may also become one's mentor, guide and navigator; this process begins with being a friend. *Proverbs 17:17* reminds us that friends reflect God's love, stating "Friends love all the time..."
2. *Ask.* After a friendship has begun, at some point you just have to ask about the crises a friend is going through. Sometimes crises are so personal and/or unsavory that people are reluctant to share them even with a friend. John Wesley saw this problem and suggested questions for the small group meetings that would draw out people's needs (for more on Wesley see *Chapter 4*). *Figure 8.3* lists ideas for discussion starters among friends, some adapted from Wesley's questions.

Figure 8.3 Questions for Discovering the Needs of Spiritual Travelers^{xii}

3.

These questions should be asked with discretion. Many are variations of the questions John Wesley suggested. Remember, do not be judgmental and do not use these questions verbatim; rather use them as idea generators:

- Do you have peace with God?
- How is God dealing with you lately?
- How do you feel about God? How do you think God feels about you?
- Is there some thought or behavior that has dominion over you?
- Is there something in your life you wish to change, but have been powerless to do so?
- What faults are you struggling with?
- What secrets are you holding that you need to share among friends?
- What things do you do, about which your conscience feels uneasy?
- What do you want to say to God about the pain in your life?
- When is life flowing out of you?
- When is life flowing into you?

Discovering the Needs for Newness

From the above discussion it is clear that starting new ministries to meet the transformation needs of others is critical. To decide which need-meeting ministry in the right column of *Figure 8.2* you should launch, use the questions in *Figure 8.3* and discretely ask the following three steps of those seeking newness.

1. *Conduct a confidential poll of new churchgoers' needs for newness.* This can be done discretely by an online survey with a confidentiality feature.

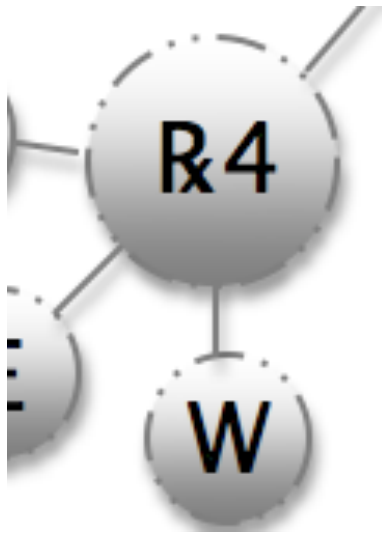
Ask the *Questions for Discovering New Churchgoers' Needs* (Figure 8.4) of people who have started attending your church in the last 18 months.

Figure 8.4 *Questions for Discovering New Churchgoers' Needs*

These are confidential questions. Please be as candid and straightforward as possible. Thank you.

1. When you started attending our church, what was it that made you want to attend church?
2. What expectations of our church did you have that we have not yet met?
3. With God's help, what do you want your life to look like two years from now?
4. If you could change your life, which change would you start with first?

2. *Match new churchgoers' needs to new ministries.* Go back to Figure 2.8 in Chapter 2. This figure show you how to draw up a list of ministries that can meet the needs of spiritual travelers.
3. Annually return to your survey of spiritual travelers and adjust your ministries accordingly (we will talk more about this in Chapter 9 where we look at an annual "checkup" that revisits the 4 Cures for the common church).



CUR_xE W =
WALK THE BRIDGE TO NEWNESS
WITH THEM

The Bridge To the Eternal Cure

The final letter in the last cure is the most momentous. Here, two things are happening to the person in spiritual and physical crisis:

1. At this point they realize that only God, the one who created them, can effectively and enduringly meet their needs.
2. They also feel that their relationship with God is estranged, because they have ignored him for so long.

The Good News is that though our misdeeds separate us from God, he has created a bridge back to a restored relationship with himself. There are four aspects to this restored friendship (which *The Message Bible* brings out nicely).

1. *Your heavenly Father wants a close personal friendship with you.*

- “He makes the creatures; the creatures don't make him. Starting from scratch, he made the entire human race and made the earth hospitable, with plenty of time and space for living so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually find him. He doesn't play hide-and-seek with us. He's not remote; he's near. We live and move in him, can't get away from him!” *Acts 17:25-28* (MSG)
- “What's the price of a pet canary? Some loose change, right? And God cares what happens to it even more than you do. He pays even greater attention to you, down to the last detail—even numbering the hairs on your head!” *Matthew 10:29-30* (MSG).

2. *There is a rift in your relationship with this loving heavenly Father.*

- “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* (MSG)
- “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* (MSG)

3. *Your Heavenly Father sent his only son Jesus to provide the only bridge back.*

- “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* (MSG)
- “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.” *John 3:16* (MSG).

- And Jesus stated, "I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of." *John 10:10* (MSG)
- "Jesus said, 'I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me.'" *John 14:6-7* (MSG).

4. *You must accept the bridge God built and travel across it.*

- The jailer ... asked, "Sirs, what do I have to do to be saved, to really live?" They said, "Put your entire trust in the Master Jesus. Then you'll live as you were meant to live..." *Acts 16:31* (MSG).
- "That's salvation. With your whole being you embrace God setting things right, and then you say it, right out loud: "God has set everything right between him and me!" *Romans 10:10* (MSG)
- "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 2:8-9* (MSG).
- "A whole, healed, put-together life right now, with more and more of life on the way! ... God's gift is real life, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master." *Romans 6:23* (MSG).

The importance of walking the bridge with them.

The uncommon church will foster an environment where helping others navigate this bridge is the norm. Therefore, the uncommon church walks this bridge with others, not retracing their own steps again but walking alongside helping, answering questions and encouraging others as they cross a bridge between natural and supernatural living. A verse that reminds us of the magnitude of the newness and we represent God in it, can be found in *2 Cor. 5:17-19*:

"... 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! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives." (MSG).

Everyone Must Learn At Least One of the Bridge Stories

And so, as Christ's representatives we need to tell how God gave His Son to provide a bridge back to himself. I have found that in many growing churches almost all congregants know how to explain the story of Jesus' bridge.

Thus, the last key toward helping others navigate the bridge back to a restored friendship with God, is to have a congregation that can explain God's biblical bridge. Sometimes called "the plan of salvation" these are simple memory devices that the majority of all attendees in the uncommon church must know if we are to fulfill Paul's admonition in *2 Cor. 5:19* that, "God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives." (MSG). Here are three of the most common explanations of that bridge:

The Four Spiritual Laws^{xiii}

1. *God loves you and created you to know Him personally* (John 3:16, John 17:3).
2. *Humans are sinful and separated from God, so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love* (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23)
3. *Jesus Christ is God's only provision for human sin.* Through Him alone we can know God personally and experience God's love (Romans 5:8, 1 Corinthians 15:3-6, John 14:6).
4. *We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord;* then we can know God personally and experience His love (John 1:12, Ephesians 2:8-9, Revelation 3:20).

The Romans Road^{xiv} (to aid in memorization it employs the metaphor of a Roman thoroughfare):

1. *Romans 3:23, "All have sinned and fall short of God's glory."* (Everyone needs salvation because we have all sinned.)
2. *Romans 6:23, "The wages that sin pays are death, but God's gift is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (The price or consequence of sin is death.)
3. *Romans 5:8, "But God shows his love for us, because while we were still sinners Christ died for us."* (Jesus Christ died for our sins. He paid the price for our death.)
4. *Romans 10:9, "Trusting with the heart leads to righteousness, and confessing with the mouth leads to salvation."* (We openly declare that we receive salvation and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.)
5. *Romans 5:1, "Therefore, since we have been made righteous through his faithfulness combined with our faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Salvation

through Jesus Christ brings us back into a relationship of peace with God.)

Steps to Peace with God^{xv} (using phrases^{xvi} from *John 3:16* as a memory tool):

1. *For God so loved the world*: “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” *Jeremiah 31:3*
2. *That He gave His only Son*: “While we were sinners, Christ died for us.” *Romans 5:8*
3. *That whoever believes in Him*: “I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?” *Jeremiah 32:27*
4. *Should not perish*: “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” *John 10:28*
5. *But have everlasting life*: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” *Acts 16:31*

So pick an explanation that works for you. But, hold one another accountable to be able to explain at least one route, for *1 Peter 3:15-18* urges:

Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you're living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy. Keep a clear conscience before God so that when people throw mud at you, none of it will stick. They'll end up realizing that they're the ones who need a bath. It's better to suffer for doing good, if that's what God wants, than to be punished for doing bad. That's what Christ did definitively: suffered because of others' sins, the Righteous One for the unrighteous ones. He went through it all—was put to death and then made alive—to bring us to God. (MSG)

CONCLUSIONS: **R_x4** FOR THE COMMON CHURCH = GROW N.E.W.

That's the cure! But *R_x 4* is the most vital, because it grows *new* lives, *new* hope and *new* futures. The way the uncommon church fosters this is by N.E.W.:

CUR_xE **N**: **N**on-judgmental atmosphere.

CUR_xE **E**: **E**xplore the newness the person craves.

CUR_xE **W**: **W**alk the bridge with them.

Remember, there are four remedies in all, so don't just focus on this chapter. But also keep in mind that this chapter helps people experience the newness that only God can bestow through His son Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP AND PERSONAL REFLECTION

CUR_xE N = NON-JUDGMENTAL ATMOSPHERE

QUESTION 1: WHO HAS PERSONALLY INFLUENCED YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE FOR THE BETTER? HAVE YOU RECRIPROCATED, BY HELPING SOMEONE ELSE IN THE SAME WAY?

Remember, creating a mentoring environment can offset a natural tendency of people to be judgmental. Though mentoring is a lost art in many churches, it still goes on informally in most congregations. Therefore, discover who are potential spiritual mentors and look into how you can organize their ministry by considering these idea starters:

- Who do most people in our church recognize as spiritual mentors?
- What can I (we) do to connect people struggling with their faith to one of these spiritual mentors?
- What would a “job description” for a spiritual mentor look like? (List five things a spiritual mentor should do, and three things they should not do.)

Discuss with others what a ministry that connects spiritual travelers to spiritual mentors would look like. Put together a plan to implement this plan in the next 60 days.

CUR_xE E = EXPLORE THE NEWNESS THE PERSON CRAVES

QUESTION 2: USE *FIGURE 8.3* TO ASK TWO NON-CHURCHGOING FRIENDS A FEW OF THE QUESTIONS FROM THIS LIST. WHAT DID YOU DISCOVER ABOUT THEIR SPIRITUAL NEEDS?

Begin by listing the spiritual needs you uncovered.

- Which were the most prevalent spiritual needs?
- Which of these could your church address?

Develop a plan for a new ministry your church could offer over the next two months that would meet one of these spiritual needs.

CUR_xE W =

WALK THE BRIDGE TO NEWNESS WITH THEM

QUESTION 3: WRITE DOWN IN ONE PARAGRAPH HOW YOU WOULD EXPLAIN TO A NON-CHURCHGOER THE PLAN OF SALVATION. (Do not use any helps to do this, i.e. do not consult the various “plans of salvation” discussed elsewhere or in this chapter.)

After you have answered question 3, then:

- Consult the plans of salvation in this chapter and elsewhere. What parts of the plan were you missing or weak at addressing?
- Rewrite your personal plan after getting input from others and from the Bible.
- Memorize this plan and share it with a churchgoing friend. Are there parts still missing or underemphasized?
- Create an explanation of the plan of salvation which is biblically faithful and personalized to your experience. Commit this to memory and once a week, restate this plan in your devotional times. Ask God and others to show you ways to better communicate it.

Endnotes:

ⁱ Greek scholar I. H. Marshall offers a literal and comprehensive translation of the Greek of *2 Timothy 3:16*, saying the mentor’s duty is in “getting a person to realize that they have done wrong... (with) correction, restoration, improvement...(via) instruction, education,’ with a strong element of discipline and correction.” *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: T & T Clark International, 1999), p. 795.

ⁱⁱ I have listed discussion starters that can connect sponsors to spiritual travelers in “Fifteen Minutes that Will Change The World,” Bob Whitesel and Kent R. Hunter, *A House Divided: Bridging the Generation Gaps in Your Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), pp. 179-183.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bob Whitesel and Kent R. Hunter, “Fifteen Minutes that Will Change The World,” *A House Divided: Bridging the Generation Gaps in Your Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), pp. 181-184.

^{iv} Mike Breen, personal conversation, Sheffield, United Kingdom, June 10, 2009.

^v Mike Yaconelli, *Messy Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002).

^{vi} In *Chapters 2* and *3* we discussed meeting needs of those outside of the church and focused on acts of kindness, helping stabilize their lives, overcoming poverty and injustice, etc.. Now at the point of transformation the needs are more deep-seated, entrenched and far-reaching. The Holmes-Rahe Social Readjustment Scale in *Figure 8.1* explains why.

^{vii} Spiritual transformation can be easily derailed if meeting the need for change in an individual is overlooked.

^{viii} This adaption of the Holmes and Rahe Readjustment Scale with the explanation of how varying crises affect a craving for spiritual transformation is based upon Flavil Yeakley's Ph.D. research at the University of Illinois (Flavil R. Yeakley, *Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the School of Communication* [Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, 1976]).

^{ix} Usually people are seeking an explanation for the change (such as when a loved one dies) or they are seeking a sense of stability (as when going through a divorce, or a child leaving for college).

^x Researchers Holmes and Rahe listed these crisis in their order of severity (with the most severe at the top of their list). See T. H. Holmes and R. H. Rahe, "The Social Readjustment Rating Scale," *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* (Waltham, MA: Elsevier, 1967), Vol. 11, pp. 213-218. It is interesting to note that some research on seminary students involved in ministry found that while a score over 300 is considered "critically high," that the average score for seminarians was 348 (Gary L. Harbaugh and Evan Rogers, "Pastoral Burnout: A View from the Seminary" *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, [Decatur, GA: 1984], Vol XXXVIII, No. 2, p. 102). This tells us that seminarians also have high levels of stress, that while most may not lead to a new spiritual transformation, many of these stressors may lead to physical transformation such as leaving the ministry, severing personal relationships, or changing churches/denominations. Today's seminary must be familiar with the consequence of these stressors, and thus seminaries should offer courses, small groups, etc. to help seminarians deal with increased stressors while in seminary.

^{xi} Flavil Yeakley discovered that crises as defined in the Holmes-Rahe Scale often send people to religion in search of assistance in meeting these emerging personal problems (Flavil R. Yeakley, *Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the School of Communication* [Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, 1976]).

^{xii} c.f. D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meetings: a Model for Making Disciples* (Springfield, MO: Evangel Publishing House, 1997), pp. 118-119 and Joel Comiskey, "Wesley's Small Group Organization," extracted with permission from Joel Comiskey, *History of the Cell Movement: A Ph.D. Tutorial Presented to Dr. Paul Pierson*; <http://www.joelcomiskeygroup.com/articles/tutorials/cellHistory-1.html> and Elaine Heath, address to The Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education, Chicago, IL, June 16, 2011.

^{xiii} The "Four Spiritual Laws" was originally conceived by Campus Crusade founder Bill Bright (<http://campuscrusade.com/fourlawseng.htm>) but the original version seemed to build upon people's more self-centered desire for attaining God's plan for their lives. While this is certainly valid, an alternative version is quoted here (c.f. <http://www.4laws.com/laws/englishkgp>) because it better emphasizes the *missio Dei* (i.e. God's desire to be reunited with his wayward offspring).

^{xiv} Additional verses in *Romans* that provide further insights for each one of these steps (along with ideas for sermons, Bible studies and teaching tools) that will help congregants remember the "Romans Road" can be found at <http://www.gotquestions.org/Romans-road-salvation.html> ,

<http://theromanroad.org> , and

<http://christianity.about.com/od/conversion/qt/romansroad.htm>

^{xv} *Steps To Peace With God* was developed by the Billy Graham organization. It supports this presentation with an extensive web presence at

<http://peacewithgod.jesus.net>.

^{xvi} The following Scriptural verses are taken from the New International Version (NIV) rather than the Common English Version usually used in this book. This is done so because the NIV is the translation that the Billy Graham organization prefers to utilize.