

**GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE:
TRANSITIONING FROM THE KING JAMES VERSION:
A CASE STUDY OF A BAPTIST CONGREGATION**

By

DONALD W. BURKE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

Four centuries have antiquated the once modern language of the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, causing it to increasingly obscure God's message to the contemporary English-speaking world. Using a Bible written in a commoner-friendly language is essential for the effective work of contemporary ministry.

However, those churches that are willing to make the change from the KJV to a contemporary version are faced with a lack of guidelines and principles to help them navigate the transition. In an effort to help fill this void, this study examined the change process of a Baptist congregation which transitioned from the King James Version to a modern-language Bible as its primary worship text.

The study primarily focused on the following three key areas which impact church-related change: family systems theory, leading in change, and Biblical and theological considerations of change. The findings confirmed that transitioning from the antiquated wording of the KJV to a contemporary-language version was beneficial to the individuals and the ministries of the congregation. However, the study also concluded that the benefits of transition, as well as the process of transition, were best set within a framework of a deeper missional purpose. The story of the case study congregation was ultimately the story of a mentoring change leader who instilled within the change participants a mission of clearly presenting God's message to people in a way they could more easily understand. The foremost lesson for other change leaders and change participants was not how to change, but rather why to change.

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in the language of my heritage;

My Deepest Appreciation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

But how shall men meditate in that, which they cannot vnderstand? How shall they vnderstand that which is kept close[d] in an vnknown tongue? ... [I]t is necessary to haue translations [of scripture in the language of its hearers or readers] in a readinesse. Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtaine, that we may looke into the most Holy place; that remooueth the couer of the well, that wee may come by the water.... Indeede without translation into the vulgar tongue, the vnlearned are but like children at *Iacobs* well (which was deepe) without a bucket or some-thing to draw with.¹

In these words, the seventeenth-century translators of the venerated King James Version (KJV) of the Bible set forth the principle that justified their labors: putting God's word into the language of the commoner. Ironically, the same principle would eventually likewise call for their honored work to be replaced as the distance increased between the language of the KJV and the ever-changing vernacular of the English-speaking world.

This principle of using a Bible in the common language notwithstanding, four centuries of popularity have deeply ingrained the KJV into English-speaking culture. Some people remain loyal to it due to the comfort of the familiar or due to its majestic tone. However, whether by ignorance or by choice, many English-speaking Christians are committed to the KJV because they fail to differentiate between the specific wording of this version and the unchangeable message of God. Arguments such as the following employ that perspective: "The others [non-KJV Bibles] have altered and changed what

¹ "The Translators to the Reader," in *The Holy Bible (King James Version)* (1611).

God said and the Lord said let God be true and every man a liar,” and “Anything besides the 1611 KJV is man putting words into what he thinks and not the Holy Ghost leading.”²

This struggle between the need for use of a contemporary-language version and the dedication to the KJV is a great cause for concern within the researcher’s denomination of the Baptist Missionary Association (BMA).³ The antiquated language of the KJV would seem to be detrimental to the ministries of most BMA churches in a number of ways. Outreach is undermined as a church’s message appears as out of touch with contemporary life as powdered wigs and horse-drawn coaches. Evangelism efforts are hindered by a vocabulary and grammar that obscure rather than clarify the message of God. Furthermore, there is a chance that many of the younger and better-educated pastors, members and visitors could be driven to other churches which use a more understandable version of the Bible. The findings of a survey of BMA pastors in 2000 suggest the validity of these concerns. Both younger and better-educated pastors decidedly favor contemporary-language versions over the KJV.⁴ Additionally, the findings note a general correlation between lower attendance and the exclusive use of the KJV.⁵

Yet, in spite of its realized and potential drawbacks, the KJV is still the version of choice within the denomination. According to the aforementioned survey, ninety percent of the denomination’s churches used the KJV as their regular worship service text, with

² From individual responses in the survey summarized in Don Burke, "A Survey of English Bible Version Usage and Preferences among BMAA Pastors and Churches" (Jacksonville, TX: Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary, 2000).

³ This study uses BMA and BMAA (Baptist Missionary Association of America) interchangeably.

⁴ Burke, 7.

⁵ Ibid. The report later cautions that “the present data is insufficient to either support or deny” any cause-and-effect relationship between the apparently correlated attendance and Bible versions. The report also notes that survey responses indicate that the Bible version “is not the sole influence in attendance,” 9.

eighty-two percent using it exclusively. Similar figures were noted for Sunday school and other ministries. The survey report concluded, “[T]here is no doubt that [the KJV] is interwoven into the very fiber of the typical BMAA church.”⁶

The report offered encouragement about the prospects of change. It states, “Half (51.1%) of worship attendees [in BMA churches] have a pastor that would personally find using a modern version acceptable for the main worship text.”⁷ Acceptance of modern versions for Sunday school was slightly higher. Analysis indicated that, overall, KJV preference was directly related to the pastors’ age, with the degree of preference progressively declining in the younger age brackets. This implies that denominationally the desire for contemporary-language versions among pastors will increase as natural attrition replaces the older pastors with younger ones. Thus, evidence suggests a limited but slowly growing willingness for such a change within the denomination.

The future seems to hold for the BMA a limited number of options for dealing with the Bible version issue. One option is to do nothing, effectively continuing the default to the KJV. The result of this might be that those pastors and individual parishioners wanting a more understandable scripture will leave. This could ultimately result in the BMA dying out within a generation or so.

A second option is for those with greater vision to remain and make a militant push for change. Yet a hostile approach could cause a denominational split, with much unnecessary collateral damage.

A third option is to address the problem proactively and develop a strategy for purposed and orchestrated change – a strategy that could be implemented on the

⁶ Ibid., 9.

congregational and possibly denominational levels. To develop such a model for transition, a number of questions must be considered. What should a church take into account in making such a transition? What factors are involved? What things should be done – and what should be avoided? Who are the major players in transition, and what are their roles? What biblical and theological considerations must be taken into account?

Statement of Problem and Purpose

The extent to which the KJV is ingrained into the BMAA can hardly be overstated, with most churches using the King James Version as their primary (and usually sole) text. Ninety percent of the denomination's pastors and churches use the KJV on a regular basis.⁸ Furthermore, the denominational publisher uses the KJV as the sole text for all Sunday school curriculums, giving BMA churches that use denominational literature no contemporary-language option for their Sunday school ministries.

Yet, for many of the people these churches minister to, the antiquated language of the KJV is very difficult to understand. In order to share the life-changing message of the Gospel more effectively, BMA churches need to see the benefits and necessity of transitioning from the KJV and develop a strategy for change that will avoid or minimize foreseeable obstacles. This study thus will examine the experience of a BMA congregation that has transitioned from the KJV to a contemporary-language version, with the desire that the findings provide insights for BMA congregations and other entities needing to undergo similar transitions. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the change process of a Baptist congregation that transitioned from the King James Version to a modern-language Bible as its primary worship text.

⁷ Ibid., 8.

Primary Research Questions

In order to obtain pertinent responses, interviews assumed a semi-structured model and attempted to answer the following primary research questions:

1. In the participants' experiences, how effective was leadership in conveying the need for changing from the KJV to a contemporary-language version?
2. From the participants' perspectives, how well did the plan for changing from the KJV to a contemporary-language version work?
3. What emotions did participants experience during the process of changing from the KJV to a contemporary-language version?
4. According to the participants, how has the change from the KJV to a contemporary-language version been beneficial to the church's ministry?

Significance of Study

Transitioning from the antiquated language of the KJV to a more user-understandable version has potential for impacting a church and those attending it in numerous ways. Evangelism efforts will potentially be more successful as those outside the church are better able to understand the message of the Gospel. Believers in the Gospel will potentially find the message of God's Word more applicable to their real-world situations. Communities may begin to see their local churches as more understanding of today's world and today's problems, providing opportunity for individual growth, which would in turn grow the church. With growing churches, the denomination may be able to reverse its continuing decline and stagnation. Thus, the

⁸ Ibid., 9.

potential for impact from this study is multi-faceted, impacting the BMA on personal, congregational, and denominational levels.

Definition of Terms

Baptist Missionary Association of America (BMAA or BMA) – According to one of its own publications, the BMAA,

is a group of regular Baptist churches formed in associational capacity by means of duly elected messengers on May 25, 1950. In theology the churches are evangelical, missionary, fundamental, and premillennial. In associational capacity they respect the equality of churches as constituent units and the equal rights and privileges of ministers of the gospel after their understanding of the New Testament order.⁹

Statistics for 2008 give a total of 1,287 BMAA churches. These churches are located in 31 states, predominately in Texas and Arkansas and those states bordering them.¹⁰

Contemporary-Language Version or Modern-Language Version – A translation of the Bible whose form, including vocabulary and grammar, is readily understandable by the people in a given setting.

Change Leader or Change Leadership – The leader or leaders who are responsible for providing direction for the various aspects of change. The change leader for the case study in this research project was the incoming pastor of the congregation.

Change Participants – The individuals that undergo the process of change.

Differentiation – “[T]he capacity of a [group] member to define his or her own life’s goals and values apart from surrounding togetherness pressures.”¹¹

Homeostasis – Literally meaning “to stay the same,” homeostasis is the tendency of an individual or group to remain in the current state or established patterns.¹²

Interview Participants or Interviewees – The change participants interviewed in this case study. By the study design, interview participants are individuals within the transitioning church who went through the transition process and remained with the church at least until the time they were interviewed.

⁹ Bobby L. Hudgens and Linda Cary, eds., *Baptist Missionary Association of America Directory & Handbook 2009 - 2010*, 49th ed. (Texarkana, AR: DiscipleGuide Church Resources, 2009), 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹¹ Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985), 27.

¹² Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006), 6.

Missional – In this study “missional” is used broadly, from simply having a mission or purpose to a more descriptive focus of presenting the message of God to others within their cultural context, as depicted by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.

Systems Theory – Also known as family theory or family systems theory, this is the study of individuals within the interactions of the group(s) to which they belong. The individual is a component of the whole and cannot be fully understood if viewed separated from that whole.

Transition – In a generic sense, this is the process of changing from one point or state to another. In its more specialized sense, which is its primary use in this research, it is the process of converting from the King James Version of the Bible to a contemporary-language version as the primary version used in a church’s worship service.

Triangles or Emotional Triangles – Triangulation occurs “when any two parts of a system become uncomfortable with one another ... [and] focus upon a third person, or issue, as a way of stabilizing their own relationship with one another.”¹³ The triangle is the interrelationship of those three parts, with the third part considered to be “triangled” into that relationship.

¹³ Friedman, 35-36.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to examine the change process of a Baptist congregation that transitioned from the King James Version to a modern-language Bible as its primary worship text. The study will examine this process of change from three primary perspectives, including a review of pertinent literature in each of these. Since such change is made within a group setting, the research will include an examination of group dynamics and the bearing of those dynamics upon the change process. It will also consider factors that prepare leadership for leading change – namely planning, along with an awareness of the process and the politics of change. Finally, the review will analyze biblical and theological aspects of Bible version transition.

Systems Theory

As stated, Bible version transition involves change within a group setting. In order to make changes within a group, the leader must understand the dynamics of group interaction. This study will now review literature on group dynamics and their effects upon the change process.

Pioneered by Murray Bowen in his study of family dynamics, systems theory (also called family systems theory) is the understanding that an individual's actions cannot be fully understood in isolation from the systems in which they interact. As described by Edwin H. Friedman, a family therapist, ordained rabbi, and student of Bowen, "components do not function according to their 'nature' but according to their

position in the network.”¹⁴ In an expanded explanation, Friedman notes that the family systems approach

deemphasizes the notion that our conflicts and anxieties are due primarily to the makeup of our personalities, and suggests, instead, that our individual problems have more to do with our relational networks, the makeup of others’ personalities, where we stand within the relational systems, and how we function within that position. It understands the symptom bearer to be only the “identified” patient and the person’s problem to be symptomatic of something askew in the family itself.¹⁵

Dr. Peter M. Senge, Senior Lecturer at the Sloan School of Management, contributes to the discussion of systems thinking. In *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge explains, “System thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes” – a framework for examining interrelationships rather than things or linear cause-effect chains. In it one looks for patterns and processes of change rather than static “snapshots.”¹⁶

Other authors agree. In reviewing systems theory materials, Tracy Hartman, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, adds this insight, “Thinking systems’ involves not examining cause and effect in a system, but observing the emotional processes and interrelations occurring there.”¹⁷ And on this topic, Dean Williams, on the faculty of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government and special advisor to the president of Madagascar, observes, “In a diagnosis that focuses primarily on individual players and not the interacting, competing, and conflicting values of the larger system, leaders have a very incomplete understanding of why the problem exists.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹⁵ Ibid., 13.

¹⁶ Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 68, 73.

¹⁷ Tracy L. Hartman, "The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory: A New Way of Thinking about the Individual and the Group," *Review & Expositor* 102 (Summer 2005): 521.

¹⁸ Dean Williams, *Real Leadership: Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2005), 47.

From *The Leader's Journey*, authors Jim Herrington, Robert Creech, and Trish Taylor contribute this thought to the discussion:

Whenever you engage in a relationship that is long-term, intense, and significant, you become emotionally connected to one another in a living system. Each person who is part of this interaction begins to affect, and be affected by, the anxiety and behaviors of the other.... The gravitational pull of relationships has its effect on the behavior and response of each person in the group; the behavior and response of each person affects the emotional gravity of the system.¹⁹

These authors explain the ramifications for group leadership: "Understanding this fact furnishes a helpful perspective as we attempt to lead a congregation. To say that we are a part of a living system is to say that there are forces at work among us."²⁰ They also note, "The better we understand the functioning and implications of a living system, the more effectively we undergo personal transformation and learn to lead with integrity."²¹

Systems theory is built around a number of primary components. This study will now consider these components and the literature related to them.

The Family Unit

As the discussion of systems theory's origin perhaps intimates, a foundational concept is that the family or group is the most basic unit for study. Drawing from a homey example, Dr. Roberta M. Gilbert, a private-practice psychiatrist and faculty member at the Bowen Center of the Study of the Family, illustrates the wisdom of such a macroscopic view:

In a herd of cattle, ... if one of the cows became upset for some reason, such as receiving a shock from the electric fence, or seeing a snake, they would all become upset and move closer together. The upset (anxiety) travels, almost

¹⁹ Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor, *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 29, 31.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

instantaneously, through the entire herd. We call it the “herding” reaction. They are an emotional unit.²²

Gilbert’s illustration shows that at times, and especially during increased anxiety, individual action can be so influenced by the group that the whole acts more as a single collective than as separate individuals.

Such group dynamics are applicable to the church setting as well. Friedman discusses family systems theory within a Judeo-Christian framework, and he considers the relational system within the congregation as one type of family to which systems thinking applies. Friedman explains that systems theory “can be extended to any relational system from a business partnership to a religious institution,”²³ and its principles “are equally applicable to emotional processes in personal families and congregational families.”²⁴ Friedman notes in one of his books, “[T]he word *family* always means church or synagogue as well as one’s network of relations.”²⁵ What is said specifically for this one book is strongly implied in his other works.

Steinke, a clergy therapist mentored by Friedman, agrees, noting that “... we fail to realize that the church functions as an emotional system. As long as people gather and interact, emotional processes occur.”²⁶ As an emotional unit, the congregation serves as a family unit within systems theory.

Anxiety

Anxiety is another important concept in systems theory. In *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*, Peter Steinke describes anxiety and its impact as “... the

²² Roberta M. Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference* (Falls Church & Basye, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2006), 6.

²³ Friedman, 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

automatic and natural reaction to anything that might threaten a person's safety. As anxiety increases in emotional systems, people's behavior is more automatic. That means people are less thoughtful and imaginative, resistant to whatever signals pain, and generally in an edgy mood."²⁷

Elsewhere Steinke gives other characteristics of anxiety. First, he considers what initiates anxiety:

What precisely triggers anxiety is unique to each system. Common activators are significant changes and losses. They upset the stable patterns and balance of the system....²⁸

He then describes what happens as anxiety is introduced within a group:

Equally as important as to what sets off anxiety is where it is focused. Anxiety is free-floating. But eventually it drains off and settles somewhere. Relationship systems have favorite ducts and crevices for the deposit of its flow. The most vulnerable or responsible people in the relationship network are the usual targets.²⁹

To the discussion of anxiety Richardson adds, "Anxiety is pervasive in emotional systems. It has a major impact on emotional process. Anxiety results from the perception of threat, whether real or imagined."³⁰ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor agree and speak to anxiety within the congregational setting:

To the degree that we are part of a family system that has learned to deal with the world as either a threatening place or as a secure place, we operate in life with a given level of chronic anxiety. We are more or less likely to experience the world as a threatening place. Our congregation behaves in the same way. Some congregations see the world as a safe place to be and are much freer to take a risk, pursue a goal, and respond calmly to crisis. Others see and feel the world as

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Steinke, xiii.

²⁷ Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006), 78.

²⁸ Steinke, *Church Family*, 15.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ronald W. Richardson, "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life," *Review & Expositor* 102 (Summer 2005): 386.

threatening and dangerous; anxiety dominates that congregation. The higher the level of chronic anxiety in a system, the more difficult it is for that system to function in a healthy way.³¹

Systems theory makes an important distinction between types of anxiety. “Two types of anxiety must be distinguished. Each leads to different results. Anxiety may be acute or chronic.”³²

Concerning the former, “[a]cute anxiety is our reaction to a threat that is real and time-limited. We react to the threat, respond to it, and then eventually return to a normal state of mind and body.”³³ Steinke characterizes acute anxiety as crisis-generated. He also notes that people experiencing it have the capacity to control their reactivity while dealing with the anxiety and regain their perspective relatively quickly after the stressor is removed.³⁴

In contrast to acute anxiety, “[c]hronic anxiety is habitual. We can’t put [chronic] anxiety to rest,”³⁵ Additionally, “the threat is imagined or distorted, rather than real. Consequently, it is not time-limited; it does not simply go away.”³⁶

*A Failure of Nerve*³⁷ is largely the work of Edwin Friedman but was completed posthumously by Margaret Treadwell (Friedman’s adjunct faculty member) and Edward Beal (colleague of Friedman and professor at Georgetown University School of Medicine). This book includes a discussion of some of the characteristics of chronic anxiety: “The five aspects of chronic anxiety are reactivity, herding, blaming, a quick-fix

³¹ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 37.

³² Steinke, *Church Family*, 22.

³³ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 35.

³⁴ Steinke, *Church Family*, 22, 24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁶ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 35.

³⁷ Edwin H. Friedman, Margaret M. Treadwell, and Edward W. Beal, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Seabury Books, 2007).

mentality, and lack of leadership – the last not only a fifth characteristic of societal regression but one that stems from and contributes to the other four.”³⁸

Steinke describes other characteristics of chronic anxiety. “Chronically anxious people ... keep their focus on others. They are easily and quickly hurt. They see themselves as victims.... They are not self-regulating. And they are not imaginative.”³⁹ He also states, “When facing anxious times, a high percentage of congregations freeze. Since action might trigger opposition, leaders delay and delay. No one wants to upset or offend others.”⁴⁰

As briefly mentioned earlier, in (chronic) anxiety, “it is the response of the system to organize itself around the least-mature member, rather than around its potential leader.”⁴¹ Ronald Richardson, retired pastor, author, and pastoral counselor, includes this in his explanation of anxiety-induced responses:

As anxiety builds in an emotional system and things begin to feel significantly unbalanced, someone or some relationship in the system may become problematic or symptomatic. Symptoms are an indication that anxiety has built to a fairly high level in the system. They are generally expressed in one or more of four types of relationship patterns: 1) significant emotional distance between people; 2) significant conflict between leaders in the church; 3) the physical, emotional, or social dysfunction of one of the leaders; or 4) the projection of anxiety to a lower level person or group who appears to be “dysfunctional.”⁴²

Herrington, Creech and Taylor point out yet another insightful characteristic:

“Chronic anxiety requires two poles if it is to function. One member of the system cannot sustain such tension alone; a negative pole requires a positive one. Some enabling or

³⁸ Ibid., 24.

³⁹ Steinke, *Church Family*, 24.

⁴⁰ Steinke, *Anxious Times*, 13.

⁴¹ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 63.

⁴² Richardson, 387.

anxious feedback is required from another member or another part of the system to keep the anxious atmosphere alive.”⁴³

The impact of anxiety can be either positive or negative, largely based upon whether the anxiety is acute or chronic. As will be discussed later, acute anxiety can be a positive motivator. In contrast, chronic anxiety “distracts [a group] from its purpose, sets people at odds with each other and builds walls against outsiders.”⁴⁴

Often anxiety is allowed to affect everyone, even leadership. “In an anxious system, the leader tends to join others in focusing on symptoms (the complaints and problems) rather than process (the systemic issues and reactions that keep a problem in place.)”⁴⁵ Yet in spite of this tendency, the responsibility for properly dealing with the anxiety rests mainly upon leadership. “The leader’s main job ... is to create an emotional atmosphere in which greater calmness [i.e. less chronic anxiety] exists – to be a less [chronically] anxious presence.”⁴⁶ Elsewhere Richardson further explains this:

During times of upset, if just one key leader can be less anxious, relate well to others in the group, and simply define self, it will have a beneficial impact on the life of the group as a whole. The more important this person is to the life of the group, the greater the impact. If the one person is more solid and less anxious, he or she can be an anchor for the whole system.⁴⁷

Like Richardson, Steinke lays this responsibility upon the leader, whose “responsible and enlightened behavior will influence the situation more than any other action.”⁴⁸ He asserts that the impact of the leader during anxious times can hardly be overstated: “A positive outcome will emerge if the leader’s presence and functioning is

⁴³ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 36.

⁴⁴ Steinke, *Church Family*, xiii.

⁴⁵ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 50.

⁴⁶ Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 173.

⁴⁷ Richardson, “Bowen,” 389.

centered in principle, based on self-regulation, and anchored by taking thoughtful positions. Principle provides clarity; self-regulation helps to avoid extremes; thoughtful positions lead to necessary action.”⁴⁹

As mentioned above, chronic anxiety requires “enabling or anxious feedback ... to keep the anxious atmosphere alive.”⁵⁰ Thus, one significant way leadership can reduce anxiety is refusing to provide such re-enforcing feedback, choosing rather to influence toward calmness (i.e., reduced anxiety) by being a calm leader.

Feedback

A third principal concept in systems theory is feedback (or feedback loops). Peter Senge says,

The practice of systems thinking starts with understanding a simple concept called “feedback” that shows how actions can reinforce or counteract (balance) each other.... [F]eedback ... means any reciprocal flow of influence. In systems thinking it is an axiom that every influence is both *cause* and *effect*. Nothing is ever influenced in just one direction.⁵¹

Rendle describes feedback as “the bits of information within the system, or congregation, that are used to keep internal fluctuations within acceptable and sustainable norms.”⁵²

As already established, systems theory attempts to understand the individual by examining the interactions within the group(s) of which he or she is a part. Such a group-based perspective is particularly important in understanding feedback. “In mastering systems thinking, we give up the assumption that there is an individual, or individual

⁴⁸ Steinke, *Anxious Times*, 7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁵⁰ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 36.

⁵¹ Senge, 73, 74-75, emphasis in original.

⁵² Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998), 112.

agent, responsible. The feedback perspective suggests that everyone shares responsibility for problems generated by a system.”⁵³

In separate works Lieutenant Colonel Jim Baker,⁵⁴ on staff of the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, and Peter Senge⁵⁵ describe two basic feedback loops: reinforcing feedback and balancing feedback. From these basic models they draw numerous more complex models, some that promote change and others that impair it.

According to Baker, the reinforcing loop can be exemplified by an interest-bearing bank account. In time, the original principle of the account generates interest, which is then deposited into the account, creating more principle. The increased principle creates more interest, and the increased interest in turn creates even more principle. As this example shows, a “reinforcing loop describes systems where elements reinforce one another, creating either a virtuous or a vicious cycle.”⁵⁶ Senge calls this type of feedback an “amplifying loop.”⁵⁷

In contrast, the balancing loop (or “stabilizing loop”⁵⁸) “describes efforts to solve a problem or close a gap between a desired state and a current state.”⁵⁹ Baker illustrates this by the actions of a person filling a glass of water from a faucet. As the distance decreases between the water level and the top of the glass, the person decreases the rate of flow from the faucet. The cycle continues with ever decreasing rate of water flow and yet-to-be-filled space in the glass until the whole process stops. Whereas the process

⁵³ Senge, 78.

⁵⁴ Jim Baker, "Systems Thinking and Counterinsurgencies," *Parameters* 36 (2006): 27.

⁵⁵ Senge, 79.

⁵⁶ Baker, 27.

⁵⁷ Senge, 79.

within the reinforcing loop never reaches an end as its component elements are constantly increasing, the process of the balancing loop ultimately reaches an end as the rate of change within its component elements diminishes to zero.

These feedback loops in various forms are what interconnect individuals within the group, allowing the condition of any given member to influence others. As exemplified in Gilbert's cow illustration, feedback loops allow anxiety and its impact to spread throughout the group. "[I]t is the feedback of an anxious other that gives any chronic condition its shape and continuity and, thus, provides its homeostasis."⁶⁰ Daniel Bagby, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, concurs: "Chronic family problems are maintained as such by a recurring reactive action somewhere in the system."⁶¹

Understanding the principles of feedback is helpful (if not necessary) for leaders wishing to initiate meaningful and lasting change. Friedman's comment on feedback is good news for change leaders: "The notion that chronic conditions require feedback also suggests strategies for change."⁶² In other words, if feedback maintains chronic conditions, then changing the feedback should ultimately change the conditions.

Homeostasis

What leader, when trying to bring change, has not encountered a "But we've always done it this way!" kind of reaction? It is this type of reaction that Senge has in mind when writing,

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Baker, 27.

⁶⁰ Friedman, *Generation*, 46-47.

⁶¹ Daniel G. Bagby, "Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue," *Review & Expositor* 102 (Summer 2005): 516.

⁶² Friedman, *Generation*, 46.

Leaders who attempt organizational change often find themselves unwittingly caught in balancing processes. To the leaders, it looks as though their efforts are clashing with sudden resistance that seems to come from nowhere. In fact, ... the resistance is a response by the system, trying to maintain an implicit system goal.⁶³

The goal that resistance is trying to achieve (via balancing feedback) is the next component of systems theory: homeostasis.

Literally meaning “to stay the same,”⁶⁴ homeostasis is the emotional inertia that attempts to maintain all things as they currently are. Bagby defines it as “the tendency of any set of human relationships to strive perpetually to regain balance and preserve its existence.”⁶⁵

Because of this nature of homeostasis, Friedman is able to postulate:

Generally, there is predictability about the highs and lows of symptomatic behavior, and the frequency with which the symptom reappears, no matter what its nature. Chronic symptoms rarely go below or above certain thresholds, and they tend to reappear with a certain rhythm. (Anyone who doubts this should try to make a problem worse and keep it at that level.)⁶⁶

Emotional Triangles

The pull for homeostasis often causes the formation of what systems theory calls emotional (or relational) triangles. A classic example of an emotional triangle is a child on the playground who, when unable to get along with a playmate (child two), finds a “new best friend” (child three) as a means of either superficially filling the loss from the second child’s disapproval, or of leveraging compliance from the second child via jealousy. Emotional triangles come about “when any two parts of a system become uncomfortable with one another [and] they will ‘triangle in’ or focus upon a third person,

⁶³ Senge, 86-87.

⁶⁴ Steinke, *Church Family*, 6.

⁶⁵ Bagby, 516.

or issue, as a way of stabilizing their own relationship with one another.”⁶⁷ James Lamkin, a pastor writing on the dynamics of systems in congregations, states: “Emotional triangles exist because life seeks balance and stability. Life wants homeostasis. A tripod is more stable than a dyad. Thus, two human beings will often manage their anxiety by ‘triangling in’ a third.”⁶⁸

The three (or even more) points of an emotional triangle are often made up of individuals, but at times may be groups of people, issues, symptoms, programs, or processes.⁶⁹ A person, group, issue, or other entity can be triangled (i.e., drawn) into the group either by the efforts of others or by its own initiative.⁷⁰

The very nature of the change process places change leadership within emotional triangles. The change leader (point A) introduces the element to be changed (point B) to the group or individual (point C), which thus forms a triangle. However, leaders can use their position within the triangle to improve the chance of successful change if they know and capitalize on the principles of triangles. Some of the major principles of emotional triangles are presented by Friedman in his Seven Laws of Triangles.⁷¹

Law 1: “The relationship of any two members of an emotional triangle is kept in balance by the way a third party relates to each of them or to their relationship.”

Friedman continues, “When a given relationship is stuck ... there is probably a third person or issue that is part of the homeostasis.”⁷² Within the context of this study, this

⁶⁶ Friedman, *Generation*, 46-47.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁶⁸ James E. Lamkin, "Systems Theory and Congregational Leadership: Leaves from an Alchemist's Journal," *Review & Expositor* 102 (Summer 2005): 469.

⁶⁹ See *Ibid.* See also Bagby, 516.

⁷⁰ Friedman, *Generation*, 35-36.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 36-39.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 37.

suggests that as a point in the triangle leadership must understand it has the potential both to help and to hinder a person's acceptance of change. Leadership is not likely a neutral factor in how the other points relate to one another.

Law 2: "If one is a third party in an emotional triangle it is generally not possible to bring [lasting] change ... to the relationship of the other two parts by trying to change their relationship directly." Friedman expands his thoughts in saying,

Trying harder to bring two people closer ... will generally maintain or increase the distance between them. On the other hand, repeated efforts to separate ... anyone and his or her cherished beliefs ... increases the possibility that they will fall "blindly in love" with one another.⁷³

As Senge explains it, "The more aggressively the advocates try to drive their desired changes, the more people feel threatened and the more resistance arises."⁷⁴ For change leadership this means that pressuring people to accept change is typically counter-productive.

Law 3: "Attempts to change the relationship of the other two sides of an emotional triangle not only are generally ineffective, but also, homeostatic forces often convert those efforts to their opposite intent." This explains why the harder leaders pressure for change the more the group members tend to respond with some form of "we've always done it *this way*" stance.

Law 4: "To the extent a third party [in] an emotional triangle tries unsuccessfully to change the relationship of the other two, the more likely it is that the third party will wind up with the stress of the other two." Friedman continues: "This helps explain why the dysfunctional member in many families is often not the weakest person in the system,

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Senge, 99.

but on the contrary, often the one taking responsibility for the entire system.”⁷⁵ Leaders are the most triangled point in any system,⁷⁶ and change leadership in particular is triangled with virtually everyone in that system.⁷⁷ So, change leaders who assume personal responsibility for others’ acceptance of change – instead of differentiating themselves (see next section) and allowing others to be responsible for their own acceptance of change – are in the dangerous position of shouldering the sum of all the individual change-related stresses within the group.

Law 5: “The various triangles in an emotional system interlock so that efforts to bring change to any one of them is [sic] often resisted by homeostatic forces in the others or in the system itself.” Thus, in the case of change leader A, who senses group member B offering resistance to proposed item of change C, the leader must realize that the resistance may be caused by an unyielding fourth person or issue D in the B-C-D triangle. It is also possible that there are additional levels of triangles (C-D-E, D-E-F, etc.) that impact the situation.

Law 6: “One side of an emotional triangle tends to be more conflictual than the others.” Friedman further explains,

In healthier families, conflict will tend to swing round the compass, so to speak, showing up in different persons or different relationships at different times.... In relationship systems that are not as healthy, the conflict tends to be located on one particular side of a triangle (the identified patient or relationship).⁷⁸

Law 7: “We can only change a relationship to which we belong.” From this Friedman concludes,

⁷⁵ Friedman, *Generation*, 37.

⁷⁶ Steinke, *Church Family*, 54.

Therefore, the way to bring change to the relationship of two others ... is to try to maintain a well-defined relationship with each, and to avoid the responsibility for their relationship with one another. To the extent we can maintain a “nonanxious presence” in a triangle, such a stance has the potential to modify the anxiety in the others. The problem is to be both nonanxious and present.⁷⁹

For change leadership this shows the necessity of personally embracing the element of change while maintaining a personal and non-anxious relationship with the person who has difficulty accepting that element. Herrington, Creech, and Taylor offer this advice: “Your aim here is ‘detriangling’: staying emotionally connected to the other ... [person or people] while being emotionally neutral about the symptomatic issue.”⁸⁰ This “detriangling” is commonly known in systems theory as differentiation.

Differentiation of Self

The final basic concept of systems theory to be presented is differentiation of self (“differentiation”), or what Gilbert calls “individuality.”⁸¹ Friedman defines differentiation as “the capacity of a family member to define his or her own life’s goals and values apart from surrounding togetherness pressures, to say ‘I’ when others are demanding ‘you’ and ‘we.’ ... Differentiation means the capacity to be an ‘I’ while remaining [emotionally] connected.”⁸² Richardson offers a similar explanation: “Differentiation is the ability to be in significant emotional contact with others and still

⁷⁷ Friedman insightfully notes, “The most triangled position in any set of relationships is always the most vulnerable; when the laws of emotional triangles are understood, however, it tends to become the most powerful.” (Friedman, *Generation*, 39.)

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁸⁰ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 55.

⁸¹ Roberta M. Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory: A New Way of Thinking About the Individual and the Group* (Falls Church & Basye, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2006), 28. See also Richardson, *Healthier Church*, 101.

⁸² Friedman, *Generation*, 27. See also Bagby, 516; Steinke, *Church Family*, 12.

be able to function as a more autonomous self, without having the automatic emotional system processes determine our thinking and behavior. This is emotional maturity.”⁸³

Insufficient differentiation often produces one of two negative outcomes: fusion and cut-off. Fusion (also called “togetherness” and “herding”⁸⁴) is “togetherness forces pushing for conformity”⁸⁵ and is often characterized by “interdependency and reactivity of one to another.”⁸⁶ Gilbert also notes the interconnectivity between fusion and anxiety: “Fusions are more apparent when anxiety rises. Anxiety also is a product of fusions.”⁸⁷

One form of fusion is groupthink. According to Gilbert, groupthink occurs when one lacks sufficient differentiation between self and the group to which that individual belongs. Groupthink, positively expressed, is “going along with the group based only on relationship reasons rather than on any principle, logic or original thought one may have on the subject.”⁸⁸ Conversely, its negative expression is seen when people “reactively disagree [with a group’s decision or direction] even though not having thought through the issue.”⁸⁹ In its more extreme form, groupthink may even take on the form of what Lamkin calls, “*borrowed self*,” which is “the act of scrounging self from the identity of another.”⁹⁰

A second possible outcome of insufficient differentiation is emotional distancing, or cutoff.⁹¹ Originally recognized in connection with teen runaways in the 1960s, cutoff was a term coined by Bowen to mean the “process of separation, isolation, withdrawal,

⁸³ Richardson, “Bowen,” 388. See also Lamkin, 476.

⁸⁴ Gilbert, *Extraordinary*, 7. See also Richardson, *Healthier Church*, 101.

⁸⁵ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 63.

⁸⁶ Gilbert, *Extraordinary*, 7.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Gilbert, *Eight Concepts*, 35.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Lamkin, 481.

running away, or denying the importance of the parental family.”⁹² Lamkin describes cut-off as “a strategy used to cope with the intensity of anxiety in a system by emotional distance.”⁹³ However, such distancing is counter-productive, for according to Friedman such distance only perpetuates the problem.⁹⁴

There is, however, a vast difference between differentiation and the emotional distance of cut-off. Concerning people who experience the latter, Gilbert observes, “Externally, they seem disconnected. Internally, however, it is a different story. Distanced persons think about each other, the relationship and the conflict that led to it a great deal. By distancing, they are far from free of the problem. They are still emotionally bound and defined by it,”⁹⁵ in contrast to the person that is properly differentiated. Friedman concurs, as he learned from the actions of a habitually critical parishioner. Edward Beal relates this story of Friedman as he was leaving his second congregation:

Although the positive responses [from parishioners] were anticipated, the letter from his harshest critic, describing their differences and how much he would miss Friedman, was not expected. He realized the most intensely negative members of the congregation were as emotionally involved with him as were the positive ones.⁹⁶

Bowen also hypothesized a “differentiation of self scale,” which ranged from 0 to 100, with the higher numbers corresponding to higher levels of self-differentiation.⁹⁷ The scale is not a precision instrument of measure, as noted by Dr. Richard B. Miller (Brigham Young University), Shayne Anderson (University of Georgia), and Kaulana

⁹¹ Gilbert, *Eight Concepts*, 57ff.

⁹² Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978), 382.

⁹³ Lamkin, 464.

⁹⁴ Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal, *Failure*, 214.

⁹⁵ Gilbert, *Eight Concepts*, 16.

⁹⁶ Edward W. Beal, "A Retrospective: Edwin Friedman, His Life and Work," *Review & Expositor* 102 (Summer 2005): 417.

⁹⁷ Bowen, 472-75. Cf. Friedman, *Generation*, 27.

Keala (University of Hawaii). Bowen “provided few guidelines to help clinicians reliably and accurately assign an appropriate score. Indeed, he claimed that the concept was not quantifiable for researchers. Consequently, Bowen's scale has been useful only as a theoretical tool.”⁹⁸ Yet, even if limited to a “theoretical tool,” the literature agrees with the general premise that “[h]igh level leaders are high on the scale of differentiation of self.”⁹⁹

The importance of leadership’s understanding and exercising differentiation can hardly be overstated. It impacts such issues as growth and maturity,¹⁰⁰ both of the leaders themselves and of those they lead. It speaks to the interaction between leaders and followers – and the predictable consequences when there is insufficient differentiation in that relationship.¹⁰¹ It addresses leadership’s over-pursuit,¹⁰² over-functioning,¹⁰³ and handling of criticism.¹⁰⁴ Friedman writes that differentiation even forecasts sabotage (“[s]elf-differentiation always triggers sabotage”¹⁰⁵) and identifies the most likely saboteurs.¹⁰⁶

The need for differentiation increases during times of higher anxiety (e.g., change). Friedman speaks to this, based first upon evidence from the presence of differentiation, and then upon evidence from its absence:

⁹⁸ Richard B. Miller, Shayne Anderson, and Davelyne Kaulana Keala, "Is Bowen Theory Valid? A Review of Basic Research," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 30 (2004): 454.

⁹⁹ Gilbert, *Extraordinary*, 93.

¹⁰⁰ Richardson, "Bowen," 388. See also Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 41.

¹⁰¹ Lamkin, 477.

¹⁰² Steinke, *Church Family*, 99. See also Richardson, *Healthier Church*, 70.

¹⁰³ Gilbert, *Extraordinary*, 94. See also Richardson, *Healthier Church*, 135.

¹⁰⁴ Steinke, *Church Family*, 99.

¹⁰⁵ Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal, *Failure*, 247.

¹⁰⁶ Friedman, *Generation*, 30.

[W]ithout question the single variable that most distinguished the [troubled] families that survived and flourished from those that disintegrated was the presence of ... a well-differentiated leader.¹⁰⁷

Later, in contrast, he writes,

The fact that chronically anxious families will always lack well-differentiated leadership is absolutely universal. I have never seen an exception to this rule.... I have found that the single most important factor distinguishing those families that become hopelessly stuck or disintegrated into crisis from those that recovered was the presence of a well-defined leader.¹⁰⁸

In short, “[a]t times of crisis, a congregation functions best when its key leaders are differentiated.”¹⁰⁹

The literature reviewed in this research showed surprisingly little criticism for systems theory, either for the whole or for its individual parts. Among that very small group are the previously cited, Miller, Anderson, and Keala who raise questions about possible limitations of Bowen’s conclusion. Their 2004 article states, “The last 15 years have seen an emergence of research that has tested the theoretical propositions of Bowen theory. Although several of Bowen's theoretical principles have received empirical testing, there are still some important propositions that need to be researched.”¹¹⁰ Two specific items are of note to this study. First, the article finds “there is a lack of research testing Bowen's claim that his theory is universal.”¹¹¹ Second, “[a]lthough there is emerging evidence validat[ing] some of Bowen's basic theoretical propositions, there is still a glaring lack of clinical process and outcome research that has tested the effectiveness of Bowen's model of therapy.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal, *Failure*, 14.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁰⁹ Steinke, *Anxious Times*, 71.

¹¹⁰ Miller, Anderson, and Keala, 463.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Systems theory is more than a way to understand and anticipate group dynamics; it is also a strategic tool to influence the group's course. As Friedman observes, systems theory "creates different strategies for inducing change."¹¹³

The reviewed literature illustrates this to be true for such settings as actual families, congregations, work groups, and others. One article even shows the use of systems theory model in the very difficult area of strategizing military counterinsurgencies: "[H]aving a model in-hand allows the counterinsurgent strategist a means to steady himself and his forces in times of difficulty."¹¹⁴ Clearly systems theory is a valid tool for planning desired outcomes. In the words of Senge, systems thinking sees people "as active participants in shaping their reality, from reacting to the present to creating the future."¹¹⁵

This review on systems theory literature indicates that a properly prepared change leader must operate from an awareness of systems principles. While the decision to accept or reject change is ultimately made by individuals and not the group, the process of making that decision is rarely done in isolation from group dynamics. Wise change leadership will pay particular note to the various components of systems theory, knowing that (1) they can signal problem areas that leadership should address or avoid, and (2) they can be proactively used by leadership as an ally in planning change. Change, therefore, must be orchestrated with the various aspects of the system's interactivity in mind.

¹¹³ Friedman, *Generation*, 17.

¹¹⁴ Baker, 38.

¹¹⁵ Senge, 69.

Leading Change

Having achieved an awareness of the fundamental system dynamics of the people involved in change, this study will now consider literature related to aspects of change itself and to the task of leading people through it.

Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, both on the faculty of John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, categorize change under two primary headings: technical problems and adaptive challenges. The former are “problems for which [people] ... have the necessary know-how and procedures.”¹¹⁶ However, it seems that change such as transition of Bible versions typically belongs within the latter category, which requires “changes in people’s priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties.”¹¹⁷

These authors describe a number of difficulties associated with adaptive change. For one, the change participants can be discouraged as they readily see the potential for loss but often cannot see how the change will better their current condition.¹¹⁸

Additionally, the authors note,

Adaptive change ... asks [people] to take a loss, experience uncertainty, and even express disloyalty to people and cultures. Because adaptive change forces people to question and perhaps redefine aspects of their identity, it also challenges their sense of competence. Loss, disloyalty, and feeling incompetent: That’s a lot to ask.¹¹⁹

Because of these and similar factors, adaptive change is apt to produce resistance.¹²⁰

In *Real Leadership*, author Dean Williams specifies six particular types of challenges or change types.¹²¹ The first challenge Williams lists is the activist challenge.

¹¹⁶ Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 13.

¹¹⁷ Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Martin Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 19.

¹¹⁸ Heifetz and Linsky, *On the Line*, 13.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

Giving Martin Luther as an example of one who encountered this type of challenge, the author explains that the defining characteristic of this challenge is that “the group or a faction of the group refuses to face some element of reality that actually might improve the people’s quality of life or institutional performance.”¹²² A superintendent of an underachieving school system faces the development challenge in which “the group can make significant improvements to its quality of life or organizational performance if latent abilities become effective.”¹²³ A maintenance challenge, such as a strategic military withdrawn, occurs when “the terrain is such that the group cannot improve its lot even if it develops the full extent of its latent abilities.”¹²⁴ A new business venture might be a creative challenge, which occurs when “a combination of events presents an unusual opportunity that, if the group can break from routine activity long enough to exploit it, might lead to a major and permanent new benefit.”¹²⁵ In the crisis challenge, “the group faces a potentially explosive situation that could threaten the life of the group or some aspect of the prevailing order.”¹²⁶

Although likely overlapping with other challenges, Bible version transition seems best to match the remaining item, transitional challenge, where “there is the possibility of great gains if the group can transition its current value set to a new value set.”¹²⁷

Williams further details the traits of this type of change:

Compelling evidence suggests that a new threat or opportunity has emerged....
[People] will have to give up, or at least modify, some of the traditions, habits,

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Williams, 34.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 35.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 34.

and practices that they cherish.... Given the strong inertial influence of values, tradition, and habit combined with the fear of the unknown, the people are reluctant to make the journey.... The people in a transition challenge might ... [be] anxious and afraid, as the process of transitioning can be overwhelming and disorienting.... [T]hey are concerned about the loss that accompanies such a process.... This process of change can be threatening to their identity, loyalties, and sense of competence.¹²⁸

Considering that Bible version transition is most likely adaptive change, leadership must consider the best course for implementing this type of change within the congregation. In order to explore options for leadership, a review of pertinent literature on leading change will be discussed under the following three areas: the plan for change, the process of change, and the politics in change.

The Plan for Change

In his book *Leading Change*,¹²⁹ as well as in a second volume entitled *The Heart of Change*¹³⁰ (written with Dan S. Cohen), John Kotter of Harvard Business School outlines an eight-step process for change. Those eight steps are: 1) increase urgency; 2) build the guiding team; 3) get the vision right; 4) communicate for buy-in; 5) empower action; 6) create short-term wins; 7) don't let up; and 8) make change stick.

Before considering each step in detail, the authors' overall perspective in working through this plan must be noted. They caution that leadership cannot address significant change from a solely mechanical or mental approach. Leaders must lead change using something more meaningful to the change participants. "Changing behavior is less a matter of giving people analysis to influence their thoughts than helping them to see a truth to influence their feelings. Both thinking and feeling are essential, ... but the heart

¹²⁸ Ibid., 117.

¹²⁹ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 21.

of change is in the emotions.”¹³¹ With this important point in mind, Kotter’s eight-step change process will now be explored.

Increase Urgency

“You can’t steer a parked car,”¹³² quips Gilbert R. Rendle, former senior consultant for Alban Institute, as he speaks of people who are settled into the status quo and hesitant to change. So how does change leadership get these “parked cars” moving and on the road to change?

Kotter emphasizes that proper change planning begins with preparing the people involved. “By far the biggest mistake people make when trying to change organizations is to plunge ahead without establishing a high enough sense of urgency.... This error is fatal because transformations always fail to achieve their objectives when complacency levels are high.”¹³³ The author also delineates a number of reasons that leaders often fail to create sufficient urgency:

They overestimate how much they can force big changes on an organization. They underestimate how hard it is to drive people out of their comfort zones. They don’t recognize how their own actions can inadvertently reinforce the status quo. They lack patience.... They become paralyzed by the [difficulties] associated with reducing complacency.¹³⁴

At first blush, Kotter’s advice to raise urgency – i.e., the level of anxiety within a group – appears to run counter to systems theory that advocates reduced anxiety.

However, this is not the case. “Anxiety can be the ruin *or* the salvation of our relationships.... [A]nxiety can be our deliverance. It has motivational power. Anxiety

¹³⁰ John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 7.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³² Rendle, 11.

¹³³ Kotter, *Leading*, 4.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

provokes change. It prods and pushes us toward innovation or transformation.”¹³⁵ The change leader must be aware that it is not the presence of anxiety that is detrimental, but rather its type (chronic anxiety versus acute anxiety) and its intensity. “If ... [anxiety] reaches a certain intensity, it prevents the very change it provokes. What is stimulus becomes restraint.”¹³⁶

The literature offers a number of suggestions for implementing Kotter’s plan on increasing urgency. Dr. William Bridges, former professor and executive development consultant, encourages change leaders to draw more attention to the problem before shifting focus to the solutions. “‘Sell’ the problem that is the reason for the change. Most managers and leaders put 10% of their energy into selling the problem and 90% into selling the solution to the problem.”¹³⁷ Dean Williams also says, “People must learn why they are in a particular condition in order to invent pathways forward that produce genuine progress,” otherwise any changes made are simply “hollow and temporary gains.”¹³⁸

Karla Taylor, contributing editor to *Association Management*, advocates increasing urgency by escalating the “dissatisfaction factor,”¹³⁹ i.e., using established dissatisfactions as a tool to show the need for change. Kotter recommends that leaders “remove sources of complacency or minimize their impact.”¹⁴⁰ This disruption of complacency can be accomplished by asking probing questions to generate “collective and individual disequilibrium ... [which] draw people’s sense of responsibility beyond

¹³⁵ Steinke, *Church Family*, 15-16, emphasis added.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹³⁷ William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), 16.

¹³⁸ Williams, 5.

the current norms and job descriptions.”¹⁴¹ Rendle remarks, “A well-formed leadership question does not increase efficiency but creates disruptive challenges that cause the system discomfort by requiring inquiry, learning, and making choices.”¹⁴² While leadership – and especially Christian leadership – may not be comfortable causing such disruption in the lives of others, in order for change to occur “[t]here must be a discomfort sufficiently strong to make the people want to be different.”¹⁴³

Urgency can also be created by focusing upon future benefits. “[I]t is critical to assert the importance of outcomes. In each case it is difficult, if not impossible, to challenge a norm if there is no clearly identified outcome to provide purpose and reason and redirect the attention and resources constrained by the norm.”¹⁴⁴

Rendle cautions that leadership must monitor how the group’s anxiety is channeled lest that anxiety be directed towards the leaders. “The increase in anxiety prompts people in [a group] to search for *what* is wrong. When they do not find clear and agreeable answers, they quickly try to determine *who* is wrong. In difficult times the search for someone to blame is swift.”¹⁴⁵

When has urgency been raised high enough? “An issue is ripe when the urgency to deal with it has become generalized across the system. If only a subgroup or faction cares passionately, but most other groups in the system have other priorities on their mind, then the issue is not yet ripe.”¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ Karla Taylor, “Curing Change-O-Phobia,” *Association Management* 57 (2005): 34.

¹⁴⁰ Kotter, *Leading*, 42.

¹⁴¹ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *Adaptive*, 29.

¹⁴² Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leadership under Constraints* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 2006), 3.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Rendle, *Leading Change*, 34, emphasis added.

¹⁴⁶ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *Adaptive*, 126.

Build the Guiding Team

Why should leadership be concerned about building a guiding team instead of putting the responsibility of leading change in the hands of a single leader? Put succinctly, except for small groups or small changes, “[i]ndividuals alone, no matter how competent or charismatic, never have all the assets needed to overcome tradition and inertia.”¹⁴⁷ Kotter later expands that thought:

Because major change is so difficult to accomplish, a powerful force is required to sustain the process. No one individual ... is ever able to develop the right vision, communicate it to large numbers of people, eliminate all the key obstacles, generate short-term wins, lead and manage dozens of change projects, and anchor new approaches deep in the organization’s culture.... A strong guiding coalition is always needed – one with the right composition, level of trust, and shared objective.”¹⁴⁸

Who should be selected for inclusion in the guiding team? Systems theory offers some input in dealing with that question. When attempting to make change in a family, the person to focus upon is the one “who has the greatest capacity to bring change to the system.”¹⁴⁹ And according to systems theory, that would be a non-anxious, self-differentiated person.¹⁵⁰

Erik Brynjolfsson, Associate Professor of Information Technology at the MIT Sloan School of Management, together with consultant Amy Austin Renshaw and Marshall Van Alstyne, Ph.D. candidate at Sloan, writes of a tool for “business process reengineering” known as the Matrix of Change.¹⁵¹ One guideline in this Matrix is “to choose redesign team members for both their knowledge of functions essential to

¹⁴⁷ Kotter, *Leading*, 6.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

¹⁴⁹ Friedman, *Generation*, 22.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹⁵¹ Erik Brynjolfsson, Amy Austin Renshaw, and Marshall Van Alstyne, “The Matrix of Change,” *Sloan Management Review* 38, no. 2 (1997): 37.

business objectives and their subsequent ability to secure support from these functions.”¹⁵² Karla Taylor concurs with the latter, noting the need for acquiring “opinion leader[s] to whom others look for guidance.”¹⁵³

However, in balance to this guideline, team positions should not be automatically given to those most knowledgeable of the system. Often, “[t]he people who rose to the top of the organization because of their ability to work with the system as is will have little interest in challenging its structures, culture, or defaults.”¹⁵⁴

One of the greatest requirements for team members is the ability to transcend the immediate circumstances and see the situation from a broad perspective. Attaining such a perspective, in the words of Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky,

requires the ability to achieve some distance from those on-the-ground events. We use the metaphor of “getting on the balcony” above the “dance floor” to depict what it means to gain the distanced perspective you need to see what is really happening.... When you move back and forth between balcony and dance floor, you can continually assess what is happening in your organization and take corrective midcourse action.¹⁵⁵

As earlier mentioned, the guiding team must have a high level of trust in the eyes of the group they lead. Many activities that develop trust will be developed later in this study (under the section on buy-in), but one item should be mentioned here: leaders must build relationships with the group.

One distinctive aspect of leading adaptive change is that you must connect with the values, beliefs, and anxieties of the people you are trying to move. Being present in that way is tough to do unless your heart is part of the mix as well.... [T]o be successful, you also need to fully engage people with all ... of yourself.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Ibid., 40.

¹⁵³ Taylor, 34.

¹⁵⁴ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *Adaptive*, 51.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 7-8.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 38.

Get the Vision Right

“Without a pull toward some goal which people truly want to achieve, the forces in support of the status quo can be overwhelming. Vision establishes an overarching goal.”¹⁵⁷ Like the urgency mentioned in a previous step, vision is an aid in overcoming the incredible inertia of homeostasis. “Questions of purpose ... are of central importance at a time of deep change.... Without clarity of purpose we do not know to what to give ourselves, and so we settle for giving ourselves to what we know.”¹⁵⁸ Vision “gives the people a reason to ‘get on the boat’ and helps them appreciate why the journey must be undertaken without delay.”¹⁵⁹

But vision provides more than a means of overcoming the status quo, as Kotter explains,

In a change process, a good vision serves three important purposes. First, by clarifying the general direction for change ... [and thereby] simplifies hundreds or thousands of more detailed decisions. Second, it motivates people to take action in the right direction.... Third, it helps coordinate the actions of different people ... in a remarkably fast and efficient way.¹⁶⁰

Authors differ somewhat in detailing specific components of a good vision. Dean Williams writes, “The orienting purpose must address the threat to the group and articulate the promise that is available if the group can succeed in making the transition. Fundamentally, it must answer the question ‘Is this journey really necessary?’”¹⁶¹ Rendle explains that in helping congregations determine their vision, the consultants at Alban Institute work with the following three “Formation Questions”:

¹⁵⁷ Senge, 195.

¹⁵⁸ Rendle, *Leadership*, 10.

¹⁵⁹ Williams, 124.

¹⁶⁰ Kotter, *Leading*, 68-69.

¹⁶¹ Williams, 124.

- Who are we? (the identity question)
- What has God called us to do or to be? (the purpose question)
- Who is our neighbor? (the context question).¹⁶²

Paraphrasing from Senge, Steinke states that “vision is the group’s way of defining itself and chartering its purpose,”¹⁶³ – another factor that should be considered as leadership formulates vision.

This discussion of vision began by noting that it helps combat homeostasis. However, homeostasis need not be viewed solely as the enemy of vision and change. In an interesting twist, Williams shows that under the craftsmanship of a wise leader, vision can leverage homeostasis as an ally: “Paradoxically, one of the most powerful and effective ways to evoke the aspirations of the group is to couch the orienting purpose in terms of traditional values.”¹⁶⁴

Communicate for Buy-In

Some aspects of getting the vision right overlap into the process of generating buy-in. As such, some factors for buy-in have been discussed under that topic.

However, the scope of buy-in exceeds the narrow sphere of vision setting. How can leaders create member buy-in in the broader spectrum of change process? One way often overlooked is to tap into the core values of the group.

Would-be change leaders often limit themselves through ... not go[ing] deeply enough into the organization to discover what it stands for.... When they do not go deeply enough into what the company stands for, they end up trying to ‘push’ their ideas into the organization,¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Rendle, *Leadership*, 3.

¹⁶³ Steinke, *Church Family*, 117. Paraphrased from Senge, n.p.

¹⁶⁴ Williams, 127.

¹⁶⁵ Senge, 305.

which further erodes buy-in. Leaders must listen to and appreciate the “story” or “narrative” of the group and “what drumbeat people are marching to” – i.e., the history, loyalties, priorities, fears, concerns, hopes, aspirations, and values of the people.¹⁶⁶

But communication is a two-way street, and buy-in also increases as leadership communicates often to group members during the change process,¹⁶⁷ taking advantage of all the various venues at their disposal.¹⁶⁸ Failure to give the group advance notice when possible weakens buy-in. As Rendle phrases it, “Surprised people tend to behave badly,”¹⁶⁹ and that bad behavior is likely an indicator of lost buy-in.

Another suggestion for greater buy-in comes from Steinke, who recommends “redefining the problem,”¹⁷⁰ i.e., framing the situation from a participant-beneficial perspective. Or as William Bridges says, “There is almost always some purpose behind a change, though sometimes you need to adapt that purpose to the interests and understandings of your audience.”¹⁷¹

Buy-in can be increased as participants see progression in the change process.

Brynjolfsson illustrates this in a quote from a change leader in a manufacturing business:

In phase two, we took down the walls that had surrounded the new equipment and assembled the new machines right on the manufacturing floor in their final location. The workers saw the new technology growing right around them. Because of this, people knew it was real and didn't want to be left out.¹⁷²

As already indicated, leaders can undermine buy-in. This can happen as they assume a calculating, dispassionate approach, expecting participants to accept the

¹⁶⁶ Williams, 42-43. Cf. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *Adaptive*, 92; Williams, 42-43.

¹⁶⁷ Kotter, *Leading*, 9.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁶⁹ Rendle, *Leading Change*, 160.

¹⁷⁰ Steinke, *Church Family*, 57.

¹⁷¹ Bridges, 61. See also Senge, 217-18.

¹⁷² Brynjolfsson, Renshaw, and Alstyne, n.p.

changes mechanically.¹⁷³ Forgetting the amount of time that it took to work through the issues themselves, leadership impairs buy-in when it fails to allow participants sufficient time to process the emotional aspects of change.¹⁷⁴

Empower Action

Kotter explains, “As we use the term, empowerment is not about giving people new authority and new responsibilities and then walking away. It is all about removing barriers.”¹⁷⁵ Leadership may be tempted to ignore such barriers, not realizing the impact that such avoidance can have. “Whenever smart and well-intentioned people avoid confronting obstacles, they disempower [those they lead] and undermine change.”¹⁷⁶

The literature both reveals various barriers leadership should watch for and recommends ways to avoid or remove them. One barrier is under-involvement, and the corresponding empowerment is achieved by increasing member self-involvement. “If the group takes an active part in solving its own problems, from its best individual thinking, it will be likely to own the solutions and implement them.”¹⁷⁷

Another potential barrier is a lack of sufficient urgency. The need for urgency in the initial stages of the change plan has already been discussed. However, there is a need to increase urgency appropriately – to “turn up the temperature” – through the other stages of the plan as well:

If you try to stimulate deep change within an organization, you have to control the temperature. There are really two tasks here. The first is to raise the heat enough that people sit up, pay attention, and deal with the real threats and challenges facing them. Without some distress, there is no incentive for them to change

¹⁷³ Bridges, 59.

¹⁷⁴ Kotter, *Leading*, 88.

¹⁷⁵ Kotter and Cohen, *Heart*, 104.

¹⁷⁶ Kotter, *Leading*, 11.

¹⁷⁷ Gilbert, *Extraordinary*, 129.

anything. The second is to lower the temperature when necessary to reduce a counterproductive level of tension. Any community can take only so much pressure before it becomes either immobilized or spins out of control.¹⁷⁸

Certainly the expression “thinking outside of the box” has become cliché, yet “boxed-in” thinking is still problematic, and this type of unnecessary, self-assumed limitation on creative thinking is another barrier. Providing a tool for empowering people by breaking through this barrier is the purpose of author Dr. Stanley Gryskiewicz, Vice President at Center for Creative Leadership, in writing “Creating Positive Turbulence.” “[T]he value of positive turbulence [is] creating a novel stimulus for people in order to make connections to problems or issues they are trying to resolve in other settings.”¹⁷⁹

The author expands upon this:

Positive turbulence is a paradoxical process: You invite an energizing, disparate, invigorating, unpredictable force into your organization so that you can use its chaotic energy and direct it toward continual renewal. You create an environment that upsets the status quo and impels people toward change.

Underlying the concept of positive turbulence is the belief that creativity is stimulated by new information, fresh concepts, and broad perspective. By looking beyond the status quo, the obvious data, and the current constraints, organizations and individuals see things differently and often discover new ideas or applications.¹⁸⁰

Gryskiewicz suggests that positive turbulence can be achieved by such measures as hosting external experts and other speakers, attending conferences and training experiences, cross-functional task forces, and even “the dubious luck of being present when crisis occurs.”¹⁸¹ The author noted one company that created positive turbulence by designing a “3G” (three generation) planning team – “a strategic planning unit that is

¹⁷⁸ Heifetz and Linsky, *On the Line*, 107-08.

¹⁷⁹ Stanley S. Gryskiewicz, "Creating Positive Turbulence," *Association Management* 52, no. 1 (Jan. 2000):

n.p.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

staffed with people representing three distinct generations who range in age from their mid-20s to their mid-60s.”¹⁸²

Create Short-Term Wins

Here, again, one finds a degree of overlap between the various steps in Kotter’s plan of change. For example, incidents of positive changes (such as the aforementioned new machines on the manufacturer’s production floor) not only provide reason for buy-in, but often qualify as short-term wins as well. And to take this a step further, in the language of systems theory the buy-in and short-term wins may even create a reinforcing feedback loop as the wins add to the participants’ buy-in, and participants with increased buy-in are more likely to produce more wins.

Kotter delineates some of the basic characteristics of short-term wins. “A good short-term win has at least these three characteristics: (1) It’s visible; large numbers of people can see for themselves whether the result is real or just hype. (2) It’s unambiguous; there can be little argument over the call. (3) It’s clearly related to the change effort.”¹⁸³

This same author also highlights six ways that short-term wins help transformation: they reinforce the change effort; they provide an opportunity for a short rest and celebration; they give a means for measuring the validity of the vision; they undermine the nay-saying of cynics and resisters; they help retain the support of bosses; and they build necessary momentum.¹⁸⁴ Taylor highlights that when there is strong

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Kotter, *Leading*, 121-22.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 122-24.

resistance against large-scale change, the short-term wins may be the only way to make any positive progress at all.¹⁸⁵

Don't Let Up

As mentioned, homeostasis is not an opponent quickly or easily defeated. “Never underestimate the magnitude of the forces that reinforce complacency and that help maintain the status quo.”¹⁸⁶ This inertia is better conquered as change leaders stick with the job.

Within Senge’s theory of feedback loops is a component he labels “delay.”¹⁸⁷ He illustrates his concept of delay as the amount of time between a person’s adjusting the temperature-control knob in the shower (changed input) and the warmer water actually reaching the skin (changed output).¹⁸⁸ Change leadership must realize that there is a similar delay between initiating change (changed input) and those changes being a part of the culture of the group (changed output). Such delays are a natural component of the process.

One reason for delay is the time it takes for people to fully buy into something new. “[M]ost human beings, especially well-educated ones, buy into something only after they have had a chance to wrestle with it. Wrestling means asking questions, challenging, and arguing,”¹⁸⁹ and this process simply takes time. Although leadership might be tempted to short-cut through this process, Steinke cautions: “I have learned from my experience that by speeding up the recovery process, I maintain people’s anxiety. To help

¹⁸⁵ Taylor, 35.

¹⁸⁶ Kotter, *Leading*, 42.

¹⁸⁷ Senge, 79.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 390.

¹⁸⁹ Kotter, *Leading*, 99-100.

anxious systems I need to be a ‘nonanxious presence,’ willing to be patient, as the process is worked out and completed.”¹⁹⁰

During this period of delay, leadership is often tempted to “let up,” especially when change participants are experiencing discomfort or pain because of the change process. In such times leadership must remember the ironic reality that “[t]hose who focus only on comfort, on relieving pain, or filling another’s need, tend to forget that another’s need may be not to have their needs fulfilled.”¹⁹¹

The solution for dealing with others’ pain may not be the relief of their pain, but rather the leader building a greater toleration of that pain. “Raising our own threshold for the pain another is experiencing can often motivate the other to take more responsibility for his or her life.”¹⁹² Steinke agrees, saying that leadership “needs to have some measure of tolerance for pain in others (as well as in himself), believing that pain can be a teacher and motivator.... Without a deepening of pain, growth seldom happens.”¹⁹³

Leadership must also have the savvy to realize that at times a member’s concern for another’s pain may only be a facade to undermine the change process. “It has generally been my experience that in any community or family discussion, those who are the first to introduce concern for empathy are trying to use the togetherness force of a regressed society to get those whom they perceive to have power [i.e., leadership] to adapt to them.”¹⁹⁴ In order to “not let up,” leadership must not be sidetracked by such subtle maneuvers.

¹⁹⁰ Steinke, *Church Family*, 113.

¹⁹¹ Friedman, *Generation*, 48.

¹⁹² Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal, *Failure*, 85.

¹⁹³ Steinke, *Anxious Times*, 137.

¹⁹⁴ Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal, *Failure*, 133.

Leaders must anticipate the potential of other types of sabotage as they persevere through this stage. “Resistance, leaders must remember, is part of the leadership process.”¹⁹⁵ Lamkin interjects an encouraging perspective: “Sabotage is an ironic compliment. It is a mark that progress is trying to happen.”¹⁹⁶ Like a military general, change leaders should learn how saboteurs work and then make their “theaters” unsusceptible to hostile take-over. Calling such saboteurs “terrorists,” Friedman warns,

For terrorists to have power, whether in a family or in the family of nations, three conditions must be fulfilled: (1) the absence of well-defined [differentiated] leadership; (2) a hostage situation to which leaders are particularly vulnerable; and (3) an unreasonable faith in reasonableness [as the solution to the standoff].¹⁹⁷

When tempted to let up, leadership might revisit the group’s vision and purpose. “I believe one of the reasons a deep sense of purpose is so important for leaders is that it also provides an anchor.”¹⁹⁸

Change leaders can also encourage themselves by remembering what has been accomplished thus far in the change process – and considering what gains might be lost if they give up. “Whenever you let up before the job is done, critical momentum can be lost and regression may follow. Until changed practices attain a new equilibrium and have been driven into the culture, they can be very fragile.”¹⁹⁹ Instead, at such times leadership must “Be patient.... The key is to continue to sell the idea of a different, better future.”²⁰⁰

Make Change Stick

Williams writes, “A transition challenge is ... given a much greater chance of success if management can provide a recurring mechanism for getting the people to take

¹⁹⁵ Steinke, *Anxious Times*, 121.

¹⁹⁶ Lamkin, 483.

¹⁹⁷ Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal, *Failure*, 201.

¹⁹⁸ Senge, 335.

full possession of the vision.”²⁰¹ He later adds, “One thing is certain: To embody the transition ideal is generally not a one-time activity but an ongoing exercise.”²⁰²

Kotter describes where this step fits in the overall plan of change: “The first four steps in the transformation process help defrost a hardened status quo.... Phases five to seven then introduce many new practices. The last stage grounds the changes in the corporate culture and helps them stick.”²⁰³ This final measure is very important since “a leader can never assume success because he or she has brought about [initial] change.”²⁰⁴

The Process of Change

As important as planning is, the literature reveals that leadership’s responsibility is far from over when the planning is done; in fact, it is only just beginning. Similar to the difference between a couple planning for children and their actually raising children, not all elements of the change-leadership experience can be planned. As Williams explains, “In the realm of human systems, you don’t manage a transition; you orchestrate a transition. The process must allow for unpredictable events, occasional detours, and emotional explosions—which are all part of the adaptive work of adjusting to a new reality.”²⁰⁵ The following literature review will move beyond the planning of change to consider the process of change.

People often fail to comprehend the degree to which the change process impacts participants. Using the term “transition” for the level of change considered in this study, Bridges compares routine change with the more impacting transition:

¹⁹⁹ Kotter, *Leading*, 133.

²⁰⁰ Taylor, 34-35.

²⁰¹ Williams, 133.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 139.

²⁰³ Kotter, *Leading*, 22.

Change is situational: the move to a new site, the retirement of the founder, the reorganization of the roles of the team, the revisions of the pension plan. Transition, on the other hand, is psychological; it is a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about.²⁰⁶

After establishing the impact that may come with transition, Bridges details this three-stage process of transition:

Because transition is a process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world, we can say that transition starts with an ending and finishes with a beginning... [Between these two worlds is the middle stage] when the old is gone but the new isn't fully operational. We call this time the "neutral zone": it's when the critical psychological realignments and the repatterning take place.²⁰⁷

The study will consider each of these three stages in detail.

The Ending

"Transition starts with an ending. That is paradoxical, but true."²⁰⁸ Bridges explains that this seems so obvious, yet is often overlooked, when he says, "The leaders forget endings and neutral zones; they try to start with the final stage of transition."²⁰⁹

Rendle echoes and expands upon this thought:

When thinking of change, people naturally want to start with the new beginning. ... It is the desire to move ahead and fix the problem without wanting to slow down to deal with the difficulties along the way. In large part, it is the wish not to deal with the need to let go of old ways or to live through the confusion of the chaos that feels so unproductive.

Yet the fact is that in order to make the transition into the new goals or plans of the congregation, people first need to do the work of letting go of what has been.²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ Friedman, Treadwell, and Beal, *Failure*, 247.

²⁰⁵ Williams, 118.

²⁰⁶ Bridges, 3.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²¹⁰ Rendle, *Leading Change*, 114.

Bridges advises leaders not to be too quick to interpret the normal negative emotions that accompany loss as revolt. “When endings take place, people get angry, sad, frightened, depressed, and confused. These emotional states can be mistaken for bad morale, but they aren’t. They are the signs of grieving, the natural sequence of emotions people go through then they lose something that matters to them.”²¹¹ In short, “it is the losses, not the changes, that they’re reacting to.”²¹²

Bridges also suggests that leaders define what has ended and what has not.²¹³ Of the former he says, “Whatever must end, must end. Don’t drag it out.”²¹⁴ But whether a particular item is kept or canceled, the wise leader will treat the cherished items of the past with respect.²¹⁵

Leadership should remember that the success of the whole change process might rest upon how well this stage is handled. “[F]ailure to provide help with endings and losses leads to more problems for organizations in transition than anything else.”²¹⁶

The Neutral Zone

Bridges writes, “Welcome to the middle phase of the transition process.... I call it the neutral zone because it is nowhere between two somewheres, and because while you are in it, forward motion seems to stop while you hang suspended between was and will be.”²¹⁷ This author also says the neutral zone “is the limbo between the old sense of identity and the new. It is the time when the old way of doing things is gone but the new

²¹¹ Bridges, 28.

²¹² Ibid., 26-27.

²¹³ Ibid., 33.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 37.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 34.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 8.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 40.

way doesn't feel comfortable yet."²¹⁸ Rendle calls this phase a "passage through chaos" and a "birthing center."²¹⁹

In many ways the neutral zone roughly corresponds to the Kotter's *Don't Let Up* step in the plan of change, as evidenced by many common characteristics. Bridges specifies the following characteristics of the neutral zone, which are also indicative of the earlier discussion: a desire to rush through or bypass this stage (with accompanying risk of jeopardizing both short gains and the overall change progress), confusion, pain or discomfort, resistance and possible sabotage, increased anxiety, decreased motivation, doubting, and decreased productivity.²²⁰ Comparing the two, it is understandable how a time of such confusion (the neutral zone) would make it easier for participants and leader alike to have a greater inclination to "let up."

This phase of the change process can be a grueling one. Comparing it to the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites under Moses, Bridges says that the neutral zone "isn't a trip from one side of the street to the other. It's a journey from one identity to another, and that kind of journey takes time."²²¹

The New Beginning

Once the neutral zone has been navigated, change participants are in a position to begin their new life in a new world. This is the time, according to Bridges, "when people develop the new identity, experience the new energy, and discover the new sense of purpose."²²²

²¹⁸ Ibid., 8.

²¹⁹ Rendle, *Leading Change*, 83.

²²⁰ Bridges, 8, 9, 16, 40, 41, 46.

²²¹ Ibid., 43.

²²² Ibid., 5.

When will a person or group move from the neutral zone to the new beginning? That is difficult to forecast. “Like any organic process, beginnings cannot be made to happen by a word or act. They happen when the timing of the transition process allows them to happen.”²²³

But while the timing is uncertain, some other factors are pretty clear. A new beginning requires that people have a purpose, a picture (vision), the plan, and a part to play.²²⁴ Bridges later punctuates this need for purpose: “Successful new beginnings are based on a clear and appropriate purpose. Without one, there may be lots of starts but no real beginnings.”²²⁵

Bridges explains that while in theory the three-staged process of change outlined above is clear and concise, in reality the position of a group member in the process is not always easily discerned. People travel through the change process at different rates, meaning that different individuals are at different stages at any given point in time.²²⁶ Furthermore, a given person may even be at one point of the process relative to some aspects, while at other points with other aspects. As Bridges puts it, “Endings are going on in one place, in another everything is in neutral zone chaos, and in yet another place the new beginning is already palpable,”²²⁷ making it difficult at times to determine a group’s process status.

But even if a person’s or group’s position in the process is at times unclear, the need for the process is not: “Without a beginning, the transition is incomplete. And

²²³ Ibid., 59.

²²⁴ Ibid., 60.

²²⁵ Ibid., 64.

²²⁶ Ibid., 65.

²²⁷ Ibid., 9.

without transition, the change changes nothing.”²²⁸ In order to reach the goal, each stage of the process must be completed.

Rendle reveals two tools that can help a leader understand a participant’s experience in the change process. Taking an overall perspective on the whole process of change, Rendle describes a phenomenon he calls “the roller coaster of change.”²²⁹ This “ride” (change) begins with an initial high level of excitement. However, in due time that excitement gives way and the emotions “bottom out,” as participants better understand and feel what change involves. Ultimately, the feelings of excitement reach another peak as participants persevere and realize the benefits of change. Leaders must grasp this process to understand better their participants with their foreseeable changes in mood, and to adapt leadership styles to meet the specific needs along the way.

Rendle also relates an incident that taught him a means for church people to communicate their own feelings more easily during tumultuous circumstances – and a way that change leaders can help them understand how change is impacting their own group members. Rendle recounts that when called to help a church board work through some difficulties that had arisen,

I asked them to break into three small groups, each with a separate task. One group was asked to identify the biblical story they thought their board or their congregation was living out at the time. In other words, if they were to place themselves in the larger biblical story, where would they find themselves?²³⁰

The author explains how this exercise provided the smaller group, then the whole group, both an insight into their own personal feelings and a vehicle to communicate those feeling to others effectively.

²²⁸ Ibid., 64.

²²⁹ Rendle, *Leading Change*, 108ff.

The reviewed literature shows that the work of the change leader is not limited to establishing a change plan and seeing it enacted. Rather, it indicates that along with planning the change, the leader must also be prepared to deal with the effects of the change process. This process works within the heart of the participants but may be expressed externally in a number of different forms and emotions, and these often vary as the participant progresses through the change process.

The Politics in Change

Politics and ministry are areas often thought to be unrelated. Dr. Robert Burns of Covenant Theological Seminary writes, “Politics is a dirty word in the church.”²³¹ Elsewhere Burns, together with Dr. Ronald Cervero, professor at the University of Georgia and a prominent writer in the field of politics and adult education, remarks that politics is not a word normally associated with the ministry. Yet, ministry “involves negotiating with others, choosing among conflicting wants and interests, developing trust, locating support and opposition, being sensitive to timing, and knowing the informal and formal organizational ropes. In short, the ministry involves politics.”²³²

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky concur, saying that “small *p* politics exists in every group of human beings, from families to huge multinational corporations.”²³³ Later they state, “We have used the phrase *thinking politically* to describe the leadership task of understanding the relationships and concerns among people in an organization.”²³⁴

²³⁰ Ibid., 27.

²³¹ Robert W. Burns, “Learning the Politics of Ministry Practice” (University of Georgia, 2001), 1.

²³² Robert W. Burns and Ronald M. Cervero, “How Pastors Learn the Politics of Ministry Practice,” *Religious Education* 97, no. 4 (2002): 304.

²³³ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *Adaptive*, 90.

²³⁴ Ibid., 133.

The above establishes that there is in fact a political aspect of ministry leadership. Literature relative to politics within the realm of change leadership will now be reviewed under three sub-categories: Planning, Empowerment, and Negotiation.

Planning

Cervero combined efforts with Dr. Arthur Wilson, professor at Cornell University, to produce *Working the Planning Table: Negotiating Democratically for Adult, Continuing, and Workplace Education*.²³⁵ These authors define planning as, “a social activity whereby people construct educational programs by negotiating personal, organizational, and social interest in contexts marked by socially structured relations of power.”²³⁶ Of particular note to this study, the change leader must ponder the ethical²³⁷ question: Whose “interests” are to be presented in that planning?

Often such outside factors as “traditions, political relationships, and needs and interests ... profoundly influence the planning process.”²³⁸ Planners should be watchful that these agendas and other “interests that are unrelated to educational outcomes” not sway the planning.²³⁹

To this end, Cervero and Wilson suggest that planners ask themselves two questions, “Who benefits?” and “Who should benefit?” which embody what should be the primary focus of planning.²⁴⁰ “Decide whose interests matter and assess their

²³⁵ Ronald M. Cervero and Arthur L. Wilson, *Working the Planning Table: Negotiating Democratically for Adult, Continuing, and Workplace Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

²³⁷ Ronald M. Cervero and Arthur L. Wilson, "What Really Matters in Adult Education Program Planning: Lessons in Negotiating Power and Interests.," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 69 (1996): 11.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

²³⁹ Cervero and Wilson, *Negotiating*, 111.

²⁴⁰ Ronald M. Cervero and Arthur L. Wilson, eds., *Power in Practice: Adult Education and the Struggle for Knowledge and Power in Society*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 268.

needs,”²⁴¹ giving due consideration to the interest of all stakeholders while remembering that the needs of the learner come first.²⁴²

Empowerment

Cervero and Wilson define “power” as “the capacity to act, which is distributed to people by virtue of their position and participation in enduring social and organizational relationships.”²⁴³ Roy M. Oswald, a founding consultant for Alban Institutes and a prolific author, simply calls it “the ability to get what you want.”²⁴⁴

Research by Burns and Cervero identifies three means of leadership empowerment: (1) empowerment coming from formal authority (i.e., from one’s official office or role); (2) empowerment from informal authority (from relationships); and (3) empowerment by others in leadership (passing along empowerment from an empowered person to a less-empowered person through education, opportunity, and interaction).²⁴⁵

This informal (relational) authority “can be even more potent than formal authority in the implementation of change within the church.”²⁴⁶ Burns later notes,

It is critical for pastors to understand that they come to a church with a level of formal authority, but their relational power has not been established. Earning trust and respect is a vital negotiating strategy if pastors are going to effectively promote their vision and ministry philosophy.²⁴⁷

In the summary of his findings Burns states, “The most important item concerning negotiation as a ministry skill identified in this study was the role of relationships in the

²⁴¹ Cervero and Wilson, *Negotiating*, 90.

²⁴² Cervero and Wilson, “What Really Matters,” 69.

²⁴³ Cervero and Wilson, *Negotiating*, 85.

²⁴⁴ Roy M. Oswald, “Power Analysis of a Congregation,” (Washington, D.C.: The Alban Institute, 2001), 7.

²⁴⁵ Robert W. Burns and Ronald M. Cervero, “Issues Framing the Politics of Pastoral Ministry Practice,” *Review of Religious Research* 45, no. 3 (2004): 240-41.

²⁴⁶ Burns, “Learning the Politics,” 126.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

ministry.... Without this understanding of relational and political dynamics, pastors are often surprised when they face difficulties and opposition.²⁴⁸

Leaders may occasionally need to estimate the amount of political power held by members within their group. Oswald has developed an instrument for such a purpose, the Power Analysis Chart, based upon various types and levels of political power held by individuals or groups.²⁴⁹ In using this chart, a leader lists the individuals of influence then marks in which of the four categories of power (reputational, structural, coalitional, and communicational) each individual wields sizeable influence. The influencer is then given a score ranging from one to four, based upon the number of categories marked. The higher the score, the greater the person's power in the congregation. The chart also provides space for evaluating the leader's credibility with each person, in essence determining the degree to which each person of power is a friend or foe.

Negotiating

Another aspect of politics for change leadership is the need for negotiating, which Burns defines as “[t]he act of conferring, bargaining, or discussing with a view toward reaching agreement with others.”²⁵⁰ Since “[p]eople in positions of power never give up easily, and in fact they may become more hardened and resolute when challenged,”²⁵¹ there is always a need for negotiating during times of change-induced stress.

But not all negotiating is between combatants. In a table entitled “Negotiation Strategies of Pastors,” Burns leans on the work of Cervero and Wilson, presenting four basic negation scenarios based upon a two-by-two matrix of whether (1) the parties have

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 225-26.

²⁴⁹ Oswald, 16.

²⁵⁰ Burns, “Learning the Politics,” 10.

consensual or conflictual interests, and (2) their power relations are symmetrical or asymmetrical. The table also includes the suggested negotiation strategies for each of those situations.²⁵² Burns also summarizes four general negotiation schemes that correlate to the matrix:

When there is a symmetrical relationship with consensual interests, participants should work at problem solving. When interests are consensual, but the relationship is asymmetrical, networking may be the proper response. When conflictual interests occur among persons in symmetrical relationship, bargaining is an appropriate action. When significant differences in interest are matched with asymmetrical relations, the appropriate option may be to counteract.²⁵³

In summary, although many may not naturally connect ministry and politics, the literature shows that they are indeed interrelated. In the planning and process of change within a ministry, leadership must maintain a proper political outlook, seeing that the needs of all parties are appropriately represented (or at least attempting to negotiate to that end), while avoiding the temptation to use its power to drive personal agendas.

Furthermore, the literature cited in the broader scope of leading change reveals this task to be a multi-faceted undertaking. The change leader must oversee such matters as mapping out the plan for change, dealing with the results of participants undergoing the process of change, while managing the politics that impact all elements of the change.

Biblical and Theological Literature

“[A]long with being a literate people, we [Christians] are also a biblical people so it is not difficult to turn to our own sources.”²⁵⁴ What Rendle here writes in reference to one aspect of change (the chaos that accompanies adaptive change) is equally true for the

²⁵¹ Cervero and Wilson, "What Really Matters," 25.

²⁵² Burns, "Learning the Politics," 173.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁵⁴ Rendle, *Leadership*, 8.

broader discussion of the topic: The Bible and other Bible-centric materials speak to the issues of change and the leadership in it.

Biblical Narrative

The Bible gives numerous examples as well as directives that relate to leadership in change, many of which confirm the previous discussions in this review. One prominent Bible example of leadership is Moses, who led the Israelites for forty years as they transitioned from an Egyptian-enslaved clan²⁵⁵ to an independent nation ready to conquer and settle a new frontier.²⁵⁶ As a change leader, Moses was driven by a worthy vision,²⁵⁷ which he shared with others in leadership,²⁵⁸ and together they shared this vision with the change participants.²⁵⁹ Moses weathered the Rendle-type rollercoaster of emotions that his change participants struggled through in the process of change.²⁶⁰ He communicated for participant buy-in by (1) regularly referring to their destination in terms of current ownership (e.g., “the land that God has given to you”²⁶¹), and (2) assigning possession of specific land tracts while still en route.²⁶² Moses had to deal with internal and external political matters,²⁶³ and the whole narrative gives the subtle but consistent tone of leadership that was differentiated from both his internal followers and his external opposition.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁵ Exodus 6.

²⁵⁶ Joshua 1:10-11.

²⁵⁷ Exodus 3:7-10.

²⁵⁸ Exodus 4:28.

²⁵⁹ Exodus 4:29-31.

²⁶⁰ e.g., Exodus 14:10-12; 14:30-15:21; 16:1-3.

²⁶¹ Exodus 6:7-8; 12:25; Deuteronomy 1:8.

²⁶² Numbers 26:53ff.

²⁶³ Numbers 16; 27:1-7; 20:14-21.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Lamkin, 471.

A second model of change leadership is seen in the ministry of Jesus Christ, whose earthly mission was to transform people who by nature are disgusting before God²⁶⁵ to those that God will one day display as the zenith of this work.²⁶⁶ Christ's actions as change leader were consistent with much of systems theory. The Gospels consistently presented him as a non-anxious presence.²⁶⁷ He showed a high degree of self-differentiation, refusing to be triangled into problems that distracted him from his mission,²⁶⁸ and neither cutting off those who rejected him²⁶⁹ nor promoting a fusion that forced conformity.²⁷⁰

Jesus also incorporated in his work a number of the steps identified in Kotter's Plan of Change. He increased urgency as he proclaimed that the long-awaited prophecies were at the point of fulfillment.²⁷¹ He built a guiding team²⁷² in the twelve disciples.²⁷³ He gave purpose and vision.²⁷⁴ He communicated for buy-in by compassion-driven helps in the form of healing and miracles,²⁷⁵ and by foretelling future blessings.²⁷⁶ He empowered by calling and sending,²⁷⁷ and provided for short-term wins.²⁷⁸ He exemplified the principle of "don't let up," as he pressed forward while facing regular

²⁶⁵ Isaiah 64:6.

²⁶⁶ Ephesians 2:7.

²⁶⁷ Mark 4:38-40.

²⁶⁸ Luke 12:13-14.

²⁶⁹ Luke 23:33-34; John 13:2-5, 21, 26.

²⁷⁰ Matthew 23:37.

²⁷¹ Matthew 4:17; John 4:25-26.

²⁷² It should be noted that the sense of "guiding" here does vary somewhat from Kotter's design of a guiding team. Kotter's description includes a sense of designing the change plan, while the biblical account here only shows one that will be the human agent to carry out the plan that has already been designed by God.

²⁷³ Luke 6:12-13.

²⁷⁴ Matthew 28:19-20.

²⁷⁵ Matthew 14:15-21; John 12:9.

²⁷⁶ John 14:2-3.

²⁷⁷ Luke 10:1; 19:5-9; Matthew 28:18-20.

²⁷⁸ Luke 10:17.

attacks and attempts to ensnare him,²⁷⁹ attempts on his life²⁸⁰ and the awareness of his upcoming excruciating death.²⁸¹ He also took measures to make change stick.²⁸²

However, while these and other biblical examples of leadership coincide in many aspects with the literature already reviewed, they differ significantly in at least one matter: taking the initiative in planning. The literature's general tone of planning, and the discussion of determining vision in particular, clearly implies that leaders determine the path to be pursued. The biblical examples of leadership do not necessarily reflect that approach.

While Moses was unquestionably the leader of the nation, in the realm of planning, his role is presented not as the leader, but as an obedient follower. Even the more mundane planning of when and where the group would travel was not his decision.²⁸³ From the participants' perspective, Moses did provide plans, but the narrative consistently shows that those plans came from somewhere other than Moses' own initiative. Specific instances include the plans for the exodus from Egypt,²⁸⁴ the crossing of the Red Sea,²⁸⁵ and the sending men to spy out the new land²⁸⁶ – all which, Moses writes, were given to him from God. The example of Christ shows the same reality, for like Moses, Christ did not take the initiative for determining his plans, but rather followed the plans of God.²⁸⁷

²⁷⁹ Matthew 22:15-40.

²⁸⁰ Luke 4:28-29.

²⁸¹ Matthew 26:39.

²⁸² John 14:26.

²⁸³ Exodus 13:21-22.

²⁸⁴ Exodus 11-12.

²⁸⁵ Exodus 14:13ff.

²⁸⁶ Numbers 13.

²⁸⁷ John 6:38, Matthew 26:39.

The fifteenth chapter of Acts illustrates the difference between acute and chronic anxiety during transition. Many in the church grew anxious when they discovered that Paul's teachings ran counter to their traditions. The Jerusalem (headquarters) church heard Paul's defense and, after giving due reflection, the leaders accepted the change and gave their blessings. For these leaders, the acute anxiety subsided and they gave support to Paul's work.²⁸⁸ In contrast, the chronically anxious traditionalists²⁸⁹ refused to accept the change and regularly attempted to stop Paul and otherwise undermine his work.²⁹⁰

The Bible advocates a non-anxious presence²⁹¹ even in the most chaotic conditions.²⁹² And consistent with Friedman's theory, the interrelationship within the church is often given in family terminology, e.g., fellow Christians are called "brother" and "sister,"²⁹³ and committing of one's life to God is described as "adoption."²⁹⁴

In James 4:13-17, the Scriptures discredit presumptuous planning as being short-sighted and failing to consider all pertinent factors. However, they do not speak against human planning altogether, but rather call upon planners to give due consideration to the plans and allowance of God.

The Bible speaks to the issues of change participants as well. It describes pastors (who are likely to be the change leaders in a congregation) as the rulers or managers of the church, comparing their leadership to the manner in which a father would rule his own children in biblical days.²⁹⁵ Those striving to obey God are thus compelled to follow

²⁸⁸ Acts 15:22-29.

²⁸⁹ Acts 15:5.

²⁹⁰ e.g., Acts 21:28ff.

²⁹¹ Luke 10:41-42; Philippians 4:5-6a.

²⁹² Psalms 46:10.

²⁹³ 1Corinthians 7:15, James 2:15.

²⁹⁴ Romans 8:23, Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5.

²⁹⁵ 1Timothy 3:4, 5.

the direction of proper pastoral leadership. But understood in its true light, ultimately this following of human leadership is built upon faith that nothing is beyond the control of God, including the decisions of human leadership.²⁹⁶

Extra-Biblical Literature

A study of Christian history reveals that the struggles of transitioning from an established biblical translation to a newer one are not unique to modern times. Augustine wrote of his objection to Jerome's new Latin translation of the Old Testament (a portion of the later-venerated Latin Vulgate). Augustine preferred an earlier Latin work because it was translated from his favored Septuagint. He objected to Jerome's Hebrew-based translation as a work deemed "new and opposed to the authority of the Septuagint version," arguing that it would be an "offence [to] the flocks of Christ, whose ears and hearts have become accustomed to listen to that version to which the seal of approbation was given by the apostles themselves."²⁹⁷

Paul Wegner, Professor of Bible at Moody Bible Institute, relates that even the King James Version²⁹⁸ was not at first readily received by some people because of theological issues. "The Authorized Version was not without its detractors, however; among the most fervent were the pilgrims who brought the Geneva Bible to the New World. The Authorized Version was rejected for its emphasis on the divine right of kings."²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Proverbs 21:1.

²⁹⁷ Augustin, "Letter LXXXII," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: A Select Library of the Christian Church (First Series)*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 361.

²⁹⁸ Also known as KJV or the Authorized Version.

²⁹⁹ Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 313.

As these two instances illustrate, transitioning to a new Bible version is a time when various issues surface: issues of losing the familiar and of questioning the validity of unfamiliar. James R. White, director of a Christian apologetics organization, published *The King James Only Controversy*³⁰⁰ in an attempt to give a reasoned consideration to many of the various issues that arise as some contemporary Christians deal with the transition from the King James Version to another in this era. He ultimately argues for the legitimacy of contemporary versions.

In stark contrast to White's conclusion is the work of Peter S. Ruckman, President and Founder of Pensacola Bible Institute. Ruckman is prominent among those adhering strictly to the KJV, and is even called "[t]he best known advocate of KJV Onlyism in the United States."³⁰¹ In *The Scholarship Only Controversy*,³⁰² a rebuttal to White's *Controversy*, Ruckman attempts to make his case based more on character assassinations against his opponents and their ideologies rather than primarily dealing with the facts of the issue. For example, Ruckman calls White such names as "silly Jimmy"³⁰³ and "Jimmy Cricket."³⁰⁴ He calls White's book "latter-day Laodicean apostasy" and "the most cockeyed piece of amateur 'scholarship' that ever came out of Hogwash University or Hot Air Seminary."³⁰⁵ Descriptions such as this are not limited to White and his work, but are also made of non-KJV Bible versions and those accepting them: "All Alexandrian

³⁰⁰ James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Translations?* 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2009).

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 151.

³⁰² Peter S. Ruckman, *The Scholarship Only Controversy: Can You Trust the Professional Liars?* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1996; reprint, 2000).

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii.

clones³⁰⁶ are ‘programmed’ in the same baloney factories. They all come out as advocates of ‘Scholarship Onlyism’: one uniform string of baloney sausages.”³⁰⁷

Another aspect of the Ruckman methodology is that he superimposes the Bible version debate into unrelated biblical narratives. For example, in his disagreement over the weight scholarship gives to certain Greek manuscripts, he interposes these manuscripts into the account of humanity’s original temptation and fall into sin: “Eve does not *add* to the Scripture (i.e., ‘D’ in the Western family at Rome) until she *subtracts* from the Scripture (i.e., ⚡ and B in Egypt).”³⁰⁸

G. A. (Gail) Riplinger’s *New Age Bible Versions*³⁰⁹ is a book that demands the attention of those leading a transition from the KJV to a newer translation. With copies of this book widely and often freely distributed, Riplinger’s arguments have had significant impact upon many people. This book is self-described as the “scoop” exposing a discovered “alliance between the new versions of the bible [sic] (NIV, NASB, Living Bible and others) and the chief conspirators in the New Age movement’s push for a One World Religion.”³¹⁰

Riplinger presents the KJV as the standard by which all other versions are evaluated, even on a word-by-word basis.³¹¹ The author argues that any alteration in wording is comparable to the impact of altering the genetic code within an offspring’s DNA:

³⁰⁶ “Alexandrian clones” is Ruckman’s term of intentional derision used of modern Bibles, whose translations are influenced by Greek manuscripts found in Alexandria, Egypt.

³⁰⁷ Ruckman, xix.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 11, emphasis in original.

³⁰⁹ G. A. Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions* (Ararat, VA: AV Publications, 1993).

³¹⁰ Ibid., 1.

³¹¹ Ibid., 17-22.

If God put the key to one's passing physical life in such a perfect and complex format, can you imagine how intricately and carefully the key to eternal life ... would be [formatted]? As with the genetic code, one change sets off a series of alterations which makes the 'new born' unlike instead of like his parents. The changes, additions and omissions discovered in the new versions have affected the health of the body of Christ and taken it step by step away from the image of God.³¹²

In reviewing works by Ruckman, Riplinger, and similar authors, White

comments:

Charges of blasphemy, heresy, even stupidity fly thick from some elements of the KJV Only movement.... [S]adly the movement as a whole is marked by such invectives. The willingness of people to dehumanize those who disagree through personal attack breeds an 'us versus them' mentality in those who buy into their belief. Anyone who would seek to reason with these individuals runs the risk of being labeled as an 'enemy of God's Word,' i.e., the KJV.³¹³

Such literature as the examples above would not of itself warrant mention in this section. However, the wide and aggressive distribution of such materials makes this a topic that persons leading a transition from the KJV to other translations cannot ignore. Lacking the personal background to evaluate the claim of such authors adequately, some pastors and congregants form conclusions based upon the possibility or assumption that such arguments are valid. Leaders desiring to transition from the KJV must anticipate the obstacles that will come from people influenced by materials of this nature.

In *A Juror's Verdict on the King James Only Debate*,³¹⁴ Jonathan E. Stonis, a layman of unknown credentials, undertakes the task of presenting a researched consideration of the various arguments and evidences, removed from the emotions of the debate. The example of Stonis should encourage church leaders to take up the cause of

³¹² Ibid., 4-5.

³¹³ White, 15-16.

³¹⁴ Johnathan E. Stonis, *A Juror's Verdict: On the King James Only Debate* (Bear, DE: ASJORA Publications, 2005).

educating their people, allowing them the opportunity to form reasoned conclusions on this topic.

The reviewed literature indicates that the Bible does have a significant voice in the subject of leading the transition of Bible versions. Examples of historical change leaders show that transition is nothing unique to contemporary Christendom. Such examples offer encouragement that today's transitions will be replaced in due time just like the transitions of yesteryear. Nevertheless, yesterday's examples, today's experiences, and the reviewed literature all point to transition being a time of struggle – the struggle that always accompanies significant change.

In summary, the literature relevant to leading in the transition of Bible versions provides much needed insights for the change leader. Leadership must understand that even though change ultimately happens within individuals, those individual decisions are typically influenced by group dynamics. Effective change requires proper planning, but planning is only a portion of the leader's work; the leader must also deal with the process and politics of change as the plans are developed and implemented. The change leader must also give due consideration to biblical and theological aspects of this type of change – utilizing applicable principles of leadership as well as anticipating factors that may become obstacles to the change process.

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the change process of a Baptist congregation that transitioned from the King James Version to a modern-language Bible as its primary worship text. Accomplishing this study required the proper design and implementation of suitable study methodology as well as an understanding of the limitations and biases of the people involved and the methods employed. This chapter will discuss each of these elements.

The Design and Implementation of the Study

This study was structured around the qualitative case study method, as outlined in Sharon Merriam's *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*.³¹⁵ Qualitative research offers a number of characteristics considered advantageous to the intent of this study. "[T]he researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis." As such, "the total context can be considered; what is known about the situation can be expanded through sensitivity to nonverbal aspects; ... the researcher can ... explore anomalous responses."³¹⁶ Whereas quantitative research depends solely upon participants' insight in evaluating and expressing their experiences, qualitative research allows for a fuller expression of the experience by the participant with both participant and researcher involved in discovering the meanings in that experience.

³¹⁵ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 151.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

Merriam also characterizes qualitative research as an inductive process that “builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than tests existing theory. Often qualitative studies are undertaken because there is a lack of theory.”³¹⁷ This research was such a study. It simply sought to discover, in the experience of the participants, the circumstances and outcome of their church’s Bible version transition. There was no preconceived explanation or other theory to evaluate. With such a lack of theory, the qualitative research model seemed best to fit the needs of this study.

The Selection of Case Study and Participants

In designing the selection process, the first step involved determining the type of a congregation to study. The following criteria was specified: a candidate congregation must be a BMA church currently using a contemporary-language version; it must have undergone the transition from the KJV to a contemporary-language version within the previous five years; and it must be large enough to have staff other than the senior pastor.

In consultation with seminary advisors, the number of interview participants was set at seven. According to the design model, a participant must have been attending the transitioning church during the transition period and must still be active in that congregation. Additionally, the senior pastor was automatically selected as an interviewee (provided he met the above requirements).

With the pastor as the first interview participant, the balance of the participant pool was to consist of two staff and four congregants. Since the staff and congregants at this church were largely unknown to the researcher, these participants were selected by the senior pastor to fit the desired group composition as outlined by the researcher. The

³¹⁷ Ibid.

specifications for this desired group composition consisted of four criteria, which were the following: first, staff participants, which should reflect age and gender diversity; second, congregant participants, which should have near-equal numbers of men and women and represent the full spectrum of adult age ranges; third, the congregant participants should include an equal number of those who were originally for and against transitioning; fourth, at least one congregant participant should be a lay leader, preferably having an official position (e.g., deacon or board member). Additionally, the researcher would prefer that the participant pool (i.e., the collective of all three categories) include at least two parents or grandparents of dependent-age children who attended the church at the time of transition. This would provide the opportunity for hearing the transition experience of the children, an otherwise unheard group.

In actual implementation, the selection of the congregation turned out to be a search for the proverbial needle-in-a-haystack, rather than a selection from a several qualifying churches. Numerous contacts with friends and denominational leaders, seeking information on any church that had recently undergone transition, proved fruitless. Then one day a casual mention of the dissertation topic with a fellow pastor at a seminar occasioned that pastor's mentioning that the BMA church he pastored had in fact undergone such a transition during his pastorate. Since this was the only church found to meet the criteria, permission was sought and granted from the seminary advisor to pursue a study with this congregation.

As outlined in the study design, this senior pastor automatically became an interview participant, and he selected the other six interviewees after being made aware of the desired group composition. However, the selection process produced a participant

pool that was slightly different from the design model. Since only two of the church's current staff had gone through the transition, they were selected by default. The two did give equal gender representation, but with both being over sixty years old, they did not reflect the ideal in age distribution.

Among the congregant participants, there were a number of variations from the design model. For one, there was a slight difference in gender representation, with only one woman in the group instead of the desired two. There was also a significant variance in age-distribution among participants, with a group of three in the thirty-to-thirty-five (approximately) bracket, and the remaining four in their sixties (approximately). One major variance from the design criteria for the participant pool was the lack of a dissenting voice – there was not a single participant who had been against the transition.

Some explanations are possible for these deviations from the ideal. For one, the interviews were conducted on a holiday weekend. This scheduling decision was made by the pastor after considering all mutually available dates in light of the church's busy schedule. Holding the interviews on a holiday weekend required the scheduling of a late appointment for one participant, caused cancellation for another, and possibly prevented others from being able to participate.

As just mentioned, one participant backed out at the last minute. This scheduled participant contacted the pastor on the day interviews were to begin and said he was unavailable. A last-minute substitute participant was located and scheduled for the second day of interviews. The full degree to which this change impacted the participant pool composition is not known.

The reason for the lack of a dissenting participant was the fact that there was no real opposition to transitioning. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

One participant was at first thought not to meet a requirement of the design criteria, for he was not attending the church when transition began. However, because of his contribution to later portions of the transition process (which will be detailed in Chapter Four) the pastor strongly felt that he should be included in the participant pool and therefore scheduled him as a participant. Although not initially convinced, after hearing all interviews and obtaining a better understanding of the transition process, the researcher agreed with the pastor's decision.

The Interviews

Three sets of interview questions (for pastor, staff, and congregants) were compiled. The basic content of the three was the same, but questions were adjusted to reflect differences in leadership roles and involvement in the change process.

A cover letter was also composed for the participants. This letter introduced the researcher and his work, gave a basic description of the interviews, and assured participants that their identity and responses would be kept confidential.

The cover letter and interview questions were emailed to the pastor in time for him to distribute them to the participants two weeks prior to the interviews. This choice to allow participants to preview the interview questions seemed advantageous because of the following factors: (1) the participants were to recall facts and feelings from as much as three-and-a-half years earlier; (2) they were asked to provide illustrations depicting the process, which would be difficult without some forethought; and (3) the researcher felt that fuller responses to all questions could be achieved by giving participants time to

reflect upon questions in advance. This premise finds a degree of support in the interviews of this study, for the length and depth of the responses from those previewing the question were decidedly superior to those of the participant who was unable to preview them.

The actual interview sessions were conducted in person over a two-day period with only one person interviewed at a time. These sessions began with a short pre-interview discussion that obtained basic personal and contact information, reviewed the consent form and obtained the necessary signature, and attempted to set the tone for the interview. Participants were encouraged to “tell their story” by pursuing any thoughts, incidents, or other tangents at any point throughout the interview.

In order to help gain a fuller comprehension of each participant’s “story” of transition, the interview questions were designed to encourage the participants to share both the facts and the feelings from their experiences. The semi-structured format was selected to encourage participants to describe their experiences more fully without being bound by a regimented battery of questions. Some individual interviews did take more of a structured nature (especially with the participant who was not able to preview the questions), while others only followed the interview questions loosely.

All interviews were digitally recorded. Copies of the digital files were sent to a transcriptionist, and within a week the transcriptionist emailed the verbatim text of the interviews to the researcher for analysis.

Subsequent to the interviews, emails were sent to David, Gene, and Ken asking for clarification on a few details. Replies with the requested information were received from the first two.

Data Analysis

The analysis portion of this study employed a slightly modified form of the constant comparative method. According to Merriam, this method is “a process whereby the data gradually evolve into a core of emerging theory. This core is a theoretical framework that guides the further collection of data. Deriving a theory from the data involves both the integration and the refinement of categories, properties, and hypotheses.”³¹⁸ The aforementioned modification of this methodology was necessary because most of the study’s interviews were conducted back-to-back. This left no appreciable time for reflection upon the data already collected, and thus did not allow the collection of data in subsequent interviews to be guided by an evolving theoretical framework. This slight limitation notwithstanding, the gradual evolution of data into an emerging theory was very much a part of post-interview analysis, thus qualifying this study as using the constant comparative method.

During the period of time between the interviews and when actual work on the interview transcripts began (including the many hours driving home after the interviews), the researcher pondered over the interview discussions. Observations were noted either on digital voice recorder or in written form.

Within a month the computer based transcript of each interview was analyzed by the researcher, and all statements deemed of possible use in the study were electronically highlighted. A new file consisting of only these highlighted excerpts was made for each participant. Following the same approach used to manage materials in the literature review section of this study, the participant excerpts were re-read with the aim of

³¹⁸ Ibid., 191.

identifying and coding common themes. The major categories evolved with these additional readings, and sub-categories also became progressively apparent. Once initial coding was completed and reviewed, each participant's excerpts were sorted by their coding and merged with other participants' sorted excerpts. At times the sorting was done one excerpt at a time using the "copy-and-paste" feature within computer text files, and at other times it was accomplished en masse by a spreadsheet sort function. At the point of sorting, and later at the point of melding the various excerpts together into narrative, each excerpt was re-examined to assure proper coding and sorting placement.

Each time the researcher incorporated an interview excerpt into his writings, he marked the excerpt in that participants' excerpt file. As the narrative neared completion, he examined each of these files to assure that no pertinent data had been overlooked. Additionally, he did not simply delete the excerpts that he removed from the narrative (e.g., the many that were found to be near-duplicates of excerpts from other participants), but rather moved them to another file in the event that they might be useful in another portion of the narrative.

Initially, the presentation of the interview data seemed problematic, in that one of the goals of this study was for each participant's unique voice and perspective to be heard. This could be accomplished by discussing each interview in turn, but the recounting of the same details from each of seven participants was deemed far too redundant, so some degree of melding of the individual stories was required. Therefore, the study takes instead a two-pronged approach to the presentation. It first introduces each of the seven participants. Second, it presents the balance of the data as a chronology

of transition, with the participants' unique contributions woven into the flow of that chronology.

While reflecting upon the interviews, including time involved in the composition of the presentation outlined above, the researcher constantly scrutinized the data and noted observations as they presented themselves. Subsequent to completing the narrative, he re-examined the full text of the first four chapters of this study, noting any additional observations pertinent to the purpose of this study. As with the interview excerpts, he collected these observations, examined them for common themes and thoughts, then coded, sorted and presented them in a section of the final chapter. As he conducted his work prior to and including the observations narrative, the researcher noted items for possible formation of conclusions in the latter portion of the final chapter. Additionally, as he completed all other narratives, he reviewed the observations and notes and reduced them to specific conclusions and recommendations.

Limitations of the Study

A number of factors may limit the universality of the findings of this study. This case study was of a BMA church, and as such the findings may not be indicative of churches from other denominations.

A number of demographic factors suggest that the selected church is likely to have a higher-than-normal acceptance of contemporary-language versions of the Bible, and thus limit the direct application of the findings to more typical BMA churches. According to a 2000 study within the BMA, such specifics as this pastor's age, his education level, the church size, the size of the surrounding community, and the state (Texas) in which the church is located – each of these factors places this church in the

upper ranges of tendency to accept a contemporary-language version of the Bible.³¹⁹ One denominational leader concurs, giving this observation about the church's location: "As regarding the use of versions I would say that the BMA churches in [that part of] Texas for the most part are more open to the use of various versions of the Bible than ... other churches in the BMA."³²⁰

One other limitation bears mention: As noted earlier, the participant pool included no dissenting voices – i.e., no one among the interview participants was against transitioning. A church without a dissenting voice on the matter of transitioning from the King James Version is certainly not representative of the denomination at large nor is it likely to represent the vast majority of its individual churches.

Biases of the Study

A study's observations can be misinterpreted and its conclusions misdirected by the influence of unknown or ignored biases in the researcher or in the research methodology. In order to minimize this type of negative impact upon this study, the researcher examined it for such biases.

Prior to the two days of interviews, the researcher had no exposure to the church studied in this research project. Similarly, the researcher had neither met nor learned anything of substance about five of the seven interviewees. Of the other two, the researcher had a casual acquaintance with the assistant pastor, having met him in denominational meetings on two or three occasions. His level of acquaintance with the head pastor was greater, the two having attended a limited number of conferences and week-long seminars together.

³¹⁹ Burke.

A second, and greater, researcher bias relates to Bible versions. This researcher believes that the message of God's Word is contained within the words of the Scriptures, but is not limited to specific words per se, whether one is talking about the original languages of the Scriptures or any of the languages into which they are translated. Any wording that adequately conveys the original message is considered the Word of God.

However, containing the message is not equivalent to communicating that message. This researcher believes that the message of God is best communicated in a language that the audience is able to understand readily (as nearly as possible).

The following illustrates this theoretical stance: The researcher grew up reading the King James Version and has great respect for it. For years he taught and preached from the KJV, and even now, when recalling Scriptures, he still "thinks in KJV." However, in order better to communicate the message of God's Word, he personally transitioned from the sole use of the KJV over two decades ago. Currently, he uses the KJV (which is the printed text in the denominational curriculum) in teaching his Sunday school class, composed almost solely of adults aged fifty and up who were raised on that version and who find the language familiar and understandable. In contrast, the researcher opts for the English Standard Version for sermonic use in Sunday worship services. Additionally, he typically uses the New International Version or the New Century Version in the weekly Wednesday night devotional period in the church's children's ministry.

Another bias is the researcher's position on King-James-Onlyism – i.e., the belief by some that the KJV is the only valid English version for today. As a long-time student

³²⁰ Grady Higgs, BMAA Director of Missions, e-mail to author, January 26, 2010.

of the King-James-Only debate, the researcher concluded that there is no valid basis for the dogmatic loyalty to this version or the assumption that this version has a special merit unattained or unattainable by other versions, whether past, present or future. The researcher has written articles which challenge others' undue criticism of contemporary-language versions and/or encourage the use of selected contemporary versions.³²¹ Additionally, the researcher was employed for over eighteen years at the denominational publishing house, which was functionally (even if not theologically) committed to the sole use of the KJV in Sunday school curriculum. Seeing periodic examples of the unmet need for denominational education on the subject (an endeavor that has never even been attempted) adds to the degree of his bias.

Besides researcher bias, hindsight reveals that the search criteria also had a built-in degree of bias. The study required that a candidate congregation have staff in addition to the senior pastor. This, in essence, necessitated that the study be conducted at a church that was significantly larger than the average BMA congregation. As already mentioned in this chapter, a previous study has established that congregations with higher worship attendance are more inclined to find contemporary-language versions acceptable.³²² Therefore, the requirement for a multi-staff congregation inclines the study toward a congregation that is more accepting of the modern-language versions.

The study design also allowed for additional bias in the participant selection process. Since the pastor of the church being studied selected the six study participants, it

³²¹ The articles mentioned were published in regional denominational papers, and to the researcher's knowledge none of them was published in the regional paper associated with the church being studied in this research. The researcher therefore assumes that his writings were unknown by the interview participants and thus had no opportunity to introduce a new bias to this study.

³²² Burke, 7.

is possible that he introduced biases of his own into the study. However, were the pastor inclined to “stack the deck,” it could be argued that he would have likely selected participants that better exemplified his desire for Bible version transition.

Being aware of real and potential biases allows a researcher to guard against them and to minimize their influence upon a study’s findings. This researcher concludes that while the potential for such influence in this study is real, sufficient measures were taken to prevent these biases from skewing the findings and conclusions of this study.

Conclusion

The methodology outlined in this chapter was designed to be instrumental in achieving the purpose of this study, which was to examine the change process of a Baptist congregation that transitioned from the King James Version to a modern-language Bible as its primary worship text. This methodology was designed around the qualitative case study, and encouraged a semi-structured approach to the study’s interviews. The congregation selected for study was the sole multi-staff BMA congregation found to have transitioned between Bible versions during the past five years. The participant selection involved the automatic inclusion of the pastor of the transitioned congregation and his selection of staff and congregant participants who best fit the researcher’s criteria. The data analysis utilized the constant comparative method, slightly adapted to fit the confines of back-to-back interviews. Some limitations and biases have been noted, but the researcher believes that sufficient care has been taken to either account for them or prevent their undue influence upon the findings of this study.

This is a review of the methodology employed in the design and implementation of this research. The study will now consider the responses of the participant interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the change process of a Baptist congregation that transitioned from the King James Version to a modern-language Bible as its primary worship text. To that end, this chapter will review the relevant findings from the seven participants selected to be interviewed in a case study of Bible version transition at Heritage Baptist Church.

Unlike other forms of research in which the researcher looks for participants' unique stories as they have undergone similar experiences in differing settings, the case study researcher interviews participants who have undergone the same experience within the same setting. The uniqueness of each participant's story in the case study is not, therefore, rooted in his or her unique setting, but in the individual perspective and unique circumstances within the common setting. In an attempt to find that unique contribution from interview participants, this study will first present each participant with his or her personal perspective and circumstances, and afterward examine the common events of transition and the personal factors within it.

Participants

All interview participants were, at the time of the interviews, regularly attending members of Heritage Baptist Church, the case study congregation. Heritage is located within a Texas community of approximately fifty-thousand people. The church currently has a membership exceeding one thousand people, and the average Sunday morning

worship attendance is approximately four hundred. A fuller description of the church will appear later in this chapter.

Ron is a native of the region in which Heritage is located, and grew up in a denomination that is very similar to the BMA. Now, in his late 50s, he is a father and grandfather (with none of his second or third generation attending Heritage). He is a college graduate, a long-time worker in commercial and industrial construction, and has been a member of Heritage for thirty-five of the last thirty-eight years.

Ron is a recognized leader at Heritage, having served as a deacon in this church for thirty years. He also serves on the Finance Committee and Long-Range Planning Committee. He is in the choir and is a member of the men's quartet. He has also taught various classes in the elementary to high school age groups. He served on the Pastor Search Committee that interviewed and recommended David (the current pastor who initiated the Bible version transition).

Concerning Bible versions, Ron says, "[When] I grew up the King James Version was the only one I ever heard [taught] from." And even now, "I still carry the King James Version Bible." But this should not be confused as KJV-only leanings. Ron relates, "Down here in [our region] there are churches that advertise themselves as being a King James Version Bible church. I thought, 'How closed-minded can you be?'" Further evidence of his opinion on other versions can be seen in his statement, "We've bought our kids student Bibles, which were NIV versions, and I have a study Bible that's NIV."

Sometimes Ron brings to church a New King James Version Bible (NKJV) – a Bible he bought as a gift for his wife, but which she was unable to use because of the print size. But even though he does not carry an ESV, he is nevertheless okay with using

it. “What I’ve seen from the English Standard Version – because I read along in my New King James Version [as the pastor reads from the ESV] – ... it’s all said a little differently, but it’s got the same message.” He in fact admits to liking the ESV and states, “I’m thinking about the next time I buy a Bible it will probably be that version [ESV],” but notes that he hates to let the new NKJV go to waste.

The second interviewee was Norma, the sole female congregant to be interviewed. Norma, now in her mid-sixties, has deep ties to Heritage. “I’ve actually been at this church since I was three years old ...,” she relates, “I grew up here.” She also met her husband at this church when his father came to be pastor.

Her education included studies at the denominational junior college in the state, followed by attendance at a state school, where she earned a Master’s Degree. She was employed for thirty-seven years in the school system, first as a classroom teacher, then as a principal. Due to her work in the latter role, she identifies with the pastor in the difficulty of leading change: “I have been in a leadership role and [led] in change. I spent all my staff development time on how to effect change and [understand that] it’s very hard.”

Now retired from public school, Norma is an adjunct instructor teaching two education courses in the local community college. She is a mother of grown children and a grandmother. At least two of her grandchildren attend Heritage. Her emphasis on education also has a ministry component, as she has taught Sunday school at the church since she was in her teens. Today one of Norma’s primary ministries is a multi-generational women’s Sunday school class, in which she takes great interest. Like Ron, Norma was on the Pastor Search Committee that interviewed David.

Also like Ron, Norma does not yet own an ESV translation of the Bible. “I haven’t ever gotten one, but I have used different versions [in my] teaching.” She does later mention, “I’ve asked for an ESV ... [and] I’ll probably be getting one [as a gift].”

Ken is a husband and father in his early thirties. His education includes a Bachelor’s degree, a Master of Divinity degree from a Southern Baptist seminary, and a Master’s degree in accounting. He is currently working as a CPA.

Ken has been at Heritage for almost three years. During the first year, he served on staff as Youth Pastor. After resigning that position, he now attends Heritage as a congregant. He has served on the Finance Committee and now teaches a Sunday school class of junior-high and senior-high boys. Since he has attended less than three years, Ken arrived eight months after the initial stage of the transition. However, he did serve as a key player in subsequent stages of the transition.

Unlike some of the other participants, Ken didn’t grow up in a setting limited to the KJV. Or as he puts it, “I didn’t grow up in a King James environment.... [I didn’t] breathe the air of King James all my life.”

As a seminary graduate, Ken is educated and conversant on the issues of Bible versions and the debates often associated with them. This education has led him towards a conviction of the need for a modern-language Bible in ministry.

Personal experience dovetails with his educational convictions. Ken has seen first-hand the impact that changing to a contemporary-language Bible made in the lives of his own father and one of his father’s friends. “We got them switched over to ... reading more contemporary translations. They started telling us, ‘Man, I’m understanding

the Bible so much better. I enjoy reading the Bible now. Now, I finally know what I'm reading.”

During the transition process, Ken relates, “I was not anti-King James, I was only neutral.” However, his feelings have changed somewhat since then: “I think, since it is sixteenth and seventeenth century English, it keeps people back from understanding the Bible.... [So,] I'm probably opposed to the King James Version now as an option for an English speaking people to read.” Elsewhere in the interview he goes further: “I'm [now] absolutely opposed to recommending the King James to anyone,” not due to its having theological error, but solely due to its inability to communicate God's message to people of today adequately.

In his late twenties, Scott³²³ is a husband and has two preschool children. Scott has an Associate's Degree in information systems, and is currently self-employed in that field.

Scott and his wife jointly teach preschool-aged children in both the Sunday school and Wednesday night ministries at Heritage. They are also involved in the church's evangelism ministry, and Scott helps with the church's counseling ministry.

Like many of the other interview participants, Scott is not yet an ESV user, but has no problem with that translation. “I personally use the NIV, but considered transitioning over to the ESV; just haven't made that move yet.... But everything I know of the ESV, it's a great translation.” He admits to having some personal (though not necessarily theological) difficulty with the KJV. “If I try to personally listen to the

³²³ Scott was a replacement for an interviewee who dropped out the day interviews began. As such he did not have the same opportunity other participants had to preview interview questions or formulate answers prior to the interview.

Scriptures being taught through the King James, I would have to be reading [along in] ... a more updated version to be able to really understand it.” He expresses similar difficulty in using the KJV when teaching his own children.

I’ve got two young daughters and I’m not going to be teaching them from the King James Version. As my wife and I are teaching our children, we’re going to be teaching them [a] modern language [version].... We want to teach them the most important thing of all: God’s Word in a language they can understand and be able to read on a personal level.

With nine years of professional ministry service at Heritage, Gene is the veteran member of the (now) four-person ministry staff. Gene’s primary roles as an Associate Pastor include counseling, evangelism, discipleship and teaching the parenting ministry. He is also responsible for preaching when the pastor is away.

Gene is in his late sixties, and is married with children (grown) and grandchildren. His formal education includes two years at a denominational college, a degree in elementary education from a state university, and a Bachelor’s degree from the denomination’s seminary.

Gene’s professional ministry experience includes pastoring six churches in four states. He is currently serving in his ninth year as Associate Pastor at Heritage, and just recently celebrated forty years in ministry.

Concerning Bible versions, Gene shares, “I use the New King James and have for [fifteen to twenty] years. I have tried to change but my memory is always back in the King James.” This personal idiosyncrasy notwithstanding, Gene supports use of the ESV, and is glad to see Heritage transition to it from the KJV.

Besting Gene’s tenure by approximately three years is the church secretary, Margaret. However, the job as secretary is more than just a job to her: “I just feel like the

secretary part is, to me, more than a job. It's a ministry. I just love my church; love my work." In her latter sixties, Margaret is married and has a grown daughter who also attends Heritage.

Besides her work as church secretary, Margaret teaches preschool children in both the Sunday school and Wednesday night ministries of the church. She also shares that, "my heart is for the church to grow ... [in reaching] the young families."

Concerning her personal preferences for Bible versions, she states, "I still have the King James Version Bible.... I study out of other Bibles, but the Bible I [use at church] ... is the King James Version." But like Gene, she has no qualms with the ESV, and supports the transition.

At age thirty-five, and married with two preschool children, David has served three-and-a-half years as Senior Pastor at Heritage, preaching weekly to an average worship attendance of approximately four hundred. Within the division of ministerial responsibilities, David lists his duties as primarily "teaching, preaching, administration, leading, overseeing the staff, leading the deacons [and] the committees."

David has a varied array of prior professional ministry experiences. He has served in various full-time (solo pastor) and bi-vocational ministries (solo mission pastor, youth and children's pastor, music minister, educator at a Christian school) located in four states.

His formal education includes an Associate's Degree from a denominational college, a Bachelor of Psychology degree from a state university, and a Master of Divinity degree from a Southern Baptist seminary. He is currently enrolled as a Doctor of Ministry student, and anticipates graduating within six months of the interview.

Summary Table of Interview Participants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age and Gender</i>	<i>Years at this Church</i>	<i>Church Involvement</i>	<i>“Carry” Bible³²⁴</i>
Ron	Male Late 50s	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deacon • Finance Committee • Long-Range Planning Committee • Choir 	KJV and New King James Version (NKJV)
Norma	Female Mid- 60s	60+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastor Search Committee • Teacher in multigenerational women’s class 	Various, but not ESV (anticipates changing to ESV soon)
Ken	Male Early 30s	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaches teen boys’ class • Was on ministry staff during portions of the transition 	Did not say, but presumed to be the ESV.
Scott	Male Late 20s	Not known	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaches various pre-school classes • Evangelism 	New International Version (NIV)
Gene	Male Late 60s	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant Pastor (primary duties include counseling, evangelism, discipleship, teaching, occasional preaching) 	NKJV
Margaret	Female Late 60s	Not known, but at least 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church secretary (twelve years) • Teaches various pre-school classes 	KJV
David	Male Mid- 30s	3½	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Pastor (primary duties include teaching, preaching, administration, leading, overseeing staff) 	ESV

The presentation above introduces the various participants and many of their unique perspectives and contributions to the larger narrative of Bible transition. The discussion will now turn to the interview participants’ responses on various aspects of the transition itself.

³²⁴ That is, the Bible version(s) that this person carries to church regularly. This information was not specifically asked for in the interview, but most interview participants did volunteer this information.

The Transition

The interviews yielded a host of information about participants' perceptions of the Bible version transition at Heritage Baptist Church. These responses will be considered under the following four categories: the preparation for transition, the chronology of transition, general comments on transition, and the current status of transition.

The Preparation for Transition

A significant percentage of the interview responses dealt with setting the stage for transition. These responses subdivide into two principal areas: those related to the congregation at Heritage, and those that relate to its soon-to-be pastor, David.

The Congregation

As mention earlier in the chapter, Heritage Baptist Church is located within a Texas community of approximately fifty thousand people. Prior to David's arrival in 2006, the church had a membership of approximately one thousand, with an average worship attendance of approximately 350.

The participant interviews furnished a number of characteristic descriptions of the church. According to David, organization is an important thing to the people of Heritage.

"I did that church personality report³²⁵ and this is a very Organizer type church....

They'll go along with anything as long as you're organized."

However, David immediately follows this with remarks about the church being frugal with its financial resources. "Now, what is hard [in] this church is getting them to spend money – that's what's hard. They are very frugal."

³²⁵ See Philip D. Douglass, *What Is Your Church's Personality? Discovering and Developing the Ministry Style of Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub., 2008).

Gene highlights a connection between communication and cooperation at Heritage. “The people here are very receptive to communication when they understand [what leaders are doing].”

Two participants – both of whom have served congregations in other settings – comment, comparing Heritage with other churches in the denomination. Gene simply states, “It’s not a typical BMA church.” David agrees, elaborating on a specific area: “I will say something about Heritage: they are open to change. They are much more open ... than [others in] the BMA. This is kind of unusual. It’s not hard to sell them on a needed change if you can prove that it’s biblical.”

David empathically points out an issue that the people of Heritage take very seriously: their freedom to make up their own minds and the right to vote and live by that decision.

Now, I’ll tell you what would upset the apple cart here in Texas, ... where they will challenge me in a heartbeat: ... that would be over their [individual] sovereignty. Why? Because Texans have this mindset [of independence].... “We were Texans before we were Americans.” ... I think they’d school me if I tried to go against them in that area.

Factors in the church’s history may also have impacted the level of success in transition. Specifics are not relevant to the study, but David relates that the church endured some staff-related difficulties for a few years just prior to his pastorate, including two years in which the church had neither a senior pastor nor a youth pastor.

Gene relates, on the positive side, that the growth Heritage had been experiencing for at least a decade prior to the transition had helped prepare it for the changes.

Heritage has grown over the years.... [It began] prior to me coming [to the church].... [W]e just got some excellent people and they had already gone through [some of these] changes on their own.... God has just provided some people that are educated, biblically.

Norma agrees, describing her own growth: “I was maybe more open to change [at this point].”

Ken points out that the region around Heritage is not without dogmatic KJV adherents: “We’ve got churches in the area that are very insistent on the King James Version as the only legitimate translation of Scripture.” But he makes it clear that Heritage is not one of them. David agrees. Contrasting Heritage to a former church he pastored which “believed that only KJV was inspired,” he says Heritage was “not a staunch KJV church to begin with. The former preacher preached from the KJV, but the church was not what I would call a strict KJV group.”

As David indicates, the King James Version used to be the primary version used in worship at Heritage, although it apparently was not the exclusive text. Margaret states, “ministers ... when they were in the pulpit they mainly stuck with the King James.” Gene agrees, noting that while the version used was chosen at the preacher’s discretion, the KJV was certainly the customary version. Ron, at first was not sure which version the former pastor used, later notes that prior to David’s coming to the church the KJV was used, “depending on who the pastor was.” Ken flatly states that the previous pastor used the KJV (but, as already noted, Ken was not yet attending Heritage at that time). For approximately a year prior to David coming to Heritage, Gene conducted the worship service, and he used the NKJV.

The “sovereignty” that David mentions is noticeable among the congregants, and shaped their perspectives through all stages of the transition, and even prior to it. While Margaret notes that “King James, I think, was mostly read” by the congregants, Gene, who has ministered in the church for nearly a decade, notes that “The congregation

[individually] selected whatever they were going to use, so the King James was not *the* only [version in use].” He mentions New American Standard and New International as specific versions that could be found within the congregation.

It should also be noted that at no point covered in this research has Heritage had a singular, church-adopted Bible version – a fact that both Gene and Ken mention. Scott similarly notes that the goal of Heritage’s transition was not to say, “Now, everybody needs to start using the ESV ...; we’re all transitioning to that.” And Norma recalls, “There has never been a time where [the new pastor] has said you have to [use] the ESV.”

The Pastor

Bearing greatly upon Heritage’s transition are David’s experiences prior to this pastorate. The events that impacted David in his previous ministry are ultimately, even if indirectly, the events that initiated the transition at Heritage.

David relates the circumstances that drove him to leave the difficult language of the King James Version and seek a more understandable Bible:

Let me go back to my previous pastorate. I went to a church ... that was vehemently opposed to anything but the King James Version.... The whole irony of the whole issue was that these people didn’t understand the Bible and I witnessed this personally. They would say firmly that we’ve got to preach King James but they couldn’t tell you what the Bible meant because they couldn’t understand it.... I noticed these people could not really grasp and apply Scripture. So I really became burdened that [this] needed to change; and that I needed to preach out of a version of the Bible that they could understand. I looked for a good version; I found the ESV and we started using that.

While the antiquated language (and resulting lack of understandability) of the KJV was the motivation for seeking another version, David makes it clear that the contemporary language of a version was not the sole factor in deciding which new translation to choose.

David shares the drumbeat of his heart as a pastor when he states,

I want my people to understand Scripture and I want them to understand it away from the pulpit. I remember guys in seminary [saying], “Use the King James and you can explain to them what ‘superfluity of naughtiness’ [i.e., the obscure terminology] means.” True, but what about when they’re at home and what about when they’re preparing for worship on Sunday? ... [Or what about] reading their Bible during family worship, which I’m going to try to promote?

It was with such a heart and holding these convictions that he received a call from Heritage’s Pastor Search Committee.

The Chronology of Transition

This section will examine the chronology of events, as related by the interview participants, that compose the transition process. The intention is not only to outline the common events of transition, but to understand those events from the personal perspective of the participants.

David and the Pastor Search Committee

Ron, a member of the Search Committee, shares that David made it clear in his discussions with the Committee that he did not plan to use the KJV in his ministry: “When Bro. David came ... he told us he liked to use the English Standard Version. So he basically began preaching out of that.” Norma, also a Committee member, likewise notes that David made that issue clear so that “when we called David as a pastor ... we already knew about him, about the version he preferred.”

David describes this period in a little more detail.

When the search committee interviewed me I asked them if there was a particular version of the Bible that [the church would require me] to use, because I felt, after being in the situation in [my previous church], that that was a break issue for me; that that was critical. I would not preach where the Bible could not be understood.... So that was an issue for me and I told the committee ..., “I want you to understand, I will be preaching out of a different version other than the King James. Now, I love the King James; I don’t have a problem with it; but it will not be primarily what I preach out of.” The Committee felt like that would be fine.

David thought that in being so forthright he had possibly talked himself right out of a job. “I thought, ‘They’ll never call me. I ticked them off. They’re never going to call me.’”

Instead, the Committee recommended him to the church, and the church ultimately called him as Pastor.

Transition Begins

“So I came and I started preaching here at Heritage using my ESV version of the Bible,” David says, but that summary statement fails to reveal the fullness of the experience. At this point (or at any other point, for that matter) David’s commitment to using a Bible that people could understand was not a commitment to the ESV, per se. In fact, this was one point where he re-evaluated whether it was the version to use or not. He did decide to continue using the ESV at Heritage, in part driven by the advantages behind his earlier decision. But he shares that he was also motivated to use the ESV because it was still relatively new on the market, which meant that not many people had it and therefore he didn’t appear to be siding with any person or group’s preferred version.

But even with a decided preference for the ESV, during the first year, David was not slavishly committed to it. Ken recalls,

Once I got here [eight months after David became pastor], he was very consistent in using the ESV. He did use the New Living Translation, like one or two Sundays [within the first few months I attended].... But besides that it’s been the ESV every Sunday.

Interviewees comment that David was not pushy with his selected version, even being somewhat restrained in discussing it. Ken says, “The type of guy David is, he’s real sensitive to what people are used to and he tries not to push them too hard.” Norma concurs: “He didn’t make it threatening. He didn’t just get up and say, ‘Ya’ll throw away those King James Versions; ... this is what I’m using. You can like it or lump it.’ He

didn't do anything like that." Ken talks of how soft-spoken David was: "It [the ESV] was the version he preached out of but he didn't go around announcing that." Margaret says David kept putting the ESV "before us – in a gentle way, not cramming it down your throat."

But using a new Bible version in front of the congregation is not the same as instilling within people the motivations behind its use. One of the research questions driving this study focuses upon participants' perspectives on how well leadership communicated the reason for transition. To ascertain this level of communication, the researcher asked interviewees to explain the reasons for transitioning. Their responses fall into three basic categories.

Ron's response highlights his conviction that David is the man that God intended to be the church's pastor, and as such the church should follow his leadership in this matter. "I would say that when we called Bro. David and his leaning was to go to that Bible [version], I figured this is God's man for our church [and we should therefore follow him]." Ron also mentions that David's research in the area of Bible versions pulled some weight as well.

A second type of response, given by both staff members (Gene and Margaret), also references David's coming in as the new pastor, but without detailing the specific reasons beyond that. "When David started preaching, I saw that was his Bible that he was using," Gene states. Whether this represents Gene's commitment to following the God-appointed leader, his simple deference to the new man, or his perspective based on some other reasoning, is not clear.

Scott and Margaret, both heavily involved in Heritage's children's work, speak of reasons for changing that are more in harmony with David's own motivations. Scott says,

I think the reasons were [because the ESV] was a better, more literal translation; ... more up to date; [and an] easier translation to read.... [I]t's a lot easier from a perspective to being able to do studies, being able to teach other people, being able to understand it on a personal level.... You don't want something that you're really not going to read or you're going to take hours and hours to try to understand.... [W]e need a modern translation that's going to [be practical in] everyday use.

He then relates this to practical ministry:

We try to get the parents to interact with [their children] and teach them the verses each week, and I think it would be very difficult to learn in something that's old English.... [This is] something that needed to be done to move us forward and to keep the teenagers and the younger [adults] and even the older [adults] actively involved in reading their Bible and doing that on a personal level.

Similarly, Margaret ties the transitioning to her sense of the church's goal expressed earlier: reaching young families.

To me, our goal is to reach the young families, the younger families with children for our church to grow, and I think this [new Bible version] was better for them to help them understand more. We have a lot of new ones that have come in that don't have a lot of biblical background, and I think it was easier for them to understand.... But the growth, the vision of the church, the growth of wanting to have younger families with children and all that – like I said, it was easier for them to understand.

What were the reactions and outcomes of this stage of transition? The interviewees discuss this point at length.

Ron simply considers the transition, at this point, to be nothing major – just allowing the new pastor room to do things the way he thinks best. “I just never really thought of [the new pastor using a new version] as being a church change; it's just a pastor change with a different outlook on that particular deal.”

Consistent with the sovereignty issue that David mentions, Ron considers the transition at this point to be a matter of individual choice. “I just felt like it's an

individual thing. If someone wants to read out of the King James Version all the time ... they can, and if they want to read out of the [New] International Version [they can do that].” He also says,

We’ve never been [a church] that says, “You got to use this Bible, or you got to use this Bible” as far as I know.... But as far as the church taking action on, “We’re no longer going to use King James Version, we’re going to use the English Standard Version” [we never did that]. I don’t think there was a line drawn in the sand.

Ron makes it clear that the transition to date has caused no problem within the church. “I would say it was very smooth transition. I mean he just started preaching out of [the ESV] and I’ve never heard anybody really say that it was a problem.... [A]s far as I can recall, the spirit of the church has not been disrupted by it.” Ron does mention one couple that visited Heritage during this time but decided to join elsewhere because the preacher did not use the KJV. But he adds, “That’s the only time I knew of anybody that’s at least made a point of saying that they had a problem with [the new version].”

The substance of Ron’s sentiments are summed up in his statement, “To me, it [was] just not that big of a deal.” Norma’s response shows that she had no problem with the transition either. “I was fine with it. It was just like, ‘Okay.’” Norma also notes, “I was very open to it, and I usually follow along in whatever version I have.”

Norma does mention a hitch – external, not internal – that arose during this period: finding copies of the ESV to purchase.

We’ve got two Bible bookstores here and really [the ESV] is the least represented [version in their stock].... In fact, we were doing a drive for ... a mission project.... It was a shoe box ministry and [the filled shoe boxes] were sent to some place in Africa; so I purposed to find an ESV version that was small enough to fit [in the shoebox], and I had to get another version because I couldn’t find one.

But in spite of the difficulty in finding copies of the ESV, Norma says that many people in the church chose to follow the pastor's lead. When David came as pastor, "he just mainly introduced [the ESV] as he preached. Then, a lot of people got the ESV version."

Ken's recollection agrees with Norma. "[F]or the most part, people went out and bought the ESV version. A lot of the kids' parents went out and bought the ESV Bible for their kids." And like Ron, Ken recalls two visitors who had issues with Heritage's using a non-KJV Bible, but Ken was not aware of any problems within the membership.

Gene thinks that, overall, this stage of transition went smoothly. "There wasn't anything ... [that was difficult] as it relates to the change." However, as a staff minister, he was privy to one particular situation he shares.

I had led a family – [a man] and his wife, [and their] two teenagers – to the Lord about two years before David came. So when David came and started reading from the ESV, it was extremely hard for them to ... [follow along] in their Bible, so they immediately talked to me and asked if it would be alright to get the Bible. So they bought themselves the ESV.

Gene shares that the family's experience since that point has been "Very good. Positive. They like it."

Gene explains an awkwardness that was part of this period. "It was confusing when David would read from the ESV in the very beginning." But in spite of the initial difficulties, "the ESV was easy to read, so [the people] liked that."

Margaret's experience closely matched the others. Even in her role as church secretary, she says, "I really didn't hear any grumbling," although she does admit, "I'm sure there was [some]." In short, as far as the people within Heritage were concerned, she says, "There wasn't a big issue made of it."

Margaret was personally familiar with a situation where the version issue caused problems for a visitor.³²⁶ She relates the incident and her perspective on it:

My husband and myself invited a friend of my husband's. He was just kind of floundering – he hadn't been in church for a while and we invited him to come.... [H]e came one time and saw that we weren't using the King James Version and he didn't come back. But that's not our vision for the church. I don't want this to sound like we don't want the old people, because we do. I'm old. But we've got to see growth. We've got to see the Word grow and see these young families with all these young children coming in and knowing that our church is growing that way, and this is an avenue to help them.

The pastor also shares his perspective and observations on this period of transition. “[P]eople had never heard of the ESV, so there was a little skepticism,” David recalls from the earliest days. But “[o]nce I started preaching out of the ESV, no problems.... The only problems I encountered were, people would say ..., ‘I want to get that.’ And they would go to the bookstore and the store wouldn't have it.”

Interest in the new version continued to grow. David recalls,

[People would] say, “I really want to read out of what you're reading out of....” The first Christmas I was here, I had a ton of people tell me, “I'm getting my husband or I'm getting my wife an ESV because that's what you preach out of.” So I had a lot of people jumping on that bandwagon.

When considering if the transition to this point had caused any type of emotional difficulties for participants, David replies that the change

has been something they pretty much accepted from the beginning. It hasn't been a roller coaster ride and I'll tell you why: Because honestly, just being forthright as I can, ... most of these people are biblically illiterate themselves. So this isn't an emotional issue for them. They don't know their Bible anyway.

However, David is quick to add, “I'm not saying everybody in my church is [biblically] illiterate.”

³²⁶ Whether this visitor is one of those mentioned earlier or is a different one is not known.

Both David and Gene say that they had braced themselves for the possibility of resistance from KJV adherents. But overall, no significant opposition materialized. David mentions a small element of resistance:

I got a little flack from some older members. I still to this day have an older member – ... he’s a nice guy; he’s 80 something years old – and he tells me he’s looking forward to the day when I preach out of my Scofield King James Bible.... [M]y reply is always, “I don’t have a Scofield Bible and I don’t plan on getting one” [David says with a playful twist in his voice and a teasing grin on his face].... He still lovingly gives a little flack.... [There are] a few people along with him who really wish that the pastor preached out of the King James, but that’s not a make or break issue for them.

The Pew Bibles

More by happenstance than by design, the interview questions and discussions used the term “transition” in an indistinct sense, i.e., without delineating the specific time period it covered. This ambiguity resulted in an unexpected discovery. Prior to the interviews, the researcher considered transition as the period beginning with the pastor’s introduction of the new version to the congregation and ending when the congregation became used to it – a period not exceeding one year. While their responses imply that the participants, too, considered that period as part of the transition, they also clearly considered transition to go beyond that time frame. This section will discuss what respondents considered to be another essential element in the change process: the purchase of ESV pew Bibles.

Two factors should be noted about the participants’ discussion of pew Bibles. First, the topic of pew Bibles was not specifically a part of the interview questions nor was it directly alluded to in the interview by the researcher. Rather, in each interview, any discussion of pew Bibles had to be initiated by the interviewee. Second, each of the seven interviewees did initiate a discussion of this topic.

Continuing with the chronology, things progressed for nearly a year following David's move to Heritage and the introduction of the ESV to the congregation. While there was no serious opposition to David using the new version, there were some pragmatic complications. Although many people began using ESV Bibles during this time, a number of people still did not. Gene explains some of the difficulties this caused:

In the beginning ... a large percentage of the folks were comfortable with their own translation and [read from them as] David was reading [from the ESV].... [W]hen he's reading that passage and you're looking at King James ... or whatever you might be using, it was a little confusing.... David would ... have to explain, "I'm in verse 1," "verse 3," "verse 5" as he read through the passage.

This approach caused difficulty for people attempting to follow the pastor as he read, and this was especially true for visitors, new converts, or others unfamiliar with the Scriptures. Scott says, "[W]e have visitors who are not familiar with the Scriptures; they don't know the books of the Bible or anything."

David relates a specific incident from this period that revealed to him the level of difficulty that some people were facing:

I'll tell you what really clued me into this. We had a visitor come. She was invited by a faithful church member and this church member worked with her. So this visitor comes and I said, in the pulpit, "Turn to Romans 8" (or whatever the text was). It was a New Testament text that day and she picked up the red hymnal and was flipping through the hymnal, trying to find what I was talking about. And it occurred to me when I heard that story, [that in spite of the transition work to date,] we are still doing an injustice [to people].... [W]e are in a biblically illiterate society and ... I've got people coming to this church, they don't even know what the book of Romans is.... So, I just realized through [this and similar instances] ... people don't understand and I need to make this understandable to them if I'm going to preach the Bible.

It was shortly after this, David tells, that

We determined at some point in our staff meeting, "Why don't we do this? Why don't we get a pew Bible? That way when a visitor comes and they don't have a Bible, they [will] have [access to] one, plus if someone doesn't know their Scripture [a pew Bible can help find the passage].... Let's tell them a page number instead of 1 Samuel 7 because people may not know where Samuel is."

In spite of David's use of the ESV to date, there was some consideration at this point of possibly migrating to another version. According to Ken, the main contenders were the English Standard Version, the New International Version (NIV), and the New Living Translation (NLT). One reason the NLT was considered was the recent impact that it had had upon one of the people in the congregation, as Ken relates: "David got another guy in our congregation ... reading the New Living Translation and he said ..., 'I've never understood the Bible. I never wanted to read it until I started reading a better translation.'"

David turned to Ken – a new staff member, a recent seminary graduate with interests and exposure to the area of Bible versions – for help in choosing between the three versions. Ken details that decision process, which ultimately hinged upon two areas of concern. The first area consisted of internal factors, such as the degree to which the translations were literal, the accuracy that would allow for a word-for-word study, and each version's readability. The second area considered external factors, such as the versions used by high-profile, nationally known leaders in Christendom whom they trusted, the versions used by churches they would consider mimicking, the versions from publishers they trusted, and the fact that the people of Heritage were already acquainted with and using the ESV. In the end, both David and Ken concluded that the ESV was the right version to use. They shared this conclusion with Gene (who was also on the ministry staff), and the three agreed to proceed.

Having seen the need, having determined that pew Bibles would address that need, and having settled on the ESV as the version of pew Bible to purchase, the next

task was to get approval for this expenditure. The first step was to address the issue with the Finance Committee. David recalls,

So I ... went in the Finance Committee and [shared these stories of the problems people were having, then] told them I needed about \$800 ... so that we can buy pew Bibles.... Now getting them to spend money, you really got to be organized. That's the stickler for them, the spending part.... I wanted to get more pew Bibles. I felt like we ought to have one in every seat cushion and [the treasurer] didn't go for that.... He said, "... Why don't we just get half [of the quantity you're requesting] and let's see how they work?"

In the end, "they agreed with me [on purchasing the pew Bibles, saying,] 'This is a good thing, a necessary thing, let's try it.' ... So we got half [of the quantity I originally wanted], and they've worked great." David now acknowledges the wisdom of the treasurer's recommendation on the smaller quantity: "[H]onestly, we haven't needed more than that."

Having cleared the hurdle of the Finance Committee, David then presented the need before the whole congregation for final approval. He passionately recalls that presentation:

[I] told the church what and how we were doing [in purchasing the pew Bibles] in a business meeting and basically preached to them [that] this is common sense.... I said, "Folks, you've got to understand something. We've got people coming to this church, they don't know where Colossians is. I need to be able to tell them to turn to page 217 and they need to be able to read what I'm reading for credibility." ... I just presented the arguments to them.... I gave them from the pulpit even those illustrations I gave you.... I just looked at the congregation and basically said, "You know, do you think it's ever going to get any better biblically? Our society is getting further away from the Bible. What does common sense tell us to do? We need to have a readable version, we need to be on the same page, and we need to assist people who come into our congregation." ... And when I just presented that question to them, [the response] was kind of like, "Well, okay. We don't really have a choice, do we? Either we're just going to be rude about this and selfish, un-gospel like ..., or yeah, you're right – we do need to do something about this."

The church approved the request.

Scott relates his perception of the events of this period:

I don't know if people were just ready for that and Pastor David just explained it to them and kind of laid the groundwork ahead of time in such a way that it wasn't confrontational. It seemed just very natural in moving forward. And the progress and the change ... [were] all given from a biblical stand point – he gave reasons why we were looking at doing that. And it seemed to just fall right into place.

Ken makes it clear that even at this more advanced stage of transition the efforts were not to adopt the ESV in any official sense. “I don't think we did any sort of formal [recognition]; like we didn't go before the church and say, “We're adopting the English Standard Version as our official version.”

David's excitement over the pew Bibles is evident in his comments: “[O]nce we got the green light to do it, I didn't hesitate. We ordered them the next day. We had them eight days later and put them in the pew.” In fact, David himself undertook that task of putting the Bibles out. “I went through and made sure all the rows had pew Bibles, especially where I thought visitors would be sitting. I thought that was crucial; I put extra ones on the back rows because that's where they normally come in and sit.” (The Bibles replaced some of the hymnals, which were no longer in regular use.) And with a bit of satisfaction David comments, “The pew Bibles are nice, they look nice.”

The pew Bibles are a tool that the church constantly utilizes. Many of the participants note what David says,

We put [the page number of the sermon text] in the bulletin ... and I always say you can turn to page 671 [for example].... I always do that because ... there are people in our audience who do not know the Bible, but they're trying and ... I want to help them become familiar with the Bible.

Ken echoes that:

[E]very Sunday morning [David] is extremely faithful to say, “My passage is coming from this book, this verse and it is in your pew Bible,” which implies you need to get a Bible out if you don't have one, because I'm going to be preaching from that passage and everything I'm saying will be coming from there and we are a people of the Book.

David actually uses one of the pew Bibles as he preaches. “I’ve got a [pew Bible] sitting up there [on the pulpit].... That way they see that I’m preaching out of that same Bible they can pick up.”

The pew Bibles are also available to anyone who may need a Bible. David says, “If you’ll notice now in our bulletin, on the visitors’ side, it says if you need a Bible, take one out of the pew; take it home, you can have it.”

What do people think about this second stage of transition? Norma is in favor of it:

I like the fact that David says, “If you don’t have a Bible, open [the pew Bible] to page so and so ... and you’ll find the Scripture. So people tend to go and hunt for the page instead of ... not even open[ing a Bible] up. And I think that’s good.

She also believes that among those who would not otherwise use a Bible, the use of the pew Bible instills a better sense that the pastor’s thoughts are not his own, but are rooted in something with more authority.

Ken and David also speak of the fact that people are using the pew Bibles, including some church members. Ken notes, “[M]ost people think, ‘It’s kind of neat, if I forget my Bible, we’ve got pew Bibles and [the pastor] tells me what page number to turn to.’”

Ken shares a personal experience that highlights the benefits of the pew Bibles to those unfamiliar with the Scriptures – and the benefit this in turn brings to the people of Heritage:

Our members can see visitors, like my parents, ... [T]hey’re not people who bring their Bibles to church, so when they came to church with me, they grabbed a pew Bible and turned to the page because the pastor told them to. Told them if they wanted to follow along, turn to this page in the pew Bible and you will see the text we will be preaching on today.

David addresses another benefit of “all being on the same page” (pun intended). “Once we got the pew Bibles in place and I was able to say a page number and people were able to follow along, all the problems of different versions disappeared entirely.... That was kind of the watershed moment.”

Gene sums up the benefits of the pew Bibles in the one word: communication. “For me personally, [it’s about] communication.” Ken says: “[O]ne of our goals was to buy those pew Bibles and have more people on Sunday morning reading the Bible as David reads and preaches from that passage. That’s definitely been accomplished.”

Scott simply calls the purchase of the pew Bibles one of the peak moments in the transition process. Both David and Ken say that there have been no problems that have come from this move; that it all went smoothly.

In retrospect, David says, “If I had to do it again, what would I do differently? Probably nothing, to be honest with you. Because it’s all worked out really well.”

General Comments on Transition

The comments presented thus far deal with particular events within the chronology of the transition process. However, many of the participant observations are not event-specific. These comments will now be presented, organized by theme.

Smooth Transition

Many of the non-event-specific comments simply state that the participants felt the transition went smoothly and caused no significant disturbance. All the congregant interviewees expressed such sentiment: “I would say it went real smooth” (Ron); “I personally don’t know anyone that struggled with switching.... Really, to me, [switching] was a non-issue” (Ken); “I think it went very smooth. I don’t think there was very much

push back from the congregation.... No issues with that that I've heard of; ... not one criticism of it or one problem with it" (Scott). Norma says that transition "wasn't this monumental thing.... It really wasn't a big deal.... I didn't see any abruptness nor did I see that it was bumpy." She further notes, "We like to think – my [ladies'] class does – [that] we're pretty forward thinking ... and [the people in our class will] give you exactly what they think; but I've never heard anyone complain."

The staff agrees with the congregants on this issue. Margaret says that the whole process went well: "It just went, I thought, wonderfully.... I think it was done very well. I don't see any way they could have maybe done better.... It went really smooth." Gene and David expressed similar feelings as well.

Meeting Goals and Improving Ministry

The interview participants were asked to state whether they feel that the transition met its intended goals. They were also asked in what ways they believe the transition has improved the church's ministry. All interviewees acknowledge that the transition met the desired goals. However, their discussion of those goals often extends heavily into the ministry improvement question, so the two topics will be considered together.

Ron describes one goal of the transition as the ability to have

a clear, concise study of the Bible. And as far as I'm concerned, Brother David has been the clearest, most concise preacher I have ever had in my life.... Brother David is richer in what he preaches and maybe that's because of the version that he is using. It's clearer to me than maybe would have been the King James Version.

Scott mentions the ministry's improvement from the version change, then discusses its goals:

[Transition] was moving us forward in a healthy manner and in a biblical manner.... I think the goal was ultimately [that] this is what's best for the church as a whole; this is the translation that your staff uses [because] they feel like is a

very literal translation and is good for everyday use and doesn't lose a lot of the biblical meaning behind things.

When asked if the goals have been met, David replies, "Absolutely! I mean, the more we're preaching, I think, the more [people] are coming to life." Gene says this about the improvement he has seen in the church's ministry:

The biggest thing is in my discipleship [group].... [S]ome of the men that have picked up the ESV are reading their Bibles. They're reading it with their families and that's been one of the major things that I emphasize in discipling.

Once again speaking from her perspective of church vision, Margaret shares,

My vision is for the Word of God to grow and see this church grow in spiritual growth, and I think this [change to a modern translation] was great in this respect.... I've seen people grow because of the more ... understandable way of teaching than the old dialect ... that [is in the] King James.

Margaret then shares, first in principle then in a particular example, what transition has enabled:

You can have the older people that have been to church all their life, and all they know is Bible stories. They don't know the theological Scriptures, and to me this [translation] makes it easier for them to understand and to learn.... I see that has happened with some of our older people. And that to me is a blessing because you hate to say that older people have been here like all their life and have always been in church but they are still so immature in the Word, and I think this has helped. I've seen it in some instances where this translation has helped them to grow and study.

Just even in my husband's life [for example]: My husband is 72 years old, and he was a strict King James Version [adherent].... [Even now] he still has King James at home, but I see when he comes [to church], now he is accepting this [new version] with an open heart.... [H]e is pretty well read in Scripture; but I see that it has even helped him. I praise God for that.... I would have said, ten years ago, I didn't think he would ever put up with that. He's pretty hard headed. [But he] is so accept[ing] of it now and so eager to see the vision with the younger couples.

The Pastor's Role

Many of the participants' general comments dealt with the pastor's role in the success of transition. Norma describes two factors associated with the pastor that, in her

perspective, played in the success. First, she simply states, “I trusted him.” Second, the fact that he was new was an asset. “[Transition] was more informal on his part, and it was kind of accepted because he was new and we knew that he was going to bring different ideas and new changes.”

David himself agrees with this latter point, even putting greater weight on it than Norma. “I think the only reason I had success switching the versions was that I was a new pastor, and I think [because of that] there was a willingness on the part of the people to put up with my switch.” However, David believes the reason for this acceptance to be rooted in something deeper: staff-related problems that were compounded by a prolonged period without two key ministerial staff, including the senior pastor. As alluded to briefly earlier in this chapter,

[the church] went without a pastor or youth pastor for almost two years.... [T]he gladness they had for a pastor [when I accepted their call] and what they had been through in leadership – they were willing to make that concession [on Bible versions] much more easily than if I had maybe come into a different situation.... [I]f I had been pastor here for a long time and just decided to make the move, I think they would have bucked that a little bit harder.

Margaret speaks of the confidence of knowing that the pastor is not erratic in his choices, but rather has studied out both the best choice and the best plan for achieving the goal.

[David] studies about different things.... [H]e doesn't just grab something and go with it, but he looks into it.... In all the things he's done, he has laid it out well ahead of time in a plan. It wasn't like he just jumped up and changed but he's pretty much let us know this is the long range plan.... I guess he just verbalized all that so well that it was a very, very smooth transition.

David also addresses this issue of being studied on such things, and the results that come with it.

I'm the first pastor ... they've had who has a Master of Divinity [degree]. That's intimidating to some of them. And I don't know if that's good or bad, but I'll tell

you, politically it's been good because they're much more willing to say, "Oh, okay. My little goofy arguments aren't going to hold water." So, there's been less challenge.

In short, "I think trying to present myself as professional, educated, knowledgeable; it just ... convinced them."

David tends to deal with issues in an honest and open way that often defuses potential problems. He relates a couple of stories that exemplify this. Knowing that some of the congregation might balk against giving up their KJV Bibles, David says,

We told them, "Look, if you want to bring the King James, bring the King James. Hallelujah, read out of it, ... I don't care what you do with it.... I'm just not going to do that." So, it's like me exercising my sovereignty and maybe they responded to that.

The second incident was about a visitor who asked to meet with David.

I had a visitor ... Marine, big guy, tough looking, young.... [H]e said, "Pastor, I love your church, but I got to know why you're not using the King James Version." ... [A]t the end of the conversation he said, "I don't know what I'm going to do." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I don't know if I'm going to stay at this church or not." And I said, "Carl, can I just be honest with you? If the King James Version is a big deal to you, then brother, let me encourage you to go find a church that preaches out of the King James. That's okay. But I just want you to understand that's not what we're going to do at this church." ... I said, "Why don't you go down there [to another church in the area]?" And he did; and he's happy. I think that was fine."

Illustrations

In order to comprehend better the participants' feelings and perceptions from throughout the transition – either viewing the experience as a whole, or in any of its smaller parts – the researcher encouraged the participants to give illustrations that, from their perspectives, convey various aspects of the transition.

Norma offers an illustration of her perspective of this change process, which highlights a trust in her pastor:

[I]t was kind of like, here's the engineer and here's the train, and let's jump on it and go.... Brother David knows where he's going and he's been there before and he's familiar with his train and he knows how to use it; he knows all of its workings and he knows how to be the [engineer], so I got on there without questioning.

She also compares David's leading through the transition to Jesus' calling the twelve disciples: "I'm not comparing David to Jesus; but just kind of like this was a leader [and] they knew to follow him."

Norma compares the effort of reading the KJV to the difficulty the average person experiences in reading a legal document, and notes that the transition has freed people from that.

I think it's made people ... more open to study and not just say that "I can't understand it." When people are able to read something and understand it, it makes them eager to understand more. It's like, you try to read a contract or legal document, you believe what people tell you it says because you don't want to have to plow through it; it's too hard. And I think that's the way that kids or new converts or younger Christians in the faith might have done with the King James Version. It's kind of like give up and throw up their hands.... [N]ow I think we are in the Word more.

David draws from the Bible story of the dry bones, found in Ezekiel 37, to describe how the transition has brought new life to the congregation:

I really think that these people [at Heritage] were starved [rather than "dead" as this passage depicts] ... but when you have church members who really don't know their Bible ... they were starved theologically.... [T]hese people ... were hungry; but using the dry bone illustration, they were dead. So the more we've concentrated on Word, we've seen them come to life with great joy.

Other Comments

Ken, with his seminary background and mindset, makes an intriguing comment about one long-term aspect of the transition: his effort in the transition might be establishing the next dominant version that others will one day have to dethrone. "That's probably what I didn't think enough about, once you do make a translation switch, [the

new translation] could become like the KJV has been.” David echoes that thought in a follow-up email: “I wonder if someone in the future will have problems changing from the ESV because of the work we have done.”

Ken questions whether the maximum benefit, at least educationally, was made from the transition process.³²⁷

What maybe could have been done better ... [was] making it more of a formal process, saying this is what we’re switching to and why, using it as a teachable moment. And do a series on “What are the differences between Bible translations and contemporary Bible translations. Why does David feel the need to switch to the ESV, and why not just use the King James Version?” ... It could have been a way to bring up the issue like, here’s why you don’t need to buy a TNIV; here’s why you don’t need to buy the Message Bible.... Here’s why you need to get an NIV, ESV, New Living Translation.... [However, you] always run the risk of making it an issue and having problems.... I think maybe David went the safe route.

Norma makes sure that the ease of transition does not convey the image that Heritage is without difficulties and disagreements. “It’s not like we didn’t go through changes in other areas that were maybe resisted; but not this particular one.”

Gene also makes some significant comments. He notes that “there [was] no specific planning for that change.” By this he means that there was no step-by-step process outlined for the transition.

Gene also attributes the success of transition, at least in part, to the growth of the church described earlier in this chapter. “Heritage has grown over the years.... [W]e just got some excellent people and they had already gone through the changes on their own.... God has just provided some people that are educated, biblically,” and these helped the church be prepared for this transition.

David believes that not all of the reasons behind the ease of transition are good. Specifically, he believes that few in the congregation are knowledgeable enough biblically to know what is at risk, and if it is worth defending.

[H]onestly, in this church theology is no one's battle. That's very sad for me to say that, but things like fighting over versions of the Bible and fighting over theology, that's not anybody's battle here. The only battles that matter here are, as long as these people get to keep their rights.... So, if ... it doesn't interfere with [their] choice, [their] vote, they don't care.

Ken put the transition within today's context of daily living, where change is the routine: "[E]verybody I know carries a cell phone, has been on the Internet, sent an email, and they're used to change," and changing Bible versions simply fits into that same pattern and causes them no problem.

The Current Status of Transition

Where do the interview participants think Heritage now stands in its transition to a contemporary-language Bible? Their remarks on that subject will now be presented.

Although they consider transition a success, interview participants note that a significant percentage of congregants still use versions other than the ESV – including many of the interviewees themselves. "I still read the King James Version, but I also like to read NIV and the English Standard Version," Ron states. Norma mentions, "Different people in my class have different versions." Participants continue to see people with such Bibles as the New International Version, King James Version (especially among the older people, Gene notes), and New King James Version, as well as the English Standard Version. Ken simply says, "I see a lot of different versions." Ron summarizes it as this: "I

³²⁷ Ken discussed this topic at some length on two occasions in the interview, with considerable overlap. To simplify the presentation, these two discussions are melded together into the quotation presented here. All words are from Ken.

would say everybody is still using what they want to use.” David agrees: “So, to say that we moved from the KJV to another translation is accurate, [but] as long as you are talking about the pulpit. The membership was so diverse ... that many [still have] all kinds of Bibles.”

What does it mean to be a teacher or minister after the transition to a contemporary-language Bible? Scott (both a father and teacher of young children) shares, “It’s so much easier for them to understand.... [It is easier] to teach and read to them.... [I]t’s so much easier to [tell] what the [Bible is] about to that age group” when using a contemporary-language Bible.

Gene notes this about the transition: “It’s still in process.” He also shares, “I’m just very excited about the ministry as a whole here, and using the ESV has just been to me a blessing with our people.”

In summary, based upon the interviews of seven change participants, this chapter has presented a vivid description of both the individual participants and the chronology of Bible version transition at Heritage, the latter including the participants’ personal involvement as well as the impact that transition has had upon them and others. Observation based upon this data in light of the earlier literature review and other factors will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the change process of a Baptist congregation that transitioned from the King James Version to a modern-language Bible as its primary worship text. This chapter will present the findings and conclusions drawn from the case study of a transitioning congregation in light of the literature reviewed and other relevant factors.

Selected Observations

During the course of this study, several observations emerged as relevant to the purpose of the study. The following discussion presents these observations, organized under the headings of The Change Participants, The Change Leader, and The Transition.

The Change Participants

A person's understanding of a process is often improved by a better comprehension of the components within that process. In an effort to understand better the transition experienced at Heritage, the researcher attempted to discover as much information as possible about the characteristics of the people involved.

Comparative Analysis

In the course of this study, some observations revealed themselves in the simple perusal of the interview data itself; other observations came from comparing that data to the body of literature reviewed. But in order to maximize the information from this case study, the researcher also sought insights from a third approach: comparing data from one

segment of the participant pool to that of other segments. Applicable observations from this data comparison will be reviewed at this point.

The first notable observation was the surprising consistency between interview participants, not just in the response content but also in the individual perspectives on change. For example, all interviewees showed the same acceptance for transition, had the same opinion of the change leader's capacity and approach in handling the change, and were enthusiastic about the use of the pew Bibles.

The researcher was curious about this consistency and looked for possible explanations. In contrast to the virtual uniformity of interviewee perspectives, an examination of the participant pool showed a very demographically diverse group. The degree of education varied greatly, at least ranging from Associate's Degrees to a soon-to-be-awarded Doctorate of Ministry. The participants were occupationally diverse, from those working in ministry and other professional areas to those working in industrial construction or self-employed in a technological field. There was also gender diversity. Ages varied from near thirty to late sixties. The number of years interviewees had attended Heritage ranged from over sixty years to less than three. There was a wide range of KJV exposure – some who were reared solely in a KJV environment and spent long years with that version, and others with little ability to use it at all. Yet with all the diversity, the data and feelings shared in the interviews were consistent – even strangely so.

The researcher's search through the interview data identified only three commonalities among the participants: (1) attendance at Heritage, (2) ethnicity (all Caucasian), and (3) a certain aspect of family structure – specifically, all participants

belonged to families that included dependent-aged children or grandchildren. The researcher immediately rejected the second item as an explanation, having seen a sufficient number of people in this category that did not share the participants' outlook. He is also inclined to discount the third item for the same reason, although the possible connection between having dependent-aged children or grandchildren and a favorable perspective on a version of the Bible the children could more easily understand is an intriguing thought.

The researcher therefore believes that the commonality among participant responses could be explained by the common attendance at this particular church. He finds this plausible, based upon one or both of two possibilities. One possibility is the general tendency for like-minded people to group together. The other possibility is that an ideology that produces the participant responses so permeates this particular setting that those regularly exposed to it are impacted by it.

Having established this surprising level of commonality among the interview participants' responses, the researcher did discover some small tendencies or patterns among sub-divisions of that group. Unsurprisingly the pastor and to a lesser degree the staff were found to be privy to more details (e.g., David being the sole participant that spoke of particular individuals who disliked the transition). However, this additional inside knowledge appeared to be limited to information and showed no indication of having altered any individual interviewee's perspectives.

This examination for participant tendencies revealed another subtle pattern. The researcher noticed a direct correlation between the level of participant enthusiasm and the level of his or her involvement in transition. This was noticed in participant-to-participant

comparisons as well as in comparing different points of time for a given participant. The former is seen in David who, as leader of the transition, was the most enthusiastic. The staff of that time (Ken, Gene, and Margaret), who were not as involved as the pastor, showed a lesser degree of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm was lowest in the remaining congregant participants, who were least involved in the transition.

The latter observation (that congregants' enthusiasm varied depending on the particular transitional phase) was evident as Ken's intensity peaked as he described his involvement in selecting pew Bibles. Gene and Margaret also appeared more emotionally moved as they related instances where the new version helped people to whom they were particularly close. From these examples, the researcher concludes that there is a connection between involvement and enthusiasm. Furthermore, the evidence suggests a reinforcing feedback loop between the two – with involvement causing an increase in enthusiasm, which in turn increases involvement – though the researcher must also caution that the evidence for this is not conclusive.

Comparisons also reveal what might be considered a time-based difference between the participant types. Specifically, while the participants shared a common perspective at the time of the interviews, comparisons at other points in time showed less commonality. The pastor revealed his passion for clearly teaching the message of God, and for using a Bible version that most easily accomplished that end, even as he met with the Search Committee. The ministerial and staff participants (Gene, Ken and Margaret) show evidence of a similar passion and commitment very early, during the initial stage of transition. (It seems, in fact, that they had some passion for this prior to David's move to the field but were limited in their ability to make significant change.) However, the

remaining congregant participants (as a whole) did not evidence such a level of passion until the second stage of transition (approximately a year later), when the pew Bibles were purchased and used. If one views the three individual frames in a time-lapse chronology, it is as if a wave progresses from one participant type to another to another, taking the passion and commitment from pastor to staff to congregants. The researcher is thus inclined to think that along with the transition from the old version of the Bible to the new, there was possibly a parallel transition where the pastor's passion and commitment for a deeper purpose or mission was passed along to the people as well.

The search for trends among participants found another small pattern, this one age-related. The age groupings of the participants fell into two distinct brackets, with nearly half of the pool in a five-year span of the early-thirties (approximately) and the other half in a ten-year span in their sixties (approximately). While both groups expressed genuine acceptance of the contemporary language, unlike their older counterparts, the younger group decidedly did not agree to the usability (though they did not question the reliability) of the KJV.

In this discussion of the impact of age upon the findings, the researcher must note a flaw in the study. The criteria forwarded to the pastor for participant selection included the following:

[T]he researcher would prefer that the participant pool ... include at least two parents or grandparents of dependent-age children who attended the church at the time of transition. This will provide the opportunity for hearing the transition experience of the children, an otherwise unheard group.

The participant pool did, in fact, meet and exceed this request. However, in both the construction of the interview questions and in the conducting of the interviews, the researcher failed to capitalize on this design element. The study did hear from parents,

grandparents and teachers about the impact of transition on their ministry to children, but it failed to attempt to understand the change process from the children's perspective. The loss this caused to the body of findings, if any, is not known.

In summary, the comparative analysis shows a surprising commonality among a much diversified group, with the best explanation of the unity being a church environment that strongly emphasizes the elements that this study was researching. While the interviews revealed a unified perspective, a few patterns within the participant sub-groups were also apparent.

Not everything to be learned about a group is found in dissecting the group and comparing its parts. Some aspects can only be learned as one examines the group as a whole. This study will therefore move from an examination of the parts of the group to a discussion of the dynamics of the group as a single unit.

Systemic Factors

The study observed an unexpected lack of anxiety among interview participants. There was no observed anxiety over Bible versions in general or the transition in particular. Some participants did demonstrate a small amount of uneasiness, but this seemed best explained as personal awkwardness from being interviewed for research by a person they did not know. It is feasible that this interview uneasiness could have hidden transition-related anxieties, but the researcher saw no indication of that.

The interviews drew a picture of the Heritage congregation that overall was identical to the participant pool on the issue of anxiety. The consolidated description was of a body that had little anxiety over the issue of Bible versions, even among those who preferred that the church remain with the King James Version.

The study also found no evidence of emotional triangles relative to the version transition. A transition setting would be fertile ground for triangles, such as a pastor attempting to triangle a parishioner in a Pastor – New Version – Congregant triangle. Other triangles that could likely develop in this scenario are Congregant – Old Version – Pastor; Unhappy Congregant – Pastor – Unhappy Congregant (or Other Staff, or Previous Pastor); or Unhappy Congregant – Pastor – Unrelated Issue(s). But the researcher saw no indication of any type of triangles.

The responses exhibited a high level of self-differentiation among the interview participants. There was no indication of cut-off or fusion. Participants were even self-differentiated enough to admit that, while unanimously agreeing with the benefit of the church's transition to the ESV (lack of cut-off), most of them neither owned a personal copy of the version nor did they use it regularly (lack of fusion).

The researcher took great interest in the "sovereignty" that David spoke of while describing Heritage's congregation. The meanings implied in that term greatly parallel the meaning of differentiation. David's use of the term to describe the congregants, then, was evidence that the members are also well differentiated – at least to the degree that the two terms are synonymous.

Since the interview participants did not include anyone with KJV-only leanings, the researcher was not able to test fully a hypothesis suggested by an observation from the literature review. The works of the two KJV-only authors reviewed in this study were filled with tones of cut-off and fusion, traits that argue for lack of self-differentiation and that Ronald Richardson considers as signs of emotional immaturity.³²⁸ In contrast, the

³²⁸ Richardson, "Bowen," 388.

authors opposing this view evidenced reason and differentiation in their writings. Based upon this observation, the researcher wondered if there is, generally speaking, a direct correlation between KJV-only tendencies and a level of systemic immaturity. While the case study interviews were consistent with this hypothesis, they offered no points of comparison with KJV-only individuals. Accepting that this hypothesis has yet to be fully confirmed, the researcher believes the evidence suggests that the Heritage congregation's choice not to be limited to the KJV is itself an indication of its systemic maturity.

In summary, the researcher concludes that the congregation at Heritage, as described by participants, shows a high level of systemic maturity. Therefore, systemically speaking, the circumstances were ideal for transition. Furthermore, the transition was handled in such a way that it produced no systemic problems.

Additional Observations

Gene and David both state that the preparation of the church was a vital element in the success of transition. Gene speaks of preparation in terms of a decade that brought biblically-educated members. David relates that portions of the congregation's preparedness came from staff troubles prior to his arrival and the allowances people were willing to make to get past those.

Trust in leadership played an important role in transition. Some of the congregation accepted the idea of transition because of trust in the pastor personally (which shall be discussed in more detail momentarily). Additional trust in the change leader's efforts came incidentally as the consequence of trusting that God would guide the congregation, using the pastor he had given them.

David and Gene – who have both ministered in a variety of places – note that the congregation is atypical among the BMA in their acceptance of change in general (David), and change in Bible versions in particular (Gene). The researcher deems that the congregation's emotional maturity on Bible versions, as suggested by the systemic characteristics mentioned above, confirms the uncommonness of this congregation. Because of this difference from the typical, appropriate adjustments are necessary for anyone wishing to apply the findings and conclusions from this study to other congregations.

While the congregational culture made no issue of Bible versions, it was not without ideologies and issues it highly valued. The needs for organizing and for communicating to constituents were mentioned by name as priority issues within the church culture. Financial frugality was also mentioned by name, as well as by examples (e.g., the question of the number of pew Bibles to purchase and the personal experience of Ron who said that he wants an ESV but hates not to use the NKJV). Also the importance of individual sovereignty was evidenced in numerous ways.

In summary, the participant interviews describe a systemically healthy participant pool and congregation, composed of people demographically diverse, and all come together with a surprisingly consistent perspective that bespeaks of some influencing element. This researcher is inclined to connect this common perspective to an inferred transfer of missional purpose, originating from the pastor's personal mission and communicated by the atmosphere he has created as change leader. The congregation has its individual culture that prioritizes the issues of financial frugality, organization, and

individual sovereignty, while (somewhat unique among the BMA) minimizing the issue of Bible versions.

The change participants are not the sole factor in transition. The change leader is also a major part of successful transition, and the study will now present observations related to this leader.

The Change Leader

The interviews show that David was the sole instigator of the Bible version transition at Heritage. While on occasion he did confer with others on the ministerial staff, all such contacts provided only personal support of him, with no indication that it brought others into any public leadership function. Therefore, the discussion of change leadership is a discussion of the involvement of one man. So, according to the participants' responses, what traits allowed this one man, David, to be successful in leading this change?

Systemic Considerations

This study has already noted the systemic maturity of the congregation in this case study. The same maturity was an important part of David's own character and his success as a change leader.

All participants describe the change leader's actions in terms consistent with a non-anxious presence. His laid-back demeanor in the early days of transition and his conversation with the Marine exemplify this. David's discussion with the Finance Committee and then the church concerning the need for pew Bibles did express a large measure of urgency, but the researcher does not believe that urgency is to be misconstrued as anxiety over the issue.

As change leader, David avoided efforts to involve him in triangles, such as the older gentleman who wished to sway him to return to the KJV. Similarly he avoided triangling others into accepting his version of choice, as seen in his low-key approach when first preaching from the ESV. In accordance with the second law of triangles, as he honored the “sovereignty” of the congregants and refused to triangle them by overly pushing his version, the change participants were able to minimize any reactive response and thus felt freedom to choose whether they personally transitioned or not. In this freedom, many participants chose to join the transition, and apparently all chose to accept it.

Descriptions of the change leader show a man who is self-differentiated. This was evident in such things as his willingness to stand for his intentions to use a non-KJV version as he interviewed with the Search Committee; his actual use of a version that was neither familiar to nor espoused by anyone in the congregation; and his lack of pressuring others to follow his decision, while sidestepping pressure from others to sway his commitment. In his words, “So, it’s like me exercising my sovereignty [i.e., differentiation], and maybe they responded to that.”

Systemic maturity is more than a description of David’s personal traits. It also characterizes the principles David incorporated during the change process. As discussed in Chapter Two, homeostasis is by default an opponent to change, but the creative change leader can at times leverage it as an ally. David was able to accomplish that. Knowing the congregational culture that places great importance on what he terms “sovereignty,” David’s attitude about the individual use of the ESV among the congregants was, “Do what you want to do” – which was a characteristic of the sovereignty they so valued. This

framed the invitation to change as a continuation of the status quo, and thereby made homeostasis an ally.

As change leader, the pastor regularly employed a feedback loop as a tool for change. His use of a pew Bible when preaching combined with the mention of the pew Bibles in the weekly bulletin create a segment of a reinforcing feedback loop: Due to this repetitive mention of the pew Bibles, they are used by attendees. As the attendees use the Bibles, many of these people are helped. The pastor and congregation are encouraged as they see the Bibles used each week. A few are further encouraged as they hear how the Bibles help the attendees. The encouraged pastor and congregation in turn further emphasize the use of the Bibles. With continued emphasis, more attendees use the Bibles and are helped, and on the feedback loop continues.

Not all feedback is positive, and not all loops are beneficial. The older gentleman who occasionally mentions his desire for the pastor to return to the KJV is an example of feedback – one intended to reverse transition. If allowed to play out, this pressure for reverse-change, pitted against the pastor’s resolve to stay with the ESV, could be allowed to form a balancing feedback loop. Under the pressure of the opposition, the pastor’s resolve lessens. As that resolve lessens, the parishioner shows his approval by lessening some of the pressure. The pastor’s desire for even less pressure erodes the resolve more, which in turn does lower the pressure more. On and on this goes until resolve is gone, the pastor reverts back to the KJV and the pressure is completely removed. However, by increasing his tolerance for the change participant’s pain and by differentiating himself from the pressure of this parishioner, the change leader prevented this loop. David also thwarted the possibility of escalating anxiety by refusing to be one of the two “poles”

required for chronic anxiety,³²⁹ and his move also preempted a system's tendency to allow the least mature member to set the agenda.³³⁰ All of these are examples of wise use of systemic principles in leading change.

The Plan for Change

One of the key interests in this study was the change leader's use of planning in transition. In order to discuss this subject more fully later, the study will now give a detailed examination of the part that transitional planning played in leading change at Heritage.

Increase Urgency. As previously mentioned, the chronology of transition naturally divided into two stages. The first stage began when David moved to Heritage and immediately began preaching from the ESV, and it included the reactions and interactions for approximately the first year. Stage two began as issues of the pew Bible purchase were first discussed. The two stages overlapped for a short period, as informal and private discussions were held prior to the public presentation of the proposed changes.

Responses indicate to the researcher that although the change leader personally felt a great sense of urgency – urgency that even pre-dated his arrival at Heritage – there was little sense of broad-scale urgency for version transition created among the congregation during the first stage of transition. There was a degree of curiosity generated, evidenced by people individually asking the pastor which version he was using. And there were isolated cases of deeper personal impact from the use of the contemporary-language versions (e.g., the young man using the NLT, whom Ken told

³²⁹ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, 36.

about). But overall, the interview responses paint a picture of a congregation that was willing to honor the sovereignty of a pastor to use whichever version he wished to use (even as he preached), provided that he did not force personal change upon them. There seems to be little urgency in that stance.

However, the level of urgency during stage two of transition stood in contrast to the lack of it in stage one. That each interview participant initiated the topic of the pew Bible purchase and use, and that they discussed the subject with such enthusiasm showed that the level of emotional involvement was high. The way in which participants spoke of the pressing need to purchase and utilize the pew Bibles was very befitting of the term urgency.

So, Heritage's transition did exhibit an increase in urgency. However, this was different from the urgency Kotter outlined, for it came late in the transition process. Kotter's plan emphasizes the use of urgency in the earliest stage of transition – what might even be considered a pre-transition component. This sense of urgency dovetails with William Bridges' advice to “‘sell’ the problem that is the reason for the change,”³³¹ i.e., allow the change participants to feel sufficient pressure of the situation's need before offering them the solution. David did not follow this approach, but rather the Bible version “solution” was initiated before the problem was broadly felt or even understood. This reversal may explain the low level of urgency in stage one of the transition.

Build the Guiding Team. Kotter's plan for change cites the need for building a guiding team. However, the interviews mentioned virtually nothing that could be considered as such a guiding team. The initial direction of transition (particularly, the

³³⁰ Ibid., 63.

determination not to use the KJV, and the initial decision to use the ESV) was determined solely by David. He did later confer with the staff to a limited degree about the need for pew Bibles, and Ken played a large part in solidifying the selection of the final version for that. But once the selection was made and the time came to go public (i.e., to present the case to the Finance Committee and then the church), there is no indication of any team-type involvement. In short, any involvement of a guiding team appears to have been limited to stage two of the transition, and then it was isolated to confirming the pastor's inclination, helping to select the specific version, and encouraging the pastor as he individually presented the idea for approval.

Communicate for Buy-In. As change leader, David was able to communicate for buy-in in a number of ways. Several of these individual factors are essentially issues of trust. David earned trust by such things as his education, his studied and non-erratic approach to considering something new, and his planning and explaining of his plans (which is understandably important in an "organizer church"). Responses indicate that he is trusted, not just for innate abilities, but also because he is deemed to be the man whom God has given as the church's leader, and participants trust God to lead through the pastor.

The researcher noticed a difference in the type, the intensity, and the results of buy-in as the transition moved from stage one to stage two. Generally speaking, stage one buy-in seemed built more on the personal attributes and position of the pastor, and manifested itself in a mental, passive acceptance of his introduced change. In contrast, stage two buy-in resulted from the emotional realization of the real needs of people

³³¹ Bridges, 16.

within the worship setting (e.g., the woman who tried to find the sermon text in the hymnal). And unlike the earlier buy-in of passive acceptance, the latter resulted in active involvement as the congregation saw the need, actively voted to address that need by purchasing the pew Bibles, and continued to utilize the Bibles in the months – and now years – that followed.

David continued to tap into “buy-in” by preaching each week from a pew Bible, giving everyone the chance to be literally (as he says) “on the same page.” In doing this, he continued to show value of the ESV in general, and of the blue pew Bibles in particular, as he authoritatively declared the message of God with blue-Bible in hand.

Another way this change leader helped with participant buy-in – or at least avoided the unnecessary loss of buy-in – was his sensitivity to the culturally significant issues that were not critical to transition. David spoke of his need to be organized, to be financially responsible, and to honor congregants’ sovereignty – all which were important to the culture of the congregation, and all which could be respected without jeopardizing the transition process.

Empower Action. Kotter says empowerment “is not about giving people new authority and new responsibilities and then walking away. It is all about removing barriers.”³³² The question thus arises, in his leading of Bible version transition, did David and the transition help remove barriers and empower people?

Margaret believes that there were empowering aspects of the transition, as she related that changing to a modern-language version removed barriers in her husband’s grasp of the Scriptures. Gene described how the transition empowered those in his men’s

³³² Kotter and Cohen, *Heart*, 104.

ministry to live better lives. Ken echoed this as he related how a contemporary-language version impacted the life of a man with whom David worked.

The process of transition also freed many to refocus on the missional purpose of the church. As David presented his case for purchasing pew Bibles, congregants found themselves awakened to realize the real needs of visitors and those unfamiliar with the Scriptures. Furthermore, they were empowered to act upon that newfound knowledge and vote to purchase the Bibles. Those involved in evangelism and children's ministry also related the empowerment that the clearer version gave in their ministries.

Transition continues to free and empower people, as newer visitors, with the aid of instructions from the pastor and the weekly bulletin, find the texts in their pew Bibles. The freedom to find the message of God in turn provides the empowerment to tap into its message as a source of comfort and strength.

While acknowledging these empowerments and their benefits, the researcher has to wonder how many of them were the means for change, and how many were, rather, the consequences of change? Arguably, those items of empowerment that are a part of planning would belong to the former. Yet most of the benefits mentioned seem better classified as the latter, meaning that they do not qualify as a planning component.

The one notable exception to this would be the empowering congregants had in their vote to purchase the pew Bibles. As will be discussed in more detail later, it appears to the researcher that by the second stage of transition the congregants were at a different place than they were a year earlier – a place where they were empowered not only to grasp the need for the pew Bibles, but also to voice their vote enthusiastically in support

of purchasing and using them. This empowerment acted as a means of transitional change but was not (solely) the result of it.

Create Short-Term Wins. Kotter gives this step so that change leaders will strategically plan for periodic events that will provide participants a morale boost. In the transition at Heritage, there were certainly a number of these periodic boosts, although they were probably more accurately considered as incidental instead of strategized wins.

During the first stage of transition, the ministry staff and some isolated individuals experienced wins, but the interviews included no mention of wins that were widely known or enjoyed. One ponders, for every congregant who approached David expressing the joy of better understanding the sermon text, who else experienced that win? For every individual who shared with him an intention of giving or getting the ESV as a Christmas gift, who else felt that win? For the family whom Gene was discipling and who later benefited from changing to the ESV, who were among the winners in that situation? The researcher agrees that these were legitimate short-term wins, but they were wins experienced by few, other than the minister, the individual, and possibly a family. These wins were quite significant to those involved, but one must still question what percentage of the three-hundred-plus people in the congregation directly felt those wins. This study finds no evidence of broad-scale wins during stage one of transition.

A point of clarification should be made at this point. The researcher anticipates that some would argue that there were wins throughout the congregation each week as the pastor preached from the more easily understood wording of the ESV. The researcher would not disagree with that. However, he rather maintains that these are not the nature of the wins that Kotter prescribes. Kotter describes wins that are evident and immediately

uplifting throughout a significant percentage of the change participants; wins that thereby encourage the group to continue in the change process. The interviews gave no indication that evident and immediately uplifting wins were regularly experienced by the congregation during the initial stage of transition. Instead, as the congregant participants recounted this stage of transition, their retellings lacked the enthusiasm that would be expected for something they deemed a “win.”

However, the tone of the participants took on a much greater sense of enthusiasm as they began to describe the events in stage two. This is understood to imply that they felt a greater sense of a win during this period. Furthermore, their descriptions include the sense of the win each week, as they saw both members and visitors putting the pew Bibles to use.

Don't Let Up. To brace for the long, hard road of change, which normally means confronting homeostasis and other opposition, Kotter advises change leaders, “Don't let up.” The leader at Heritage apparently stayed true to that charge, for the interviews revealed no point at which he staggered from the pursuit of his goal. Of course, within a congregation that holds little loyalty to any particular Bible version and where the change leader has leveraged homeostasis as an ally, the road of change has considerably less opposition than would normally be experienced.

Another reason for this need to not let up is that change takes time. Even within the circumstances at Heritage, a church which to the researcher increasingly seems an ideal setting for transition, that change still took time. This requirement of time was hinted at even in the tone of the interviews, as participant enthusiasm grew when they moved from recounting the initial months of transition to describing the later period. The

researcher sees evidence, as previously mentioned, of missional change that paralleled the Bible version change, and the transfer of that missional heart from mentor (pastor) to congregation required time.

Make Change Stick. Making change stick is another area, according to the interviews, where a component of Kotter's change plan has been accomplished incidentally – i.e., without specific effort focused on that specific goal – rather than strategically.

The purchase of the pew Bible was missionally focused, yet it did incidentally accomplish the task of ingraining the transition to the ESV more deeply into the congregational practice. According to the interviews, other efforts that aided in making change stick (e.g., the weekly citations of the sermon text in the bulletin and by the pastor, and the pastor's own use of the blue pew Bible) were at least primarily missionally motivated, and any element of establishing the new norm was secondary if not incidental.

In reviewing the discussion on change planning presented above, it is obvious that David incorporated several of the components of Kotter's plan. However, these seem to have happened largely as isolated incidents, with many not even planned, instead of as the chronological series of strategized steps that Kotter presents.

Additional Observations

The discussion now shifts from the components of planning, to planning as a whole. Some biblical aspects of planning will also be melded into the following discussion.

Both biblical and extra-biblical literature reveals the benefit of planning for transition. However, the two often vary significantly on how aspects of that planning are accomplished. The latter (extra-biblical literature) frequently presents the change leader as the mastermind who strategizes the necessary steps in order to move a transitioning group from one station to another. The former (biblical literature) paints a different picture of planning. The Scriptures present proper human planning, when done at all, as acknowledging subservience to the plans and wishes of God. Furthermore, they often show change leaders (e.g., Moses and Christ) as ones who were not heavily involved in strategizing plans.

Since this study must ultimately address aspects of how well the plan for change worked at Heritage, it must first grapple with the question of whether there was actually any particular plan. Was the change leader in this case study a planner? The answer to that question is open to debate and is dependent upon one's interpretation of the data. There are several commonalities between particular elements of this transition and the steps of Kotter's change model, and that might incline a person to think that the change leader was a planner who intentionally strategized these events. The researcher is inclined to disagree. In his interview, David was forthright about the various ways in which he was involved in the transition, yet he did not mention anything about intentional strategizing. The researcher deems it highly unlikely that the pastor and all other participants would omit mentioning such a key task, had they done it. Their silence, then, is sufficient for the researcher to rule out the possibility that there was any strategized planning.

Could this instead be intuitive leadership – that is, day-by-day acting out good planning because it just “feels right,” without any predetermined strategies? This option does seem more likely than the previous one. However, the researcher maintains that even this type of planning is not in keeping with the nature of the participants’ responses. For example, the various efforts that contributed to making change stick were not given in the context of an “it just feels right” desire to ingrain change into the congregational custom, as would be expected if David had been motivated by intuitive planning.

Instead of intentional or intuitive, the study finds incidental planning more consistent with the data. Similar to the examples of Moses and Christ, it seems that David simply followed the call and direction he felt upon his ministry (i.e., a missional purpose), and the needed components in planning fell into place. The tone of David’s interview indicated that he, like the two biblical examples, stood before the participants as their leader, yet stood before God as a follower.

In summary of this examination of leader-related observations, the researcher concludes that the change leader was systemically mature and utilized systemic principles as major tools in the change process. He incorporated many aspects of Kotter’s plan for change, some intentionally and others incidentally. Both of these contributed to the success of the transition, however they did not fit together to form a cohesive plan for Bible version transition. Most notably, David was a trusted leader and appears to have conveyed missional purpose in partnership with Bible version transition.

This study has thus noted observations about the change participants and the change leader. Having dealt with the people involved in transition, discussion now turns to observations about the transition itself.

The Transition

In addition to observing the traits of the people involved in the transition, the researcher also made observations about the transition process. The study will now consider these.

General Observations

The most surprising realization that came out of the participant interviews was the apparent fact that Heritage experienced no conflict in its transitioning from the KJV. While the researcher accepts the participants' recounting of this as true, he finds it out of sync with his experience in both denominational and local church work. As two of the ministerial participants stated, this is not a typical BMA church.

Lacking any level of conflict, this transition was not the scenario for which this study was actually designed. Even the research questions were constructed with conflict in mind, and this realization required that they be retooled (in purpose and perspective, not in wording). The lack of conflict also impacts the degree to which the study's findings are directly transferable to more typical BMA settings.

However, these unexpected dynamics do not imply that the case study's findings have no broad benefit. The researcher believes that the findings of this study provide great insight, as long as they are understood within their context and if appropriate adjustments are made when the findings are applied beyond their original setting.

A second significant and surprising observation relates to the pew Bibles and the extent to which interview participants believe the Bibles contributed to the overall process of transition. That this event was considered a part of transition can be seen in two items. First, as previously mentioned, all interviewees initiated the topic in the

interviews. In a discussion that was designed with only stage one transition in mind, each interviewee introduced the pew Bibles of his or her own accord. This voluntary introduction of the topic, combined with the participants' enthusiasm in discussing it, argues that from the perspective of the participants this event was monumental in the course of transition.

Second, the pastor's selection of Ken as an interview participant implies that he also considered the pew Bibles a part of the transition. David was aware that the criteria required participants to be attending Heritage during transition, yet he still chose Ken, knowing that he was not yet attending Heritage during the initial months of transition. This selection argues that David as the change leader considered the pew Bible events to be part of the transition, too.

The interviews highlighted another principle of transition: transition takes time. Even in conditions that are very conducive for change (as Heritage was), change is not instantaneous. Overall, the participants clearly viewed the transition as taking over a year, with one participant even stating that the transition is still going on after three-and-a-half years.

Ken's comment about making transition a "teachable moment" deserves mention here. In contrast to David's approach in handling transition, Ken suggested that leadership could have used the opportunity to educate the congregation on aspects of Bibliology. Instead of just stating the version that change leadership had decided upon, Ken believes leadership could have given an extended study to educate congregants on how versions arise, how to select a good version, what versions to avoid and why, et cetera. While the researcher agrees that David's approach was best at the time because it

provided less opportunity for congregants to be distracted by off-missional issues, he does see long-term benefit in implementing a version of Ken's idea.

On a separate but related thought, Ken and David made an interesting observation by pondering the potential transitions of the future. Will the ESV (or other contemporary version) be the ingrained version of the future? Will the transitions of today cause transition difficulties for a future generation? This anticipated transitional *déjà vu* suggests to the researcher that change leaders of today may serve the Christian community of tomorrow much better if they instill in their congregations the basis for determining acceptable transitions, rather than push for a replacement transition to be blindly accepted. Ken's suggestion for better education in Bibliology today may turn out to be a great service to future church leaders.

The Process of Change

One of the study's research questions explored the emotional impact of transition upon change participants – a subject covered by William Bridges in *Managing Transitions*.³³³ In order to address the research question more thoroughly later, the study will now present observations that emerged from comparing the events at Heritage with the Bridges' three-phase process of change.

The study did find some elements in the case study that were comparable to characteristics of Bridges' journey of transition. Similar to the first phase he labels "Ending" and "Letting Go," change participants at Heritage did have to give up the familiarity of the version they were used to hearing read from the pulpit each week. Many chose to lay aside their "carry" version (e.g., the Bible they personally carried to church

³³³ Bridges.

each week) in order to use the version that the pastor introduced. The second phase, called the “Neutral Zone,” is characterized in part by confusion, and it may correspond to the skepticism of some of the Heritage participants and the confusion others felt during their initial unfamiliarity with the new version. The greatest correlation was in the third phase (Bridges’ “New Beginning”), as some change participants experienced the benefits of understanding the messages of Scripture better, and as others began to embrace a new missional approach.

There were, therefore, some similarities between the Bridges’ model and Heritage’s transition. However, in the first two phases, the amount of similarity is small, and the dissimilarities appear to outweigh it greatly. Bridges’ model is built primarily upon the emotional aspect of transition, and the case study showed virtually no change-related emotion among the congregants during the early portions of transition. Overall, there was neither any significant emotional connection to the KJV nor any other interest that had to be severed and grieved over, which would be expected within Bridge’s model. Nor was there anything similar to the “wilderness experience” that Bridges relates to the Neutral Zone period. On the other hand, the interviews did reveal a significant degree of emotional involvement related to the pew Bibles, which corresponds to Bridges’ final phase.

In summary, the case study has little commonality with Bridges’ model in its first two phases. There was no emotional upheaval in transitioning away from the KJV, and the participants expressed little confusion. However, significant positive emotional response did emerge in the later portions of transition, which was similar to what the Bridges’ model anticipated.

To expand upon a previously established observation, the study would like to point out here that even in a situation where emotional ties with past items were not a factor, transition still took time. Having made that final observation on the process of change, the study will now consider the politics in change.

The Politics in Change

The interviews revealed virtually nothing that would be considered political in the typical use of the word. The only overtly political statement was made by David who said, “I’ll tell you, politically [my education has] been good.... [Because of it] there’s been less challenge [from the change participants].” But ministry, Bob Burns notes, “involves negotiating with others, choosing among conflicting wants and interests, developing trust, locating support and opposition, being sensitive to timing, and knowing the informal and formal organizational ropes. In short, the ministry involves politics.”³³⁴ Observations about several of these items (e.g., trust, timing, organization ropes [culture]) have already been discussed in previous sections. The discussion here will center on political aspects of planning, empowerment, and negotiating.

Planning. Borrowing from the terms of Cervero and Wilson,³³⁵ one must ask who was represented at the planning table in this case study’s transition. David’s response would arguably be that everyone’s interests were represented at the table. In one sense, he ensured that individuals would have a say at the table by telling congregants to do whatever they wanted to do concerning the versions they personally chose to use, in effect leaving each person as the sole vote at his or her individual table. On another level,

³³⁴ Burns and Cervero, "How Pastors Learn," 304.

³³⁵ Cervero and Wilson, *Negotiating*.

David believes that a version that makes the message of God more understandable is best for everyone, and thus his preference itself equally represents everyone at the table.

Some might object, saying that everyone's interests can not be equally represented if leadership sides more with one group (e.g., those preferring contemporary versions) than with others (those preferring the KJV). David would disagree with that evaluation, noting that as a leader his primary concern is not focused upon what individuals want, but rather, what they need. As he equally considers the needs of all and decides in accordance with those needs, he sees that everyone is equally represented at the planning table.

David's interview suggests that he would say there were additional factors represented at the table of transition. His missional purpose of helping people understand the clear message of the Bible was doubtlessly a major factor at the planning table. Yet David would be quick to emphasize that this factor compliments, not contradicts, the interests of the people.

Some might challenge David's right to be the one to make such determinations. If so, the consensus of participant interviews would counter by stating that as the pastor and spiritual leader of the congregation, this decision is a part of his responsibility. Furthermore, the interview data argues that others – particularly the individuals on the search committee and within the congregation – did put their stamp of approval on David's plans, for these voted to accept him as Pastor, knowing his intentions to lead in this direction.

Empowerment. Cervero and Wilson define political power as “the capacity to act, which is distributed to people by virtue of their position and participation in enduring

social and organizational relationships.”³³⁶ In the social and organizational structure at Heritage, and most notably in its priority upon individual sovereignty, every individual is empowered. Within the specifics of this study, this means that each person has the capacity to act upon his own personal belief when deciding which version is best – both in personal version selection, and in the opportunity to be a voice in the democratic selection process. Heritage made use of the latter opportunity in the vote to purchase the ESV pew Bibles and even in the aforementioned vote to call as their pastor a person they knew would bring transition to the congregation.

Negotiating. The researcher wanted to see what negotiation strategies Bob Burns recommended in his *Negotiation Strategies of Pastors*.³³⁷ This required that the relationship between the change leader and the change participants be categorized into two fields: consensual or conflictual, and symmetrical or asymmetrical (power-wise). For the first field, the data left no question that the relationship was consensual, since there was no indication of conflict.

However, categorizing the parties’ power relationship was difficult; was it symmetrical or asymmetrical, or a mixture of the two? Some congregants and staff spoke of the pastor as the leader they should follow, and David took the lead in the initial transition by preaching from the ESV without official church approval – both suggesting some level of asymmetrical relationship with David in the more powerful position. Yet other comments suggested times or situations of peer equality with no power position (e.g., the sovereignty issue about which David said, “they’d school me if I tried to go against them in that area”). This would imply a degree of symmetrical relationship. The

³³⁶ Ibid., 85.

need for David to get approval from the budget committee and from the church to purchase pew Bibles suggests a reversal of the earlier asymmetrical relationship, i.e., with David now in the position of less power. Yet David's presentation urging the purchase of the pew Bibles had the tone of peer-to-peer discussion (symmetrical).

In light of the evidence, the researcher thinks that the power relationship of the two parties is best categorized as a combination of symmetrical and asymmetrical. From a church hierarchy perspective, the pastor holds the power position over congregants in an asymmetrical relationship. On rare occasions the roles are reversed, as the pastor's role is to a degree functionally subservient to the vote of the congregants in committee or church capacity. Furthermore, it seems that David at times opts to negotiate on the peer-to-peer symmetrical level, even though he holds the power position of an asymmetrical relationship. The researcher speculates that this last approach is utilized (at least in part) because it works to David's advantage from a negotiation standpoint (since, systemically speaking, people are less likely to cooperate if they feel a decision is forced upon them) and because it shows deference to the culture's priority of individual sovereignty. Even though leveraging a negotiational advantage is arguably not the primary motivation behind David's decision to work symmetrically, it does create such an advantage nonetheless.

Burns' matrix suggests that the best negotiation strategies for parties with consensual interests are networking if the relationship is asymmetrical, and problem solving if the relationship is symmetrical. According to Burns, "[n]etworking is the sharing of information among individuals or groups," and includes such activities as

³³⁷ Burns, "Learning the Politics," 173.

“earning trust and respect.”³³⁸ He also explains that problem solving “takes place when individuals or groups come together to address and resolve issues,” which can include the development of policies and procedures.³³⁹

The interviews show that David was involved in both networking and problem solving. The study has already established the role that pastoral trust played in transitioning. The interviews describe David’s pulpit presence and his interacting with congregants as networking that builds relationships and fosters trust.

David also engaged in problem-solving activities. David’s interacting with Ken to determine which version to select for the pew Bibles qualifies as problem solving. His presentation of the need for pew Bibles – both to the committee and to the church – was framed as a problem-solving activity. “How are we going to make finding the sermon text easier for our visitors that don’t even know the difference between a hymnal and a Bible?” was the solution-seeking question David set before the committee and the church.

In a broad perspective, the researcher feels that David used the asymmetrical networking approach from the beginning and later incorporated the symmetrical problem-solving approach as the second stage of transition began. However, as discussed elsewhere, the researcher speculates that David did not take a problem-solving approach primarily because of a symmetrical relationship with the congregants. Rather, it was a means of drawing the congregants into the decision making process in order to see their needs firsthand, capitalize on buy-in from that involvement, and help congregants grow in the deeper missional purpose.

³³⁸ Ibid., 176.

In summary, the transition afforded some surprises. The lack of conflict and its impact on the process of change was unexpected and required rethinking certain aspects of the study. The magnitude of the pew Bibles in the transition was likewise surprising and enlightening. Unsurprising, though, was that the interviews confirm that even in the situations most conducive for change the process does take time.

Politically speaking, it appears that all parties were properly represented at the planning table, and that the circumstances allowed for individual empowerment. The researcher surmises that the relationship between the change leader and the change participants was consensual and predominantly asymmetrical. However, the change leader at times negotiated from a peer-to-peer symmetrical perspective, which provided opportunity for congregants' growth as well as (intentional and/or incidental) negotiational advantage.

This presentation of the case study findings is organized topically, with all thoughts about Subject A discussed in one place, whether a particular thought was discovered early or late in the study. Were this presentation instead arranged chronologically, the reader would find the researcher at this point in somewhat of a quandary. Having analyzed the various findings he finds himself looking at numerous individual pieces – pieces that the study has clarified, but are still somewhat disjointed. In the chronology of this study, the next discovery was the element that brought the various parts into a unified whole, and that element was the deeper realization of how the version transition at Heritage also fit into a greater vision.

³³⁹ Ibid., 174-75.

Get the Vision Right

The discussion of this step from Kotter's plan for change was postponed to this point because of the crucial factor that vision played in this case study. A proper understanding of the actual vision behind the transition explains many of the previously cited findings.

In analyzing the interview responses, the researcher realized that he had assumed Bible version transition was more of a primary issue than the data supported. This mistake was fostered by at least two factors. The first factor was the researcher himself, as he inadvertently allowed the primary focus of this study (version transition) to be superimposed upon his perception of the dynamics of the case study. The second factor was related to the situation of the case study, where the version transition was the visible outward expression that overshadowed the more subtle and internal missional change that the study has already highlighted. Because version transition was more visible on a week-to-week basis, it became the prominent factor in the perception of the participants.

However, a careful reflection upon the change leader's interview gave a deeper realization that version transition was not his primary vision. This chapter has already established a missional element that was transferred from pastor to congregants in parallel with the Bible version transition. This missional element was founded in the pastor's heart and reflected in his words, "I want my people to understand Scripture." That purpose found expression in the implementation of a contemporary-language Bible version. Version transition was not the vision that motivated this change process, but rather was a tool to accomplish the vision. The leader's real vision was to make Scripture

understandable, applicable, and livable in the lives of the people to whom he leads and ministers.

This corrected perspective on vision explained some of the earlier findings. A fuller discussion of this will be given under research question one, but the researcher thinks that the aforementioned lack of direction in the change plan was not because of a lack of planning, per se, but rather because the design of the study focused the search for planning within the wrong vision. Also, previous discussion also questioned the lack of urgency in the first stage of transition. However, in better understanding the real (missional) vision, it becomes more evident that through clearly worded Scripture and clearly proclaimed teaching during these initial months, the change leader was doing the preparatory work that would eventually allow those hearts to feel the urgency and act upon it – which is what happened with the pew Bibles.

The researcher observes in this preparatory work a form of reinforcing feedback loop. The clear presentation of the message of the Bible (as found in a clearly worded Scripture combined with clear teaching) in time produces a changed heart within willing hearers. The changed heart reaches out to help others (e.g., the use of the pew Bibles) who thereby come into contact with the clear presentation of the message of the Bible, and the loop continues. With each cycle, more people are brought in, people continue to mature, and more people are reaching out to others.

Did the change leader get the vision right? The interview responses indicate that David got the vision exactly right – an understandable version did improve the learning and application of the Bible in the lives of the congregation. Interview participants from all types (pastor, staff, and congregants) unanimously describe the benefits that have

come from this change. And the evidence strongly suggests that the change leader instilled both the vision as well as the means of achieving it (contemporary-language version) into the fiber of the congregation through example and through the content of his message. The congregants' grasp of attendees' needs and their enthusiasm in using the pew Bibles to address those needs indicated that both the vision and at least this one particular means for reaching that vision were transferred from mentoring pastor to his constituents.

In considering the above, the researcher was intrigued with this thought: What would the participants say has been changed during the transition process? The interviews showed a realization of the obvious changes – the worship text was changed during the initial days of transition and the addition of the pew Bibles was a change later in the transition chronology. But it is interesting to the researcher that, other than the change leader, not a single interviewee showed any realization of the personal transition that enabled them to embrace so enthusiastically the missional use of a tool of transition – the blue ESV pew Bibles. It would seem that the primary vision was achieved without those involved even realizing its impact upon them.

In summary, the researcher found vision to be the key to understanding what happened in this case study and why Bible version transition worked. In this case, that transition worked because it was a means to a heart-felt missional purpose passed from change leader to change participants.

Research Questions Addressed

The research questions were the framework upon which the case study was pursued. Having reviewed the data of the interviews in the previous chapter and noting

pertinent observations from that data in the previous portion of this chapter, the study will now attempt to answer the four primary research questions behind this study.

The research questions were designed with no knowledge of the transitioning congregation or its circumstances. These questions were constructed with the assumption that there would be a large measure of either interpersonal conflict or intrapersonal struggle that had resulted from the transition, and the questions were designed to explore aspects of these difficulties. The lack of such conflict and struggle in the case studied required that some of the questions be examined from a slightly broader point of view than originally designed.

Research Question One: The Need

The first research question was “In the participants’ experiences, how effective was leadership in conveying the need for changing from the KJV to a contemporary-language version?” The early examination of the data suggested that the change leader did a relatively poor job of conveying the need for change during the initial months of transition (stage one). The pastor’s low-key approach and the fact that some interview participants still describe the initial stage of transition in terms of concession to the new pastor suggest that the pastor had not conveyed on a large scale the underlying need for transition. As stage two began to go public, the change leader changed his approach and did finally convey to the group the need for change.

However, on further reflection and in light of understanding Bible transition as a component of a greater movement in the case study, the researcher is now drawn to a significantly different conclusion. The change leader clearly saw version transition not as an issue in itself, but as a tool for the greater missional purpose. This was evident in his

stated reason for preferring a contemporary-language version: “I want my people to understand Scripture.” The researcher now understands stage one to have been a period of conveying from mentor pastor to congregation the missional purpose and the sensitivity to people’s needs – needs that would later find their solution as the change participants moved into stage two.

In summary, the participant responses indicate that the change leader did convey the need for transition from the KJV to a more easily understood version. Furthermore, the change leader conveyed to the congregation the foundational missional purpose that established the legitimate need for such transition, instead of pursuing transition as an isolated or primary agenda item.

Research Question Two: The Plan

The second research question was “From the participants’ perspectives, how well did the plan for changing from the KJV to a contemporary-language version work?” The interview responses suggested mixed answers to this research question. On the one hand, participants felt that the transition went smoothly with no hitch along the way and that it accomplished its intended goal. This argues that from their perspective the change worked well.

However, “worked well” does not address all that is asked in the research question, for it fails to address the component of planning. As originally penned, which was within the framework of the literature reviewed on this subject, this research question envisioned planning of transition in a strategized or semi-strategized sense. Within those parameters the researcher concludes with Gene that change leadership did no planning for transition. Even if the study allows for a broader definition of planning, as detailed earlier

in this chapter, the researcher does not think the evidences allows for even an intuitive type of transition planning. Rather, it seems that most of the components of planning that were accomplished were done incidentally.

However, in light of an improved understanding of how version transition fit into the main issue of missional purpose, the researcher is unsure about the validity of the research question itself. The question was conceived and framed as if transition were the primary issue, rather than a tool for a greater purpose. Arguably, one plans for achieving the main goal, but does not necessarily develop a plan for each instrument used in achieving that goal.

Gathering interview data on the new pastor's broader missional pursuit was beyond the design of this study, so the following is given with an acknowledgement of limited data. But within the data gathered for this study, the researcher concludes that the change leader did not incorporate a plan for transitioning Bible versions. However, the researcher does believe that in his pursuit of his primary vision (i.e., missional goal) the change leader intuitively accomplished a plan for that goal. Since the missional change involved transitional change as a secondary component (i.e., as a "tool"), any aspect of planning for transition was accomplished incidentally.

Research Question Three: The Emotions

The third research question was "What emotions did participants experience during the process of changing from the KJV to a contemporary-language version?" This question attempted to determine the level of change-induced emotions that William Bridges³⁴⁰ describes as part of the process of letting go of the old and accepting the new.

³⁴⁰ Bridges.

The interview participants said that there was no emotion involved in the transition. It appears that during the initial period of transition, which Bridges labels as “Letting Go,” the congregation had no emotional bond to the KJV or anything else that was changed in the process.

However, the responses clearly showed the potential for such emotional responses. There were a number of culturally important elements (e.g., organization concerns, financial sensitivity, and individual sovereignty) that the congregants did have emotional ties to, and the mishandling of these would have likely brought an emotional response. But because of the change leader’s negotiational sensitivity to each of these areas of concern, the transition was able to avoid unnecessary emotional obstacles.

In spite of the participants’ claim that there were no emotions involved in the transition, the researcher found otherwise.³⁴¹ The enthusiasm the participants exhibited in discussing the second stage of version transition (pew Bibles) showed a significant measure of positive emotions. Such emotions are characteristic of Bridge’s final phase of transitioning.

Although not originally intended as part of this question, the literature review speaks of the part that emotions play in the change process. Kotter writes, “Changing behavior ... [involves] influenc[ing people’s] feelings. Both thinking and feeling are essential ... but the heart of change is in the emotions.”³⁴² David’s interview revealed that such feelings were involved in his initial move from the KJV to the ESV in a previous pastorate. Among the other interview participants, a similar sense of emotion was

³⁴¹ The researcher believes that this difference is not because of intentional misinformation on the part of the participants, but rather because their concept of emotions was limited to a negative sense.

³⁴² Kotter and Cohen, *Heart*, 2.

expressed as they related the events of change at Heritage. Some showed a measure of happiness simply at the transitioning from the KJV. And the researcher considered all participants to exhibit positive emotions in recounting the impact of transition, especially when it related to the pew Bibles.

In summary, there was no evidence of negative emotions that came from the “Letting Go” phase of transition in the case study, and the participants only expressed limited positive emotions. This lack of stronger emotional involvement was no doubt largely caused by an overall lack of personal attachment to the previously used KJV. The latter stage of transition did show a notable measure of positive emotion, although the researcher believes that this emotion was not sparked by the transitioned version itself, but rather by its ability to aid in the church’s missional purpose.

Research Question Four: The Benefits

The fourth research question was “According to the participants, how has the change from the KJV to a contemporary-language version been beneficial to the church’s ministry?” The participants unanimously acknowledge that the transition from the KJV to the ESV was very beneficial to the church. David says that more people are “coming to life,” Gene speaks of positive changes in the lives of his discipleship group members, and Margaret speaks of a change in her husband. These are but a few of the specific examples.

However, properly answering this question requires that it be considered within the transition’s fuller context. The version change came in tandem with growth of a missional perspective, and the benefits attributed to the former can not presume isolation from the latter. In fact, the evidence strongly suggests otherwise.

In summary, the researcher found that the research questions failed to anticipate fully the circumstances of the specific congregation and the degree to which this transition was only part of a greater vision. In Heritage's case, there were no initial emotions during the transition, transitional planning was deemed to be incidental, and conveying the need for transition was largely slow in presentation. However, even with such difficulties, much was gleaned through these research questions. It was the questions' inability to explain adequately the transition that was largely responsible for the researcher's seeking a deeper cause for it, and that seeking uncovered the more subtle, key missional component of the transition. The final research question, however, did show the extensive benefit of version transition, even if within the context of missional purpose.

Three Additional Questions Considered

One of the driving forces behind this study was a desire to determine transferable principles that will help other BMA churches or entities successfully transition from the King James Version to a contemporary-language version. To that end, the study will now consider three important questions about the transitioning in this study.

Was It Transition?

If this study is to distill principles for transition from Heritage's case, as it was intended to do, it must first grapple with the question of whether there was a transition or not. If there was no transition, then arguably the case gives limited insight to churches that need to transition.

All would acknowledge at least a degree of change at Heritage, for a then-unknown Bible version is now the worship text read each Sunday. People previously

unfamiliar with this version now praise it, and many have acquired personal copies of it. A number of lives have also been impacted, so there is little room to debate that some level of change has happened.

However, the principle factor in this question is not the impact of the item of change (the ESV), but rather, how impacting was the process of change? In spite of the huge impact the item of change had, this researcher feels that the process of change was largely a non-issue. Therefore, using the distinctions made by William Bridges, this researcher concludes that the issue of Bible versions was a “change,” but the process was so easy that it does not warrant his classification of “transition.” Overall there was no turmoil in breaking away from the old, no difficulty in accepting the new, nor any serious struggle in the migration between the two. There was not even any minor emotional upheaval in any of the steps along the way. In the terminology of Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky, this event proved to be a technical problem (“problems for which [people] ... have the necessary know-how and procedures”³⁴³), not an adaptive challenge (“changes in people’s priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties”³⁴⁴).

In summary, the researcher acknowledges a degree of transition in the case study, but with the disclaimer that it lacked many of the aspects that the typical congregation would deal with in attempting similar change.

Was It a Success?

Lessons from minor change can often be extrapolated for use in larger transitions, so even though the case at Heritage is not deemed a full-blown transition, its lessons are

³⁴³ Heifetz and Linsky, *On the Line*, 13.

³⁴⁴ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *Adaptive*, 19.

not necessarily useless. But in order to use those lessons, a second question must be asked: Was it a success?

In order to answer this question, an additional question must be asked: What was the goal? Was the goal to establish a new version (ESV) as the Bible of choice among the individual congregants? If so, there was obviously only limited success. While a large percentage of the congregation use the ESV, there remains a significant percentage that still do not own or use it. In fact, of the six interview participants other than the change leader, only one (less than twenty percent) uses the ESV – and it is likely that his use of the ESV is not because of the Heritage transition, per se. So, if getting the ESV into the hands and the regular use of all the congregants was the purpose of transition, its level of success is not high.

Was the goal to establish the acceptability of contemporary language versions in general? The participant responses show that a very large percentage of people already accepted such versions prior to the transition that David began. In light of this, it seems that transition did not itself change the basic outlook on the acceptability of contemporary-language versions. If the goal was acceptability, then the goal was reached prior to this transition, meaning that this transition can not be considered a success.

Was the goal that lives be changed by the impact of increased use of an understandable version? Such seems to be the pressing issue from the perspective of the change leader. This argues that the ESV is not the intended end of the transition, but is rather the means to an end. And participant responses conclude that in answer to this question, transition has definitely been a success.

In short, if version transition is viewed as an end in itself, the evidence seems to indicate that its transition was a failure. If, however, transition is viewed as a component of a greater missional movement – as the researcher concludes it to be – the transition was a success.

Therefore, those change leaders wishing to use these findings as principles for Bible version transition within their own congregations must understand and use them within a context of a greater and genuine missional purpose that they endeavor to grasp personally and to instill within their congregation. That is the lesson of Heritage.

Why Did It Succeed?

Merriam characterizes qualitative research as an inductive process that “builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, or theories.”³⁴⁵ From the qualitative research of the case study of transition the researcher offers the following as a theory to explain why transition – to the degree that it was transition – was successful for this congregation.

Congregational Factors

A number of congregational factors contributed to the ease of transition in the case study church. The congregation showed a high level of systemic health, with a high priority on self-differentiation and no evidence of emotional triangles. Congregational preparation was another key element in transitional success, part of which was circumstantial (i.e., staff problems) and other parts educational (i.e., they were biblically grounded). Arguably the most important factor was the congregation’s willingness to accept and embrace the missional purpose, even if they did not actually realize that they were undergoing that change.

³⁴⁵ Merriam, 7.

A fourth factor, which the researcher deems not to have been essential but which made the transition much easier, was the congregation's initial openness to change, which included no emotional connection to the KJV. The consensual relationship between the change participants and the change leader allowed for easier negotiations while working through the transition. However, the consensual relationship should not be assumed as an imperative for success, for as the change leader used the appropriate negotiation strategies for this relationship, so a change leader in a conflictual relationship might similarly obtain success as he chooses strategies better suited for that situation.

Leadership Factors

Leadership factors also played heavily in the success of version transition in the case study congregation. The change leader proved to be systemically healthy and exhibited a capability of utilizing systemic principles as tools for change. He was trusted by the change participants. He was a leader that worked and negotiated within the culture of the congregation, and in this instance, that culture fortunately did not necessarily conflict with any element of change. The leader did not allow himself to be hindered with distracting issues (e.g., requests to go back to the KJV, or a personal agenda that demanded group consensus or individual conformity).

The leader, in due time, brought the participants to a place where they were stirred by the needs of others. As Kotter notes, "the heart of change is in the emotions."³⁴⁶ Apparently without most congregants realizing it, the change leader transferred his own heart of missional purpose into their hearts – a transfer that allowed them to feel what he felt in giving people the message of God in a language they can understand.

³⁴⁶ Kotter and Cohen, *Heart*, 2.

Other Factors

One of the key factors in the ease of transition in the case study was that it did not require much change. The study finds no reason to believe that deeper change would have made transition impossible; however, it arguably would have made it a lot more difficult.

In summary, this study finds that the case study was not a full-blown Bible version transition. However, the researcher concludes that it was a success of missional vision that included a transition of Bible versions. That success points to the need for an underlying missional purpose in version transition. It also points to other factors that will be helpful in establishing that purpose and implementing the accompanying version transition in other congregations.

As with any attempt to transfer the finding of one study to another situation, one must exercise caution in extrapolating the findings of this study. Where individuals and circumstances are identical, the findings of the original study may be easily transferred to another group. Slight variations will foreseeably require slight adaptations, and larger variation may require larger adaptations or even prove the original finding unusable.

In reviewing the whole study, the researcher draws the following summary: The lesson of Heritage is not about Bible version change in isolation of deeper issues; it is not about planning; it is not primarily about politics or negotiation or power struggles. Ultimately it is not specifically about the Bible versions themselves. The lesson of Heritage Baptist Church is not primarily a presentation of the best way to prepare for and enact Bible transition (although it does speak to these issues). The primary lesson of Heritage is a mentoring change leader who is willing to instill within the change

participants a mission of clearly presenting God's message to people in a way they can more easily understand. The principle lesson for other BMA churches and entities is not how to change, but rather why to change. To deal with the secondary issue of translations and transitions without grappling with and instilling the primary issue of one's missional purpose is to rip the heart right out of the beast.

In the big picture, the story of Heritage is a story of transition. However, it is not at root a story of Bible version transition. It is the story of transmitting a missional purpose to a congregation, a missional purpose that changes their own lives and impacts the way they meet the needs of others – including the version of the Bible they use.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study provided several insights into the transition process in the case study church, and these suggest a number of principles for other congregations that transition from the King James Version to a contemporary-language version. However, there is much more to be learned that could provide additional aid for those congregations.

The circumstances at Heritage fail to mirror what the researcher considers to be the typical BMA congregation, most notably in the area of participants' emotional ties to the KJV. The researcher anticipates that a very beneficial subsequent study would be of a BMA or BMA-type congregation that has attempted transition where a significant portion of the membership did have emotional ties to the KJV. The findings from such a study could build upon or correct the findings in this study.

The researcher also thinks that an updated study of Bible version use and acceptability within the BMA would be valuable. The most recent study known to the researcher is a decade old, and it only surveys pastors. Ideally, the new study would

include both pastors and congregants and would determine which versions are currently used, as well as which versions the participants would deem acceptable. The study should also query pastors about any anticipated dates for transitioning and about their reasons for not transitioning, and ask the congregants their degree of willingness to follow a pastor who decided to transition. Comparing the findings of this study to the older survey could also illuminate any denominational trends in version change.

The researcher has noted what appears to be a difference in systemic maturity between the KJV-only authors and the other authors that wrote on the subject, at least for those materials reviewed for this study. He would be curious to see a broad study undertaken that would (1) compare the degree of a person's KJV commitment to his or her level of systemic maturity, and (2) attempt to determine any causal relationship between the two. If KJV commitment was found to be a factor of systemic maturity, this would provide change leaders with a means of indirectly preparing congregations for transition.

Final Thought

In the first chapter of this study, the researcher hypothesized that “[t]ransitioning from the antiquated language of the KJV to a more user-understandable version has potential for impacting a church and those attending it in numerous ways.” He then specifically anticipated improvements in evangelism, spiritual growth of believers, and a sense that the local church is in touch with contemporary people and their present day needs. The case study congregation exhibited each of these improvements, substantiating the hypothesis that proper transition from the antiquated language of the King James Version will benefit a congregation's ministry.

In the examination of Bible version transition in the case study congregation, the researcher identified some factors that made transition much easier for this church. However, nothing suggests that this congregation's circumstances were so unique that similar transition could not be accomplished in other congregations. In fact, the evidence points to an opposite conclusion: transition is possible when systemically mature change leaders stay the course in preparing, negotiating with and otherwise leading a willing congregation to maturity, while transferring to them their own biblically-sound and active missional purpose. A missional purpose that allows change participants to recognize and feel the need of others and motivates them to fill that need will prepare and motivate congregants for an easier Bible version transition.

The researcher also ventured that such growth among individual congregations will have denominational impact – a belief that is only strengthened by the finding of this study. It is his sincere hope and prayer that churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of America will see the benefits of missional based Bible version transition as exemplified in this study, will plan and implement it into their unique situations, and will in due time reap its benefits for the glory of God and His Kingdom.

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