

The Reason for This Network: An Introduction to Revitalisation

Why is church revitalisation necessary? Why is it so difficult? What is the difference between revival and revitalisation? This session will present some of the barriers to revitalisation, as well as statistics from the USA and Europe. Attendees will learn specific steps that we as leaders can take to encourage the revitalisation of our churches.

David Brown has been involved in church planting in France since 1976 and has planted three churches (two in Nancy and one in the Paris suburbs). After revitalising a church in central Paris, he is now planting a daughter church in an adjoining borough. For many years he was involved with GBU (Groupes Bibliques Universitaires), the French student movement affiliated with IFES, first as General Secretary, and then as chair of the board. He also chairs the Evangelism Commission of the French “National Council of Evangelicals” and teaches church revitalization at the Geneva Bible Institute. He is married to Mary, and they have four adult children and a growing number of grandchildren.

I. The need for revitalization

A. Statistics

1. In North America
2. In France

The Tasmanian tiger – extinct in 1936.

II. Some signs that a church needs revitalization

- A. A gradual erosion
- B. Living in the past: nostalgia (“The Preference-Driven Church” parody of Rick Warren’s “purpose-driven”)
- C. Focusing on maintenance rather than on the needs of those outside the church
- D. Refusing to live in today’s world and be in phase with the neighborhood around the church
- E. Amnesia regarding the Great Commission
- F. The church rarely prays together
- G. The church functions by routine (“Going through the motions”)

III. New Testament examples

NB OT as well

“Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us” (Romans 15.4).

- Judges 2.10-11
- The kings of Judah and Israel
- Haggai chapter 1: “My house remains a ruin while each of you is busy with his own house.”

The 7 letters to the churches in Revelation

- Smyrna and Philadelphia told to be “faithful” and to “hold on”
- The others are told to repent
 - Ephesus: loss of their first love
 - Pergamum: the need to fight against error
 - Thyatira: the need fight against sin and immorality
 - Sardis: the church has the reputation of being alive but it is dead
 - Laodicea: the church is lukewarm

A. The Ephesus church example (Revelation 2.5)

1. Remember
2. Repent
3. Recover the first things

B. The Sardis church example (Revelation 3.1-3)

1. Wake up! Strengthen what remains
2. Remember
3. Obey and repent

IV. Different contexts of revitalization

A. The stage the church is at

1. A church in danger of extinction
2. A church in crisis
3. A stable church

The bell-curve.

B. The different regions of Europe

V. A vision and a process

The vision: the gathered church and the scattered church

The process

A. The social dimension

Improving relationships within the church and with non-Christians

1. Loving others (the second commandment)
 - Show an interest in them / listen to them
 - Do good to them / encourage them

Reconciled with God, our aim is to be human, as God restores His image in us.

B. The societal dimension

Improving the contextualization

1. Geographically
2. Culturally

- ❖ To help Christians live their lives in the contemporary world
 - To understand and believe the Bible faced with today's challenges
 - To build bridges to unbelievers
 - Not to live in a parallel world to the rest of the population

- ❖ To identify with the needs of society outside the church

C. The spiritual dimension

Improving the spiritual health of the Church

1. Worship (the first commandment)
2. Trust
3. Obedience (the good fight)

Preparing Christians to love in the scattered church 24/7

Suggested Readings:

John James, *Renewal*, 10 Publishing (Leyland, UK, 2016)

Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2007)

Thom S. Rainer *Anatomy of a Deceased Church* (Nashville, B&H Publishing Group, 2014)

Harry L. Reeder, *From Embers to a Flame* (P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ 2004)