

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Reflect on Your Life and Ministry

The new year is always a time of reflection. Many people make resolutions to lose weight, exercise, and continue education. Whether or not you make resolutions, the new year is a good time to reflect on your life and ministry.

A few years ago, *Success* magazine asked its readers when they reflected on the direction of their life. Over half (57%) confessed to reflecting every night before going to bed, while

21% indicated they did so at the beginning of the new year. Vacation time was reported by 10% of the readers, 7% mentioned weddings, 4% noted funerals, and 2% said they reflected on their lives when they were sick. Only 4% of people said they did not have time to reflect.

The Bible recommends that we reflect (examine) our lives at different times. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Let a person examine himself, then, and to eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28). Later Paul encouraged the Corinthians to "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). According to the Bible, reflection on one's life from time to time is a good thing.

Many leaders find it helpful to reflect on their life purpose in comparison to the our phases developed by Bobby Clinton, Clinton calls the first phase of life Sovereign Foundations. This phase covers our life from birth

to the early 20s. It is the soil out of which our life purpose develops. Our early experiences form our personality, character, and values. Leaders often have an initial sense of calling or life purpose during this time, but, it is usually very general.

Phase two normally takes place in our 20s and 30s. During these years people engage in their first attempts at ministry leadership, experiencing success or failure. It is at this time of life that most leaders determine the major role they will play for the remainder of their lives. God often uses this period of time to develop a leader more than developing a leader's ministry. An emerging sense of life purpose arises during this time period.

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Watch for Dr. McIntosh 's new book

*Growing God's Church:
How People Are Actually Coming
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Significance is more important than success.

Ministry often moves from job to career to calling.

This phase is concerned about survival. For most of us, the 20s and 30s are all about finding a job, paying off school loans, and getting established in the work force

The third phase takes place during our 40s and 50s. During these years a leader's direction becomes focused, as a unique ministry is identified and embraced. He or she stops thinking about survival and begins to think about success; finding a career is more crucial than just having a job. People identify a major role that is compatible with their giftedness and passion. The earlier emerging sense of purpose is confirmed, and they focus on what will come to be their ultimate contribution.

The last phase starts about age 60 and continues for the remainder of a leader's life. It is during this time period that leaders assess their entire ministry, and become concerned about leaving a legacy. Clinton calls this time convergence, as the entirety of a leader's life converges in an end of life and career assessment. Success in life is not as important as significance. Leaders hope to fulfill their life calling more than succeeding in their careers.

There is a continual narrowing of ministry over the lifetime of a person. Leaders begin doing ministry in a general way, but by phase four they are more focused on limiting ministry engagement to areas that fit their life purpose, gifts, and passions. Between each phase is a time of transition. Perhaps the most famous transition is called a mid-life crisis, i.e., the transition between phase two and three, which usually occurs around age 40-45. However, there are also transitions in one's early 20s and in one's 60s. These transitions

are natural points for reflection, but, of course, reflection may take place at any time in a leader's life depending on circumstances.

As you reflect on your life, ministry, and purpose this year, consider the following.

First, in which phase of life and ministry do you find yourself? Are you dealing with a transition point? If, so, which one?

Second, how clear are you on your life purpose? Are you still seeking a clear understanding of your life purpose or have you decided on what it is?

Third, what goals do you have for the future? Set three-to-five goals for each of the following:

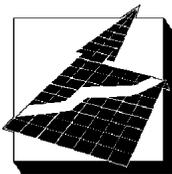
- Family goals
- Career goals
- Financial goals
- Education goals,
- Spiritual goals
- Ministry goals

Leaders who set goals tend to accomplish much, and make a difference! What goals do you have for the coming year?



Gary L. McIntosh is an internationally respected speaker, author, and professor.

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Ministry Insights for Church Leaders
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What Visitors See!

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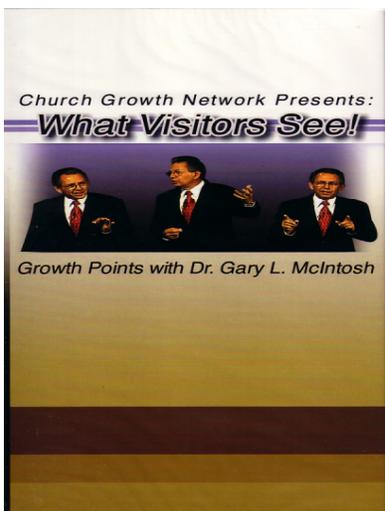
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Dr. Gary L. McIntosh is an internationally known author, trainer, consultant, and professor of Christian Ministry & Leadership at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, La Mirada, California.

As President of the McIntosh Church Growth Network, a church consulting firm, Dr. McIntosh has served numerous churches in over eighty-three denominations throughout the United States, Canada, and Southeast Asia.

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