

RISE

**BOLD STRATEGIES
TO TRANSFORM
YOUR CHURCH**



CALLY PARKINSON
WITH NANCY SCAMMACCA LEWIS

Cally Parkinson has combined brilliant research with what is at the heart of transforming a church! In *Rise: Bold Strategies to Transform Your Church*, Cally gives you a design that will revolutionize your church to be all that God meant for it to be. Who doesn't want that? This is a must read for every church leader.

DAVE FERGUSON

Lead pastor of Community Christian Church and author of *Finding Your Way Back to God*

Filled with case studies and strategies for the transformation of your church, *Rise* is a powerful tool for leaders and congregations who want more of Christ in their church. Based on research and real examples, *Rise* charts the pathway to change and church renewal. The REVEAL survey proved that not every church that grows is spiritually strong. *Rise* reveals ways to strengthen your church based on its unique characteristics.

C. JEFFREY WRIGHT, JD, MBA

Chief executive officer of UMI (Urban Ministries, Inc.)

Church leaders looking for next steps for moving their congregations to new levels of church health and ministry effectiveness will find *Rise* to be an exceptional resource. This book provides answers to the unique needs of several church types. The research will enable you to identify your church's unique path to greater vitality. I highly recommend *Rise* to all churches desiring to attain greater ministry impact.

TODD HUDNALL, DMin

Lead pastor of Radiant Church and author of *Church, Come Forth*

Rise is a win for the body of Christ! We think every pastor and church leader should read this helpful resource, just as every church benefits from taking the REVEAL assessment. *Rise* takes the snapshot of church spiritual health from REVEAL and puts legs and action to it. It combines great hope, biblical direction, and practical suggestions every church can use.

ROY and MARGARET FITZWATER

Coaches, consultants, and co-directors of Navigator Church Ministries

Rise is a clear and inspiring call to action. The archetype descriptions reflect an excellent balance of candor and grace. We see our parishes in them, and they challenge us to courageously recalibrate towards spiritual growth. A wonderful answer to the "what do we do now?" question.

RT. Rev. MARIANN EDGAR BUDDE, BISHOP, and Ms. JOEY RICK

Canon for Congregational Vitality, the Episcopal Diocese of Washington

This is a terrific volume, full of wisdom and practical advice about strategies to move churches along the path to greater vibrancy. Convinced that all churches have the power to thrive spiritually but eschewing a “one size fits all” strategy, Cally assesses the challenges eight church “archetypes” face and the ways in which they can achieve or sustain spiritual depth. This is a truly hopeful book, based as it is on the conviction that all churches can grow spiritually, no matter where they fall on the spectrum of vitality. It could be profitably read by every pastor in America.

BILL SIMON

Founder of Parish Catalyst and coauthor of *Living the Call*

As a Lutheran pastor and consultant to mainline congregations, I recognize many of the archetypes in this book. But the important thing is not just more diagnoses of the problem—we have lots of books about that already. This book looks at strategies that have helped move churches forward and gives real guidance for leaders who want to do more than simply wallow in their situations.

DAVE DAUBERT, DMin, PhD

Parish pastor and lead consultant for Day 8 Strategies; author of *Seeing Through New Eyes* and *Lutheran Trump Cards*

The three questions a church must ask at the onset of a renewal journey are “Who are we?” “Where are we headed?” and “How will we get there?” When congregations ask and answer those questions, they will have stepped onto the path of renewal. Until now there have been few comprehensive tools to help churches wrestle with those basic questions. *Rise*, especially when accompanied with REVEAL survey results, is that comprehensive tool and should be foundational reading for congregations seeking revitalization.

DR. KEITH DOORBOS

Director of the Renewal Lab at Calvin Seminary

The work of revitalizing the church has just taken a remarkable step forward with *Rise!* This challenging endeavor requires a clear and straightforward understanding of the current reality facing a church. God is clearly moving across the US, bringing revival to the Christian church, and the breakthrough notion of church archetypes will empower this work for years to come.

T. GREG SURVANT

Cofounder and managing partner of Spiritual Leadership, Inc.; former vice president and general manager of Lexmark International, Inc.

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Rise: Bold Strategies to Transform Your Church

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ALSO BY CALLY PARKINSON

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Follow Me: What's Next for You? (with Greg L. Hawkins)

*Focus: The Top Ten Things People Want and Need from You
and Your Church* (with Greg L. Hawkins)

Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth
(with Greg L. Hawkins)

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P R E F A C E

THE HOPE OF RISE

The world is round.

The greatest discoveries aren't always life-changing inventions like the lightbulb or penicillin. Rather, the most significant game changers are often the recognition of realities that change the way we think. Like the discovery that the world is not flat, which set the stage for exploration that transformed human history.

In 2004, in its very first survey, REVEAL found this unexpected reality:

Church activities do not produce spiritual growth.

More specifically, increased participation in church activities does not significantly contribute to an increasing love of God and others.

This hallmark discovery challenged and eventually changed the mind-set of thousands of church leaders. Today its truth is confirmed by hundreds of surveys done over the last decade—with churches ranging from Pentecostal to Presbyterian; from those with weekend attendance of fifty to those with five thousand; from inner-city storefront locations to sprawling suburban campuses. The counter-intuitive nature of this discovery prompted an exhaustive search for the answer to this question: What can churches do to become more effective change-agents for Christ?

Rise provides that answer, grounded in findings from its unmatched dataset on the spiritual lives of hundreds of thousands of churchgoers and enhanced by the first-person accounts of pastors and church leaders whose survey results have spurred successful spiritual growth initiatives. But more importantly, *Rise* opens with another mentality-changing discovery:

Churches are more similar than unique. Every church falls into one of eight patterns of spiritual growth effectiveness.

Rise reveals eight defining archetypes, and every church fits one of them—including yours. Those archetypes vary widely, from the Troubled Church introduced in chapter 2 to the Vibrant Church described in chapter 9. And each archetype has a different answer to the question “What’s our next step toward becoming more effective for Christ?”

Rise will take you on an illuminating journey through the dynamics of eight distinct church cultures—a journey with the potential to forever change how you lead your church.



CHAPTER 1

THE THINGS REVEALED

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever.

DEUTERONOMY 29:29

We thought we were done.

Not with the work. We knew that was far from finished. The number of REVEAL church clients was growing, along with the demands of processing surveys and generating reports. But we thought that the discovery phase was behind us—that the most dramatic insights about spiritual growth had been revealed and were, in fact, already built into the survey.

We were wrong.

It was 2009, and by then, nearly eight hundred churches had their eagerly awaited REVEAL survey results in hand. *But what are we supposed to do with them?* pastors asked. Although we had tried our best to make the reports and their numbers self-explanatory, they were still filled with statistics that many found confusing.

So they called. They asked questions. And together we discussed individual survey reports, working to arrive at a few takeaways that would benefit their ministry.

Then, after about fifty such consultations, it happened. Not a burning bush or a lightning bolt. Just one consultation that seemed almost identical to a handful of earlier ones—and soon, additional patterns of undeniable similarities began to surface from otherwise independent conversations.

As those similarities mounted, the REVEAL team sensed the prospect of a truly powerful discovery: Was it possible, we wondered, to determine if these patterns could be verified statistically as viable, replicable profiles? Could such profiles define America's church culture in conclusive, concrete terms?

Rise reveals the extraordinary outcome from this quest—a powerful framework that, with precision and depth, identifies and clarifies eight

EIGHTCHURCHARCHETYPES

TOTAL CHURCHES IN REVEAL DATABASE

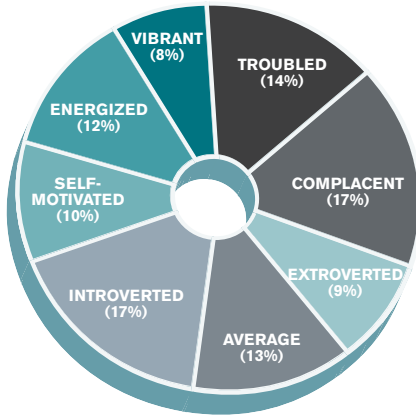


CHART 1.1

church patterns, which we call “archetypes,” that define church culture in the United States. The intuitive appeal of this framework allows pastors everywhere—regardless of church size, denomination, or geography—to recognize their church's likely profile, and then to unlock the wealth of knowledge that underlies their archetype. (Each of the eight archetypes are depicted in Chart 1.1 and described briefly in the following sidebar.)

Chapters 2 through 9 unpack these archetypes in depth, including fact-based descriptions, stories about churches that are classic examples of each archetype, and a case study that details how one church advanced from its original archetype position to another of greater spiritual impact.

First, though, chapter 1 will explain how the archetypes came

EIGHT CHURCH ARCHETYPES: A SNAPSHOT

1. THE TROUBLED CHURCH (14%)

– People are spiritually immature and unhappy with the church and its senior pastor.

2. THE COMPLACENT CHURCH (17%)

– Faith is surprisingly underdeveloped, given that attenders are longtime churchgoers.

3. THE EXTROVERTED CHURCH (9%)

– Faith is underdeveloped, but community service is embraced.

4. THE AVERAGE CHURCH (13%)

– No spiritual measures deviate from the norm.

5. THE INTROVERTED CHURCH (17%)

– Faith is strong, but faith-based behaviors are lacking.

6. THE SELF-MOTIVATED CHURCH (10%)

– Faith is strong across the board, yet people are unenthused about the church.

7. THE ENERGIZED CHURCH (12%)

– Faith is somewhat underdeveloped but growing, and people love the church.

8. THE VIBRANT CHURCH (8%)

– Faith is strong and mature but still growing, and people love the church.

SIDEBAR

together, an explanation that starts with a brief tour of the two primary buckets of REVEAL findings uncovered over the last ten years.

BUCKET #1: THE PEOPLE FACTOR

The starting point, and the foundation for all REVEAL discoveries including the archetypes, is the Spiritual Continuum (see Chart 1.2). In essence, the Continuum defines four stages of spiritual growth based on how a person describes his or her relationship with Christ.

These stages of spiritual growth are covered extensively in prior REVEAL books, notably, *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth*. The most important takeaway for readers of *Rise* is that these four stages are powerful, consistent predictors of all factors related to spiritual growth measured by REVEAL. In other words, as a person's relationship with Christ matures through these four stages, *everything rises*—from acceptance of the core Christian beliefs, like

THE SPIRITUAL CONTINUUM

TOTAL CONGREGANTS IN REVEAL DATABASE

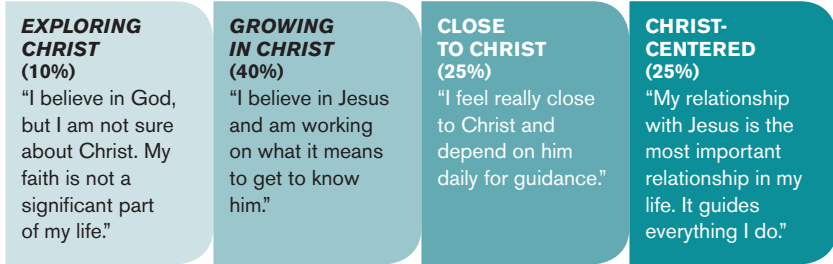


CHART 1.2

belief in the Trinity, to how often a person prays or opens a Bible. Literally hundreds of factors related to spiritual growth increase exponentially as people advance from Exploring Christ to becoming Christ-Centered. This input was crucial to the creation of the archetypes because, of course, increased spiritual maturity is *exactly* what churches are trying to accomplish.

The most important input, however, was *not* the Continuum itself—but, rather, it was the discovery of *what helps people move* along the Continuum. Chart 1.3 illustrates three movements and the three core catalysts of spiritual growth.

THREEMOVEMENTSANDCATALYSTSOFSPIRITUALGROWTH

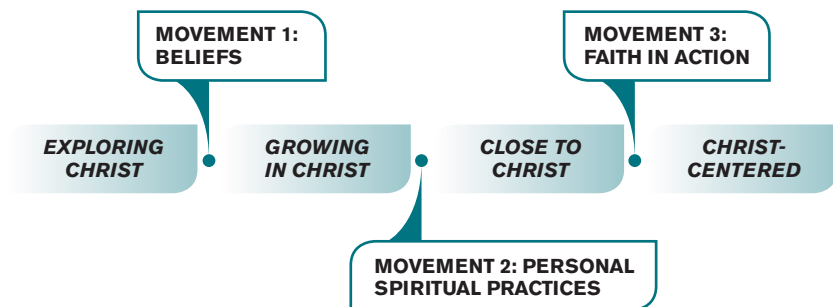


CHART 1.3

CORE CATALYSTS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

MOVEMENT 1: BELIEFS

Early spiritual growth is about building trust in the character of Jesus, so building a firm foundation of core Christian beliefs is essential. Catalysts include beliefs in:

- » Salvation by grace
- » The Trinity
- » A personal God
- » Authority of the Bible

MOVEMENT 2: PERSONAL SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Intermediate spiritual growth is about developing a personal relationship with Christ, which depends on investing time to communicate with God. Catalysts include:

- » Reflection on Scripture
- » Prayer for guidance
- » Solitude

MOVEMENT 3: FAITH IN ACTION

Advanced spiritual growth is about surrendering everything to God, and dedicating significant time and energy to serve his purposes. Catalysts include:

- » Willingness to risk everything for Christ
- » Evangelism
- » Serving those in need

CHART 1.4

It became obvious that these three categories of catalysts would shed light on whether or not distinct patterns of discipleship effectiveness existed—because these are the things congregants must experience in order for spiritual growth to occur. Chart 1.4 summarizes the most significant catalysts for each movement.

This became the first big bucket of evidence to explore in the quest to identify the archetypes. It may seem that this could have been all the information that was necessary, since we had assembled the most influential “ingredients” for spiritual growth. But just as the ingredients for whatever you’re making for dinner do not cook themselves by sitting untouched on the kitchen counter, a major component in our search for the archetypes was still missing. While in possession

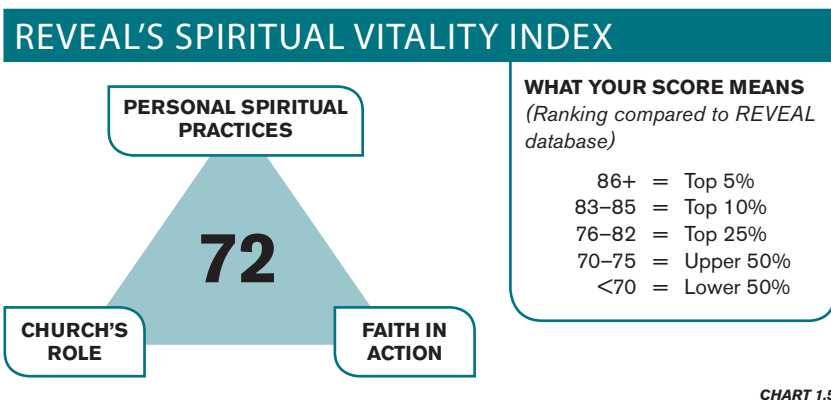
of hundreds of thousands of data points about the catalysts—the ingredients—of personal spiritual growth, we were still without the “recipe.” So before any conclusions could be drawn, it was important to pull together everything we knew about the church.

BUCKET #2: THE CHURCH FACTOR

Even pastors who professed to enjoy statistics complained about having to wade through a forty-five-page REVEAL report to discover what their survey findings had to say about their church. “Net it out for me,” they said. “Let me know where we stand on one page. Give it to me straight—short and sweet.”

So the REVEAL team created the Spiritual Vitality Index (SVI). The SVI is a gauge that measures the spiritual maturity of a congregation and the discipleship effectiveness of its church. As illustrated in Chart 1.5, the SVI was intentionally designed to reflect the familiar academic grading scale—meaning that scores over 70 are above average and those under 70 are below average.

Like the Continuum, the SVI is useful, but static—in other words, it doesn’t give pastors any practical insights about what can be done to increase the number. Its only objective was to satisfy the request of pastors for a spiritual vitality “snapshot”—and even



though they said they wanted it, not all REVEAL church leaders are thrilled to confront such a black-and-white, unambiguous assessment as soon as they open their report. “I’ve never been average at anything in my life!” is a common response from pastors facing an SVI in the 60s or 70s.

The SVI wound up playing an incredibly valuable role in the hunt for the archetypes. Like a Geiger counter that scours terrain in search of the most potent source of radioactivity, the SVI allowed us to comb through hundreds of reports to identify the churches achieving the highest marks. That search led to an in-depth study of sixteen churches—a study that yielded great fruit: the five best practices that advance spiritual growth, highlighted in Chart 1.6.

These five Best Practice Principles represent the church strategies that help pastors move their people along the Continuum because, according to all the REVEAL research done to date, churches must activate these strategies for discipleship to advance.

Returning to our earlier analogy, if the catalysts (Chart 1.4) are the “ingredients” for spiritual growth, the five best practices provide the “recipe”—the instructions—for what the church needs to do in order to allow the “heat” of the Holy Spirit to create spiritual momentum.

Together, the Spiritual Growth Catalysts and the Best Practice

FIVE BEST PRACTICES THAT HELP CHURCHES ADVANCE SPIRITUAL GROWTH

GET PEOPLE MOVING

Jump-start newcomers with clear next steps by offering a spiritual “on-ramp” (like Alpha). Make the discipleship path and destination clear.

EMBED THE BIBLE IN EVERYTHING

Make Scripture the heart of the church culture. Take away people’s excuses by doing whatever you can to make Bible engagement easy.

CREATE OWNERSHIP

Help people “own” the vision of the church. Use your small group system to empower and equip them to grow as leaders.

PASTOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Make the local community your mission field by partnering with other churches and nonprofits to tackle local problems.

CHRIST-CENTERED LEADERSHIP

Surrender all leadership dilemmas and decisions to Christ. Humility and transparency are key.

CHART 1.6

Principles served up a wealth of evidence to explore and analyze as we began a serious, intentional hunt for the archetypes.

THE BREAKTHROUGH

God lit our path in this search, providing insight once again through our one-on-one consultations with REVEAL client pastors. These conversations allowed us to create hypotheses—theories regarding which archetypes might emerge. For example, we talked with a number of very dissimilar congregations in terms of size, theology, and demographics that shared the *same* low spiritual beliefs, the *same* lukewarm relationship between congregants and the church, the *same* long-term tenure of church attendance, and the *same* minimal personal spiritual practices. These similarities prompted the search for an archetype now known as the Complacent Church.

More patterns surfaced. The Troubled Church was obvious, with its high dissatisfaction rates. The Introverted Church was also easy to spot, with above-average dedication to spiritual beliefs and practices but well-below-average expression of faith outside of its tight church circle of believers. These and additional patterns emerged out of pure conjecture, based on conversations with pastors leading churches with surprisingly similar survey results. Then—with the mountain of evidence narrowed by a dozen possible archetype pathways—we went to work to find whatever God wanted to reveal. Chart 1.7 brings the final outcome to life.

Merging the Best Practice Principles and the Spiritual Growth Catalysts produced a clear portrait of eight individual archetypes, each one with distinct strengths and weaknesses.¹ For example, in the upper right quadrant the Self-Motivated Church represents a congregation that has strong spiritual maturity but is unimpressed with its

¹For a more detailed description of the statistical methodology used to develop the archetypes, see Appendix.

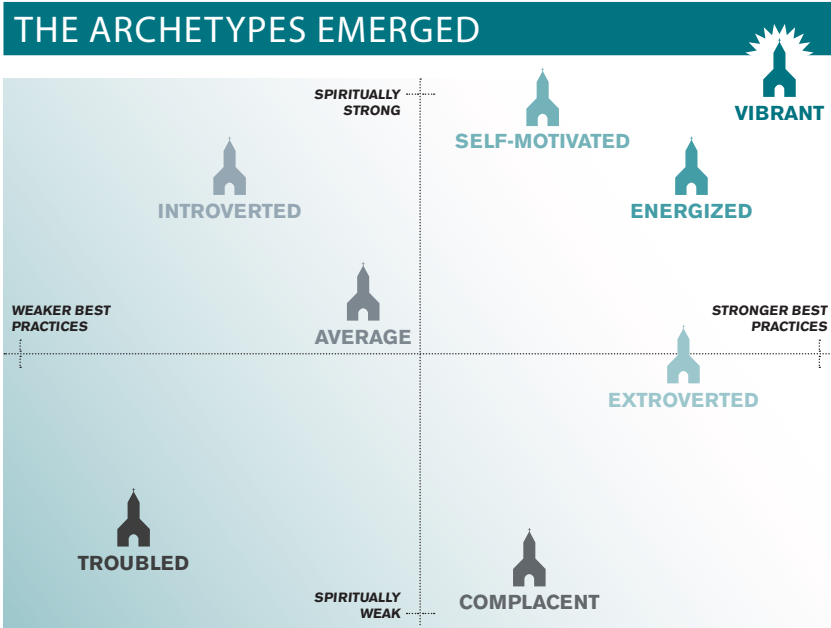


CHART 1.7

church. On the other hand, the Extroverted Church in the lower right quadrant is fully engaged and on board with everything its church is doing, despite the fact that its spiritual maturity is lacking.

What does all this mean? In the past, the path to becoming a spiritually “vibrant” church has been elusive, mysterious, even unknown. Today that path can be understood and pursued—particularly if a church knows its starting point. For instance, Chart 1.7 visually demonstrates that a Troubled Church has much more ground to cover than an Average Church, and a Complacent Church has a different path to “vibrancy” compared to an Introverted Church, which should pursue very different strategies than an Energized Church. The rest of this book is dedicated to describing *everything* REVEAL has uncovered about these eight archetypes—including, most importantly, what we know about the path to greater spiritual impact regardless of a church’s current archetype position.



Through these archetypes, we believe—as Moses wrote in Deuteronomy—that God has made known more “things revealed.” Moses, of course, was writing about the law. But the spirit of his words transcends the millennia, we think, to remind us that God holds us accountable—not for the “secret things” known only to him, but for those things he decides to reveal.

REVEAL was accountable for pursuing the doors God opened to find these archetypes. We were also accountable for communicating them to you, a responsibility we consider to be a privilege. It is our prayer and greatest hope that you, too, will feel accountable—for learning about, and ultimately acting upon, these remarkable “things revealed.”