{MIND THE}

GAP

LEADING YOUR CHURCH
TO AGILITY + EFFECTIVENESS
IN ANY ENVIRONMENT

CLINT GRIDER

{MIND THE}

GAP

{MIND THE}

GAP

LEADING YOUR CHURCH
TO AGILITY + EFFECTIVENESS
IN ANY ENVIRONMENT

CLINT GRIDER

Acknowledgments

My prayer is that this book gives pastors and ministry leaders a renewed sense of joy, clarity, and intentionality in their calling. Jesus is the hope of the world. In an ever-changing culture, never has it been more important for leaders to grow in their ability to adapt as they galvanize people toward the transformation Jesus is calling them to.

The impact of so many who have encouraged me and provided wise counsel over the years is significant. I can't begin to list them all, but would like to offer a few special acknowledgments. First, I'd like to thank several key people at Lifeway and B&H Publishing. I'm grateful for Ben Mandrell and the uncommon balance of visionary and servant leadership he demonstrates. I'd also like to thank Bill Craig, who I first met in ministry many years ago, for his thoughtful posture and gifted insight. The entire B&H team is the best of the best and has been a joy to work with. My editor, Logan Pyron, has provided especially good input that overflows from his love for people and the church.

I greatly appreciate the foundational support and important contributions of Jim Randall, Cory Hartman, and Quintin Stieff. I also want to thank core members of the Auxano team—Bryan

Rose, Mike Gammill, Kent Vincent, Greg Gibbs, David Putman, Jeff Meyer, Bob Adams, and Andrea Kandler. Your passion for the church is unparalleled.

But most of all, I want to thank my family, beginning with my precious wife, Kindra, who brings gap-minding creativity to our home and challenges me to be my best. And to my beautiful daughters, Kayln and Camryn . . . your sparkles and sprinkles are magical and reflect the love of Christ. I'm so proud of you. And to my outstanding sons-in-law . . . Carter, I love the way you approach life with both compassion and determination. And Chris, for your attention to the simple things that matter. And to my parents, Mom and Pop, your lifelong love story reflected such deep passion for each other, and a sense of joy and adventure in life even in the midst of great trials. And to my parents-in-law, Mom and Dad, for your quiet steadfastness and generous spirits. To say that God has used all of you in a major way in my life doesn't even come close to your impact.

Finally, I want to express appreciation to the many pastors and leaders who have allowed me to join them on their sometimes challenging, but always exhilarating, journeys. It's been a blessing to seek God together and see him move in extraordinary ways as he's revealed the gaps we need to mind.

Contents

The Two Gaps: How a Pastor's Stunning Admission Revealed Every Church's Problem

I couldn't believe what the pastor had just said. Such bluntness . . . such honesty.

I hear pastors talk quite a bit. In my field, I get to interact with ministry leaders from around the country almost every day. But this leader was unusual. He had a large following and a national profile. He was a sought-after conference speaker. Author of a dozen books. Pastor of a gigachurch (the sort of church that makes megachurches look small). All in all, a model of ministry success, and a pretty modest guy to boot.

Don't misunderstand. I didn't expect him to be *dis*honest. I just didn't expect him to be *that* honest in this particular setting, at the front of a well-lit auditorium with thousands of in-person and

online attenders of his church watching. And I didn't expect him to be so honest about *this*.

In the middle of his sermon, he made a startling confession about what prevents him from sleeping. "What keeps me up at night," he said, "is this question: *Are all the people who are part of this church really growing?*"

Maybe this isn't a surprise to you. Granted, there are certainly more embarrassing admissions that people make—acknowledging a lurid sin, for example. Indeed, inured to shock as we are in this generation, many people in the crowd may not have noticed what he said at all.

But I noticed it. Pastors have one main job: to grow people in Christ so they multiply the kingdom. This is essential to pastoral ministry. And yet here was this pastor, the sort of leader whom many pastors far and wide aspire to emulate, humbly admitting that he didn't know whether or not he was succeeding in the one thing he was called to do. It was remarkable.

The Root of the Problem in Church Ministry

In another way, however, it wasn't *that* remarkable, because over the years I've been hearing the same thing in different words from leaders of all kinds and sizes of churches. People call me an organizational movement expert. I focus on catalyzing momentum. I've discovered unique ways to get under the hood and help leaders discern how to adapt in a variety of conditions to achieve their church's distinct missional calling. This helps them impact the world more deeply and clearly. Along the way I've met leaders who describe different pain points to me, but their stories share a deeper theme in common.

We all say that we need to make disciples who make disciples, but we don't tell people how to get there in a way that deeply connects. Don't get me wrong; we *think* we do and we earnestly *try*. But there are many models and ideas that leaders jump to for a season, only to then jump to another. Success is limited and doesn't sustain for some reason across the whole congregation. Something is lacking.

One church leader told me, "We function like an Ivy League school, not a trade school; we impress with our theological teaching, but we aren't making practical application of the Bible in daily action the norm. We seem to have a fundamental inability to get the majority of our laypeople to the point where they start bridging divides and sharing their faith as a natural outflow of their life, especially those under the age of thirty-five. Worse, we have trouble recognizing things that we're doing ineffectively; some of our leaders even get defensive rather than addressing them."

Another church said, "We have a heart-level commitment to transforming generations of people throughout our city, but our understanding of what that means is all over the map. We've declared a model of spiritual formation stages, but despite our best intentions, it doesn't seem that people have embraced it. We have some stories of mentoring and testimonies here and there . . . but don't know whether we're actually doing it across the board with more people than the ones who were already with us."

Yet another leader shared, "In a divided world, the gospel should cut across racial, economic, and cultural barriers, but as much as we talk about it, we don't know if we're doing the right things to help our people actually live out that kind of compassion and unity. The events we sponsor seem to resonate with a lot of

people at first, but then they kind of trail off and we wonder if very many are really embracing next steps that reveal the kind of confession, reconciliation, and transformation that Jesus talked about."

I could go on and on, but you get the idea. And my guess is that you can probably relate.

Perhaps you too are concerned that you don't know whether the activities of your church or network of churches are actually moving the needle in most of your people's daily lives. Or worse, maybe you *know* that you aren't moving the needle much.

Or perhaps you do know that you're making a difference—maybe even thriving in others' eyes—but you're not confident that you're making as big or widespread of an impact as you *could*. There's a drag on your effectiveness, or there's a next hill to climb and you haven't found a way to the top.

In a rapidly changing world fraught with sociocultural challenges, it feels like a struggle to figure out how to filter options and make the best decisions on what to do next.

Whatever the context—whether things could be just a little better or nothing is working at all or anywhere in between—what you're experiencing is real. It's not your imagination. And you're not alone.

I'm convinced that the root of our problem is that **there's never been a greater disconnect between God's desired outcomes, people's life journeys, and what they actually experience through church.**

Leaders broadly agree that the church is God's instrument for movement, the community God created to help people take each right next step, one after another, to grow in Christ and multiply

his kingdom.[1] Yet too often, despite the sincere intentions, churches struggle to deliver this in a deep, consistent way. In an age where many people already question the effectiveness of institutions, it shouldn't surprise us that "church" as an organization is viewed skeptically by some—even by some who are called to ministry.

Still, regardless of how structured or organic a person's current view of an "effective" church might be, there is undeniably more that can be achieved when a whole community of individuals is truly mobilized toward something bigger than themselves. Interestingly, as Carey Nieuwhof observes, "most of the New Testament is not about the teachings of Jesus. It's about the work of the church that Jesus initiated and ordained. . . . To pretend the church doesn't need to be organized is as logical as arguing that society shouldn't be organized."[2]

And yet, problems with this are rampant. Many churches host events that are disconnected from one another. They evaluate themselves by random anecdotes here and there or by those who participate, not by widespread production of lasting fruit. They avoid viewing their functions as an interdependent whole and neglect to improve and adapt by applying biblical principles that many other organizations find helpful. They don't always know

---

1. I realize some may disagree with nuances of this statement if it is separated from the context of this larger discussion. I do not intend to disregard constructs such as God's sovereignty, that believers *are* the church, that important sacraments are administered in church gatherings, that part of the mission is to reestablish God's kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven," etc. Many authors have written about the functions of the church, so for the purposes of this discussion I will leave that to other or future works.

2. Carey Nieuwhof, "A Response to Christians Who Are Done with Church," n.d., https://careynieuwhof.com/a-response-to-christians-who-are-done-with-church/.

how to see clearly what is happening in most of their people's lives, or how to nimbly adjust activity to escort them into their next step with God.

But this doesn't have to be the norm. Amid these challenging questions, there are leaders rising to a level of understanding and effectiveness that they didn't know was possible. They're making far better decisions in real time to help people throughout their churches grow in Christ and multiply disciple-makers in ways they never could imagine before, much less facilitate. They are no longer wondering whether they're really making a widespread difference in people's lives—they know they are.

This transformation is no miracle, but it might feel like it. Everything changes when leaders learn to mind the gap.

The First Gap: Awareness

The full significance of the phrase "mind the gap" will become apparent shortly. But first I want to point out the *two* gaps we need to mind—gaps that often frustrate church leaders' desire to grow people.

The first gap is the *awareness gap*. It's the gap between what we think is happening in people as a result of our efforts and what is *actually* happening.

Many leaders admit to truly not knowing how most people in their church are growing and struggling spiritually. They know about some, but not most. This can lead to false assumptions or misplaced hope. They recognize the awareness gap, and seek to close it with knowledge. Yet in their effort to arrive at the answer,

leaders often stumble into a few attempted solutions that are very common but not very helpful.

The first common attempted solution is to count what can easily be counted: participation. The assumption is that the more people who show up or engage with us, the better we must be doing. Granted, few leaders are so unsophisticated as to take something like mere worship attendance as a sufficient indicator of spiritual maturity. Nevertheless, there are some leaders who take group participation or volunteer service as clear indicators that people are growing and living out their faith more deeply, which may not actually be so.

Unfortunately, measuring participation does not close the awareness gap, even when measuring participation in activities that are intended to help people grow. Doing so makes big assumptions about what is actually happening throughout those groups and why people are participating in them. As long as people are being socialized into more activity in the church, we're prone to give ourselves credit that they're growing, even though we don't know what that activity is producing in most people's lives.

I'm not suggesting that increased participation isn't important; I'm suggesting that many leaders stop short of examining the reasons for and outcomes of that participation.

When participation metrics become the stand-in for growth in Christ, it gradually, unconsciously shifts leaders toward a shadow mission other than the Great Commission. The subtle temptation becomes to multiply participation instead of focusing on how well that participation is training people to multiply their faith. In other words, the more that leaders equate the church apparatus with making attenders, the more zealous they will be to ram people through

the system without knowing whether the system is working. And as C. S. Lewis reminds us, if the church is not making disciples, "then all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time."[3]

Even so, no leader is stuck in a *total* awareness gap; almost all leaders know what's going on in *someone's* life. Every decent leader is in touch with individuals who are evidently growing in their faith through the structures the church provides. These success stories activate the second common way that leaders ineffectively try to close the awareness gap, which I call "spotlighting."

Spotlighting is elevating a few success stories to represent what is happening among the many. When it's time to communicate what God is doing in the life of the church, spotlighting individual stories is almost always a great move. The problem comes when leaders assume too much based on those stories. Spotlighting is great for *communication,* but critically flawed for overall *evaluation.*

> Spotlighting is great for *communication*, but critically flawed for overall *evaluation.*

The individuals you know who are growing in Christ are a real part of your church, but they aren't a random sample of the whole. Quite the contrary—these people gravitate to you (and vice versa) precisely because they are benefiting the most from the ministry. They are not average attenders of your church; they are far above average. So their testimonies do little to increase your awareness of

---

3. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952 repr.; New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 199.

what is happening broadly in people's lives. We'll examine this more in chapter 2.

These inferior solutions to closing the awareness gap encourage complacency in some church leaders who are content to believe that things are "all good," especially if they are in the minority of churches presently enjoying numerical growth. Counting participants and appreciating success stories can be soothing, but they don't remove the deeper concern. Often without realizing it, leaders who don't close the awareness gap default to *leading by assumption*, a treacherous place to be. And there remains an uneasy sense that the church ought to be doing something more to make a greater impact.

> Leaders who don't close the awareness gap default to *leading by assumption*, a treacherous place to be.

Unfortunately, as long as the awareness gap exists, there is no true way to know what the "something more" ought to be. New models, interventions, initiatives, and programs are too often shots in the dark based on hunches or copying what supposedly worked for someone else, not on good information from one's own context. Aiming for improvement resembles the remark by Montgomery Scott in the movie *Star Trek*: it's "like trying to hit a bullet with a smaller bullet whilst wearing a blindfold, riding a horse."[4]

The result is whiplash—changes from the current thing to a new thing to the next thing, few of them with staying power or that build on gains of the innovation before. Paradoxically, some

---

4. *Star Trek*, directed by J. J. Abrams (Paramount Pictures, 2009).

churches are both continually changing and continually remaining stuck because they lack a clear awareness of the actual impact their varied efforts are having (or not having) on the people they serve.

The Second Gap: Connectivity

The awareness gap is one obstacle, but leaders also face a second gap: the *connectivity gap*. It's the gap between misconnected steps or ministries in your church that short-circuits their effectiveness.

Misconnection means "a wrong, faulty, or inadequate connection of things."[5]

In part, this is the gap between the variety of different things a person might engage in over time that might not feel connected to them. Some are organized church events and structures; others are personal habits like spiritual disciplines. Whether collective or individual, activities like these are intended to help people mature in Christ and live out their faith.

Unfortunately, people don't always engage in the things that might be biblically important to connecting the dots in their spiritual growth. They get stuck where they are, and all of our pleading with them to engage in missional community, or to seek reconciliation, or to dig into Scripture, or to pray, or to share their faith with others in a regular rhythm seems to fall on deaf ears. They're not connecting the dots. This is the connectivity gap in action.

All leaders encounter this frustrating phenomenon. To overcome it, some experiment with a host of tactics to persuade people to take the right next step. Others surrender to the principle that

---

5. *Oxford University Press*, Lexico.com., s.v. "misconnection," accessed 2021, https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/misconnection.

it's all in God's hands and resolve to pray more and wait longer. Most leaders typically swing between both approaches. When neither works, it is tempting to blame the people themselves for their stubbornness, worldliness, or lack of commitment.

Any of those accusations may be true (after all, everyone has a sinful nature to contend with), but the connectivity gap frequently has more to do with leaders than followers. When people don't take their next step, it's often because we haven't given them the right next step to take. From our point of view, the next step we've laid out for people makes perfect sense, yet for some reason it isn't reasonable, desirable, or feasible from *their* point of view. We introduce a new opportunity or program to engage in that feels to them like a haphazard jump with little to no relationship to what they're already doing. What looks like a step to us feels like a puzzling leap to them because it requires too many moves from where they are now on their faith journey. And whether they fully

> People often don't take their next step because we haven't given them the right next step to take.

realize it or not, they've already experienced the confusion that results from jumping from thing to thing, idea to idea, preference to preference.

We aren't minding the connectivity gap when we aren't taking thoughtful, strategic action to facilitate the right next moves that respect the diversity of people's spiritual journeys.

This isn't easy to do, but it is crucial that we succeed because of the limited time at our disposal. On the church's side, leaders only have so many hours to prepare next moves for people, so the moves

they present need to have a high success rate. On the people's side, they only have so much attention to give and only so many moves they can make at one time. There are many voices clamoring for their attention where they live, work, shop, give, worship, serve, and play. So in the moments that we do cut through the noise, what we offer needs to be compelling, and it needs to work. If it doesn't, people eventually tune us out.

This is the other part of the connectivity gap—not just connection between one activity and another but also *between an activity and the difference it's supposed to make in people's lives.*

This is why I assert that the root of the problem in ministry is the disconnect between God's desired outcomes, people's life journeys, and what they experience through church. When leaders don't intentionally and thoughtfully focus church ministry on *outcomes* in people's lives, it's unlikely to produce those outcomes. And leaders can't focus ministry on outcomes if those outcomes aren't clearly defined.

How Agile Leaders Mind the Gap

The oldest metro subway system in the world, the London Underground, has some stations with an unusual quirk: the platform sits against a curve in the rail line. When straight train cars line up against a curved platform, it makes wider spaces than usual between the edge of the platform and part of each car. If one of these wide spaces is right under a door, it can be a dangerous surprise for a passenger who isn't careful stepping on or off the train.

So to help passengers stay safe, an announcement booms from speakers at the stations—"MIND THE GAP"—warning people

to watch out for the gap between the train and the platform. (The warning later applied to other awkward situations too, such as when trains of different heights ran through the same station, making strange vertical gaps where cars were a good bit higher or sometimes *lower* than the platform.) Today, the phrase "mind the gap" is so associated with the London Underground that it's almost a slogan, sticking in the memory of anyone who has visited that city.[6]

I love the phrase "mind the gap" because of its multiple meanings. It tells us to be careful, but it also tells us to use our *minds*. Think about phrases like "mind your manners" and "mind your mother." Minding something is more than noticing it or even recognizing it; it obligates us to do something with it.

As leaders, we must continually use our minds in vibrant new ways to evaluate and grow our effectiveness.

We need to apply the mindpower God has given us not only to the *message we state* but also the *system we make* to disciple those who believe it.

Being "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2) becomes especially significant in this context. As Tod Bolsinger points out in his book, *Canoeing the Mountains*: "In a changing world, the leader must be continually committed to ongoing personal change, to develop new capacities, to be continually transformed in ways that will enable the organization's larger transformation."[7]

---

6. Mike Horne, "Mind the Gap," Metadyne, June 16, 2013, http://www.metadyne.co.uk/mind_the_gap.htm.

7. Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 216.

It will take all the mindpower that God grants us through his Spirit to close the awareness gap and the connectivity gap. Minding the gap in our churches, then, means more than analyzing it or talking about it or writing an article about it; it means taking active steps to close it.

Yet I use "mind the gap" for still another reason. The Underground is itself a fascinating metaphor for church ministry. What it teaches us makes some of the cloudiness of church leadership wondrously clear. The analogy of a church to a train system is the thread that ties this book together, so that is where we begin as we seek to connect people's journeys to God's outcomes again.

I use the word "journey" rather freely because they say that life is a journey. And by "they" I don't mean motivational wall-hangings or sentimental movies; I mean the books of the Bible.

The Parable of the Underground

The authors of Scripture regularly use the image of a "way" or "path" to talk about the conduct of a person's life and its basic direction, as when Psalm 139:3 says, "You search out my path . . . and are acquainted with all my ways" (ESV). It can be good or evil, as when Psalm 1 compares "the way of the righteous" to "the way of the wicked" (v. 6). Jesus himself taught that "the way is easy that leads to destruction," but "the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matt. 7:13–14 ESV). The early disciples who did find it called themselves simply those "who belonged to

the Way"—namely Jesus himself, who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Acts 9:2; John 14:6).[8]

So in keeping with the picture of life as a "way" or journey, imagine a traveler making her way through a huge metropolis. In this city there are thousands of possible destinations and millions of places to stop and look around. Still, not just any place will satisfy her. What she is looking for can only be found in a few places, but she only has a vague idea of what they are and where they are. All she knows for sure is that she isn't getting very far on two feet. Not only is she lost, but even if she knew where she was going, her progress still would be slow.

As the traveler wanders through the city, she sees occasional clues to an alternate mode of transportation. Sometimes she hears a roaring, rattling sound and feels a whoosh of warm air from the grate under her feet in the sidewalk. In some places, she sees a train rolling on an elevated track passing over the street. And at certain intersections she sees a stairway plunging into a dim hole under a sign that reads UNDERGROUND.

One day she recognizes a friend going down a set of those stairs and decides to follow her. At the bottom, she learns that she has walked into something called a station, and she sees people waiting for one of those trains she sometimes sees above ground. She notices a map and begins to realize that this station is part of an entire system of stations and trains. Finally, she sees posters along the walls describing various points of interest, all of them destinations she might visit. Each one looks more amazing than the one

---

8. Leland Ryken et al., eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), s.v. "path."

before, but according to the map, these are all reachable by this underground train system.

She realizes, *This is way better than walking! Now I see the places where I want to go, and have a way to get there.*

That would be the beginning of a happy ending. But before we go there, let's rewind and tell a different story.

Imagine that the traveler descended into a different underground train system, one that's actually worse than trying to walk to some unknown destination.

Imagine that she saw trains running above ground all the time but could never find a station where she could catch one. Or that she could find a station, but the gate was locked. Or that she went down into a station, but would have to risk her life leaping across an electrified rail to get to the right platform. Or that she caught a train that the sign said was headed one way, but it was actually heading somewhere else.

Or imagine that she waits in a station for hours, but no train ever arrives. Or that she boards a train, but it starts and then stops, then starts again, then stops again. Or that the windows are stuck open and the slipstream blows debris on the passengers. Or that the doors are stuck open and people fall off the train. Or the train collides with another and gets derailed.

Or imagine that there are no places to stop for refreshment on a long journey. Or that the destinations are not as advertised. Or worst of all, that there are no destinations: the whole system is a closed loop, trains circling endlessly but going nowhere.

A traveler who encountered a train system with any of these problems, even if she were to try to make it work, would eventually give up. She would get off the train, ascend the stairs into the air

outside the station, and continue her wandering on foot, no matter how useless it might be in the tangled maze of the city.

No one in their right mind would ever create a system that would cause a traveler so much frustration and even danger. But without intending it or even realizing it, churches and their leaders do so every day.

Two Critical Questions Facing Every Church

In this parable, the city is the world, the place of human habitation with its pleasures and pains, its joys and sorrows, its unity and division, its wholesomeness and pollution. The church is the Underground. Through the people who make it up, the church weaves throughout the world without the world fully recognizing it for what it is.

The purpose of the church in this parable is to help wandering people find their way to the destinations they are longing for but can't quite name and don't know how to reach. Though the ultimate destination—eternal life with Christ—is bigger than the cosmos, there are nearer but very important destinations along the way there. I call these destinations *outcomes*, personal characteristics of maturity in Christ that are revealed and grow along one's journey. These journey outcomes are larger and larger glimmers of "the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" reflected in a life being transformed (Phil. 3:14 ESV). They represent the active progress of spiritual growth and multiplication that we desire to see in all the people we serve as we equip them to be disciple-making disciples.

In their strategy to show travelers the way to these destinations, churches—from the level of an entire organization to individual followers of Jesus—fashion two kinds of helps.

The first is what I call *constants*, an individual's ongoing engagements for spiritual growth. Some constants are organized church activities like worship gatherings, groups, classes, and serving as a consistent volunteer. Other constants are personal habits or disciplines like consistent Bible reading, prayer, and regularly seeking to reconcile and help one's neighbor. Whatever the scope, constants are the trains that are intended to carry a person to destinations of Christlikeness when the person rides them over time. (Please note that my use of the metaphor, unlike the real world, assumes that a person can ride on multiple "trains" at the same time by engaging in more than one constant.)

The second way churches help travelers is with *waypoints*, one-time events or short-run experiences with the potential to lead a person into a new commitment. Waypoints are the stations that connect people to the right next constants for their journey. A waypoint might be a discipleship training opportunity or other special event inside or outside the church such as a focused community service initiative. It might be a four-week Bible study built to draw people to try out a group for the first time. A waypoint also can be a restorative ministry like counseling or group therapy—unlike other waypoints, a person may engage in that type of waypoint for quite a while, but it still isn't intended to last forever. In this analogy, all these various waypoints are the stations that inspire someone to do something new, to change their direction—to get on a train (a constant) they have never traveled on before.

To summarize, then:

- destinations = outcomes (characteristics of growing maturity)
- trains = constants (ongoing engagements)

- stations = waypoints (one-time or temporary experiences)

Here's the significance for your church:

First, every church has constants. These are ongoing activities happening week after week. But not every church's constants are delivering *perpetual movement*. Constants ought to proactively enable people to *go somewhere* in their walk with Christ. They should keep people moving forward on their journey, not stall out or go in circles by seeming like they're repeating the same thing over and over with little forward momentum. Are people motivated by your constants to stick with them long enough to experience deep spiritual transformation or do they drift away?

Second, all churches have waypoints—short-term opportunities or events—though some churches might have more than others. But not every church's waypoints become *pivotal moments* in people's lives, reaching people's hearts so they take a personal step in a new direction. Do they make sense to people where they currently are and give them a next step that is just the right distance ahead, not a leap too far? Churches without intentional waypoints expect people to hop into constants like jumping onto a moving train.

Third, most churches have not spelled out outcomes clearly enough based on their own missional context. They have a general idea of what maturity in Christ looks like—the fruit of the Spirit for example (Gal. 5:22–23)—but they have not systematically articulated what that looks like practically in life where their people live, work, and play. Journey outcomes should be *progress metrics*. Every church should seek God's wisdom in developing a relatable list of individual and shared qualities that will be nurtured on each person's journey as they engage with the church. These

are the priorities, competencies, behaviors, or sensitivities that are codified as the basic aspects of following Christ in their unique missional context. These distinct outcomes should then influence the design of every part of the whole ministry system.

The Underground	What They Are	I call them . . .	They enable . . .
Trains	Ongoing engagements (personal habits, church activities that are consistent)	Constants	Perpetual movement
Stations	One-time or temporary experiences (special events, focused campaigns, restorative ministries)	Waypoints	Pivotal moments
Destinations	Characteristics of growing maturity (virtues, priorities, competencies, behaviors, relationships, sensitivities)	Outcomes	Progress metrics

Table 1: The three features of the church Underground[9]

9. This intends to add to the disciple-making conversation by offering new perspectives and deeper tools in areas Auxano historically referred to as measures and strategy in *Church Unique*. In its vision framing process, Auxano

Ultimately, every church has two critical questions to answer:

1. Do our stations (waypoints) connect people to our trains (constants)?
2. Do our trains take people to our intended destinations (outcomes)?

These two fundamental questions aren't meant to intimidate but to provide a glimpse of where we're going. I'm not presenting a new ministry model; I'm introducing a new way of thinking—a mentality—that transcends the din of competing models. Applying this way of thinking, depicted figuratively by the Underground, is the key to minding the awareness gap and the connectivity gap that leave churches stuck. Your leadership will grow through *responsive disciple-making* that will help you and your leaders become more and more attuned to what's really happening in the lives of all of your people and to adapt what you're doing accordingly. In a rapidly changing world, this paradigm will help you respond flexibly to unexpected conditions and unique differences in whatever missional context you're called to.

> Responsive leadership helps you and your team become more attuned to your people.

---

originally called *outcomes* "measures." This book provides deeper ways for leaders to evaluate and adapt nimbly based on disciple-making outcomes. The terms *waypoints* and *constants* provide a new way to examine what is inside the "strategy" side of a church's vision frame (i.e., any elements of a church's current strategy can be grouped as waypoints or constants for evaluative purposes, as described later in this book).

The first step to close the awareness gap is to define outcomes (destinations), because until you name where you hope to go, you can't determine whether or not you're getting there. Until you clearly know where you want to take people, you can't get a meaningful fix on where they are today. Chapters 2 and 3 are about defining your target biblically and contextually with greater specificity than you ever have before. These chapters also explain how to accurately assess the degree to which your efforts are moving the needle to help people mature and grow in their gospel impact in these areas. You can arrive at breakthrough awareness through innovative research of what is really happening and consistent checkup loops between church staff and front-line leaders (which also works in churches where these are the same people).

Next, in chapters 4 through 8, we'll examine how to close the connectivity gap by integrating constants (trains) and waypoints (stations) into a unified whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. The careful integration of constants and waypoints—both aimed at defined outcomes—revolutionizes ministry, because it helps people who are otherwise left out and left behind to take meaningful next steps in their walk with God, one after the next. This integration will refreshingly help church staff and lay leaders clearly understand why they're doing what they're doing and how to evaluate and refine their work. Along the way I'll deconstruct common myths about church disciple-making strategies in favor of an authentically biblical paradigm that nimbly fits the changing conditions of your unique context.

Finally, chapters 9 and 10 bring it all together to illustrate how leaders can apply these principles in the day to day and year to year of ministry. I'll describe how a discipline called "moves management"

from a separate but related field has surprising lessons to teach us about how staff and lay leaders can work as a more tight-knit team to make disciples who multiply and change their world. We'll also look at how the Underground paradigm can enhance your leader meetings and add new vitality and significance to the relationships between your staff, lay leaders, and congregation or network of congregations. We'll discover how leaders can mesh breakthrough awareness with wise connectivity to enable everyone in your church to gain ground in one critical aspect of spiritual growth at the same time. And we'll catch an exhilarating glimpse of how your team can experiment, learn, and experiment again, continually improving how you guide and support God's people on the path of life.

It's about People

The awareness gap and the connectivity gap aren't just problems that organizations face. People struggle with them first.

The church leaders I know got into ministry because God called them to make a difference in people's lives. They are fueled by a desire to see souls saved, brokenness healed, and people become all that God made them to be for his kingdom.

Yet when an awareness gap prevails, many of these precious people aren't truly seen, heard, and known.

And when a connectivity gap is present, they don't receive the right invitations to the right next steps that open into a transformed life.

Minding the gap, then, is an urgent and critical need. God has placed every leader in the church for this very purpose, for the sake of the people he loves.

This book shows you how to accomplish it.

THE TRAPS MINISTRY LEADERS FALL INTO ARE MANY.

In a rapidly changing world, how do you maximize your church's effectiveness no matter what you're faced with? An extraordinary combination of deep thinking and practical clarity, *Mind the Gap* demonstrates how churches can *know* they're doing the most impactful things to multiply disciple-making in all contexts. This is not just another leadership book filled with simplistic clichés, nor a book about a new ministry model. Instead, *Mind the Gap* offers a new and timeless way of thinking that cuts past the noise. For the leader who wants to deepen their people's growth and impact for Christ and to adapt nimbly when challenges arise, there is *Mind the Gap.*

"In a moment when almost every leader is aware of a crisis of discipleship, leadership expert Clint Grider offers a process for that very pain point. If you find yourself tripping over the gap between what you believe the church should produce and what is actually happening in the lives of your people, Mind the Gap *offers an explicit approach and tested expertise. I believe you'll return to it time and again."*

TOD BOLSINGER, bestselling author of *Canoeing the Mountains* and *Tempered Resilience*, Fuller Theological Seminary

"Clint Grider serves the church with a unique blend of a shepherding heart and a strategic mind. He is able to toggle back and forth in leading conversations about each believer's discipleship journey and how a church can be most effectively organized to scale discipleship for a lot of people. He has devoted his life to serving and catalyzing the minds and hearts of ministry leaders and Mind the Gap *will be a helpful tool for many."*

ERIC GEIGER, bestselling coauthor of *Simple Church* and *Designed to Lead*, senior pastor of Mariners Church

CLINT GRIDER is a strategist, vision optimizer, and momentum catalyzer with extensive experience in church ministry and nonprofit leadership. Clint is chief integration officer and senior lead navigator for Auxano, a leading consulting group that has served thousands of churches and other organizations. He holds business and educational psychology degrees from Baylor and a PhD in educational administration and process improvement from Texas A&M.