

*(JPJ's items of interest from the book TRANSFORMING CHURCH by Kevin G Ford.)*

## THE FIVE KEY INDICATORS

As we continued to analyze the TCI (Transforming Church Index) results, we began to see the data organizing itself into patterns. We came to agree that the five key indicators of church health each had an underlying "problem" at one end of its dimension and a "solution" at the other end. The indicators have to do with:

1. How church members relate to each other. Unhealthy churches are a collection of people acting individually, while healthy churches relate as a **community**. We call this *consumerism vs. community*.
2. The church's "genetic code." Unhealthy churches lack a clear identity, while healthy churches have a clear sense of their DNA and take steps to align their ministries and culture with their code. We refer to this as *incongruence vs. code*.
3. The church's leadership. Unhealthy churches tend to be overly autocratic or bureaucratic, while healthy churches view leadership as a shared function and as a ministry. The term we use is *autocracy vs. shared leadership*.
4. How the church relates to the local community. Unhealthy churches disengage from the world around them, while healthy churches are focused on their mission and have an outward orientation that starts with their own locale. We call this *cloister vs. missional*.
5. How church members think about the future. Unhealthy churches resist change and fear or deny the future, while healthy churches embrace change, even when it is painful. Our term is *inertia vs. reinvention*.

That's when it hit us: The problem side of each indicator correlates directly to a dysfunction in modern Western culture. Our culture is all too often characterized as a collection of individuals disconnected from one another, drifting without an overarching story or unifying values, expecting someone else to solve our problems, largely self-serving, and resistant to change. The parallels between these symptoms and the problem sides of unhealthy churches were too striking to ignore. The church desires to change the surrounding culture. The truth, however, is that the church has been infected by the very culture it seeks to transform.

The common thread running through all five dysfunctions is the overriding tendency to shift the focus from the biblical "we" to the cultural "me." The real work of the church – what I will refer to as **adaptive change** – is largely a movement along each of the key indicators, from cultural dysfunction to biblical dynamic.

... a transforming church is one that has a clear and focused sense of mission beyond its walls, regardless of its personality or worship style. Remember the most startling figure from the TCI results: 93% of members among healthy churches considered themselves to be involved in some form of ministry, compared to only 11% among unhealthy churches.

In follow-up research, I discovered that the disparity was often the result of how churches defined ministry. **Unhealthy churches tend to define ministry as what happens inside the church** (ushers, committee members, Sunday school teachers, and greeters). **Healthy churches define ministry in broader terms – ministering and glorifying God in their neighborhoods, workplaces, social circles, and schools.**