Randy Frazee:

You're listening to the Bible Roots Podcast with Pastor Randy Frazee. If you're a church leader looking for creative ideas to help your church engage more deeply with the Bible, this podcast is for you. And now for today's episode.

Randy Frazee:

Well, welcome everyone to a podcast that is all about Bible engagement. We've designed this podcast for anyone who longs to see people, including yourself, effectively engage God's word. Everybody is welcome to dial in, but our crosshairs are on pastors and church leaders. And what we want to do in this podcast is to stimulate your thinking and give you creative and effective ideas on how you can see the people you lead, engage in God's word in such a way that it transforms their lives, not only their lives, but the lives of their family, their church, their community, and even the world.

Randy Frazee:

And so this is the maiden voyage episode one. And in this first episode, I want to establish the case for Bible engagement and why it should be one of our very top concerns as pastors and church leaders. And I cannot think of a better guest to invite to this maiden voyage of this beautiful podcast than my good friend, Cally Parkinson. Cally thank you for being the first. I can't think of anybody better for being a part of this podcast.

Cally Parkinson:

Thank you Randy I'm happy to be here. This is just a real gift to me.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. Well, we can have a conversation for hours like we've done in the past and forget that we're even doing a podcast. So I'll try to be mindful of our audience because you and I have so much fun together. Can you start off by just telling people a little bit about who you are and where you've been?

Cally Parkinson:

Yes. Well, I've had many journeys, but my professional journey was at Allstate Insurance Company where I spent 25 plus years in different jobs. I was in finance, I was in planning, I was in research. It was always numbers related, but I wound up in the communications department at the end and then Willow Creek decided to offer me a job. So I wound up as their communications director and then this consultant I had worked with at Allstate knocked on my door. He'd never heard of Willow. Just want to know what I was doing. Came out. I tried to talk him into doing something free for us. And he decided to help us and REVEAL was born.

Cally Parkinson:

This guy was one of the top people in the country, and you know him, Eric Ernesto, in market research. And he gave us four years of pro bono work and REVEAL was a survey with Willow at first. And now it is what it is. I was the communications director at Willow. Then I went to the WCA and the survey exploded. And then Scott Beck from Gloo purchased the intellectual property a few years ago. And so now I'm with Gloo.

Randy Frazee:

Yes. And Scott is going to actually be the second person on this podcast to talk about how people grow and REVEAL is just such an important contribution to the church today. And that's what we want to build this case around for Bible engagement. And so I want to chat a little bit about how our stories collided and it was at Willow. I came to Willow to be a teaching pastor and to focus on spiritual formation and developing community. And I was super excited to get in a room. And the very first time, you come to your recollection, because the first time I remember us really diving in. I think we met and all that, but we were in a room with no windows with maybe Greg Hawkins or maybe Eric Ernesto and you guys were debriefing me in this almost closet. And my heart was pounding. What's your recollection of us?

Cally Parkinson:

I'm remembering, that was before you were hired.

Randy Frazee:

Yes.

Cally Parkinson:

You were checking things out, right? And we were one of the things you were checking out. I think, I hope, I believe that the fact this work was going on at Willow was a real draw and was one reason that you decided that, "Hey, maybe this would be a good fit for me. There's a lot of interesting stuff going on." And while you were at Willow, you and I connected on many fronts. I remember some media things you and I did together that were pretty amazing.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah.

Cally Parkinson:

But when I was communications director, then I went to the WCA and we continued to connect as REVEAL became more and more robust. You helped us with a number of things based on my recollection.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah, absolutely. Well, I had done a project with George Gallup called the Christian Life Profile Assessment tool. And so I was super interested. And to be honest with you yeah, it was that conversation that convinced me to leave the warmth of Texas to come to a slightly colder place in Windy city.

Cally Parkinson:

Sorry.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. I couldn't imagine, if I say no to this, I won't be as close to this amazing thing that's going on and it's been everything that and more. So let's dive into, for someone who might not know what REVEAL is, what is REVEAL and why do you think it's so unique?

Cally Parkinson:

Well, what's interesting about REVEAL is that it measures something that is unseen. We measure people, how people are feeling about their faith, we measure beliefs, we measure that kind of thing. We measure how they're feeling about their church in terms of whether the church is helping them grow spiritually. And the thing that was different when REVEAL was born was that, that was not being measured. All right. Because that was just not part of the paradigm of a church, which makes complete sense. The church and church leaders were just, by default, trapped in this, what we called an activity model.

Cally Parkinson:

Church leaders have always wanted to know if they were helping their people grow spiritually with growing their love of God, growing their love of Jesus Christ, right? They've always wanted to do that, but they were trapped by not being able to measure the unseen, so they measured the seen. What did you measure? What did we track all the time in my communications job? We tracked attendance. We tracked baptism. We tracked tithing. We track whether people were showing up to volunteer. We tracked the things we could count, the things we could see. And we got tied up thinking that if more people showed up, that would mean people were growing in their faith.

Cally Parkinson:

And what happened with REVEAL is, we fielded this one survey and we found out that was not the case. And that is what was unique about REVEAL is that while it was launched, and I don't know if you remember this, but the survey was never intended really to find out what was catalyzing spiritual growth. Because we, as church leaders knew what was catalyzing spiritual growth. It was our weekend services, small groups. And in fact, the survey was intended to figure out whether it was small groups or we had a midweek service. You'll remember New Community.

Randy Frazee:

Yes.

Cally Parkinson:

You taught at it many times.

Randy Frazee:

[inaudible 00:07:27].

Cally Parkinson:

All right. We wanted to know which one of those things was doing the best job of helping people grow spiritually, growing their love of God.

Randy Frazee:

That's fascinating.

Cally Parkinson:

And you know what? Neither one of them were doing very much. They were not, okay? So what was working, which was just astounding, I shouldn't have been, but is how people engage in our faith outside of church, really personal spiritual practices, just rose to the forefront as being the driver behind increasing love of God and increasing love of others, which is how we define spiritual growth.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. Well, Cally, I have to say, because this hit me like a ton of bricks too, when this all came out and I think we need to say it again is that attendance is not a predictor of spiritual growth and spiritual growth or helping people become like Jesus or become disciples is our number one mission. And it turns out for all these years, we were measuring the wrong thing. And that's what I love about REVEAL. It gets under the surface of these unseen things and ask the congregation, what's catalyzing their spiritual growth. And then how is the church doing at helping you with these things to catalyze them?

Cally Parkinson:

Exactly.

Randy Frazee:

And that's just really fascinating. Let's give the people that are listening or watching an idea of, well, how big is this thing? How many churches have done this and how many individuals have taken it?

Cally Parkinson:

At this point, we've had, I think it's 2,500 churches that have taken it. Maybe 600,000 congregants are in our database. What's fascinating about this database though, is because of the reach of the Willow Creek Association, where it was housed for its first seven years or so. We have a real diverse database. You would think a lot of people do that. The survey is like a megachurch non-denominational survey and there are a lot of non-denominational churches in there. One out of four churches in there is a non-denominational church. One out of five churches is a church that has attendance over a thousand, but one out of four churches in the database have attendance under 250. We've got every denomination represented in this database, it is very diverse. We've got Baptist, Presbyterians, foreign church, a lot of Pentecostal churches.

Cally Parkinson:

I was just thinking actually, of the Mennonite churches, because I think the people who were kidnapped in Haiti were from a Mennonite church and I've talked to some Mennonite churches there in the database. So it's a very diverse database, which gives you the power of REVEAL really, is to take all those spiritual beliefs and attitudes and practices and stuff and measure not only how you're doing, how are you doing relative to other churches, relative to this database? Are you doing better? Or is it an opportunity? What's happening? Where are your people relative to some norm that you can look at and get a real benchmark about how well you're doing or not?

Randy Frazee:

Well, as you might suspect, having you as my first guest, I'm a real big believer in this. And to be honest with you, it's powerful enough just getting the feedback, but to compare it with other churches, has been such an eye opener because you don't know what it was. Is this good or bad? And you get it.

Randy Frazee:

And I think for church leaders today, as it relates to leadership, the world's way too complex, and we cannot build our initiatives for these people that God has given us to lead simply on what interests us or a hunch. And I know there's still a lot of spirit led things that are required on that, but I have just found REVEAL to give me just unbelievable information that says as a good under shepherd of Jesus, which should I focus my church on to accomplish the actual mission that we've been given, which is pretty dang exciting. It's because it's so large. I think it probably is the largest, maybe this not accurate, but I cannot think of another body of information for church leaders that is possibly as big and as important as this, because it's asking the fundamental question about where we are taking our people.

Cally Parkinson:

That's right. And I would say, I think we believe it's the largest database certainly of its kind. Which goes back to this, measuring the unseen with the beliefs and attitudes and the church piece to all of that.

Randy Frazee:

Okay. This is a podcast on Bible engagement. And so I remember you and Greg Hawkins saying, as you guys gave seminars and debriefs on REVEAL, "Here are the big learnings." I remember particularly two of them. Let's riff on those for just a little bit, some of the big learnings.

Cally Parkinson:

All right. Okay. Well, number one, as you know, was that, when we did our initial survey and as we analyze this database, as it was growing, the number one single greatest catalyst of growth was reflection on scripture. We measure reflection on scripture with a statement that reads, "I reflect on scripture everyday or every week, or however often, I reflect on scripture for meaning in my life." It's not about, I read the Bible. It's, I reflect on scripture for meaning in my life. And this was so powerful. I used the metaphor of vanilla ice cream. And give me just one second on this.

Randy Frazee:

Yes.

Cally Parkinson:

So if I asked you, what is the most popular flavor of ice cream in the United States? It is, for sure, vanilla ice cream. And number two is chocolate, number three is strawberry, number 10 is praline and cream, whatever. Okay. What's important about this though, is that vanilla actually, it's a little misleading because vanilla's actually twice as popular as chocolate. Chocolate is twice as popular as anything else on the list. We say reflection on scripture is the vanilla of spiritual growth. It's the vanilla. It is way head and shoulders above anything else.

Cally Parkinson:

And what's interesting about when we came out with this finding, you'll love this, Randy, is I got so many pastors pointing at us saying, "Well, duh, the Bible's important." How is that such breakthrough finding, why is that so important? And I'd say, "Fine. Okay. If it's so important, why aren't people reading it?" And I had the numbers to prove it. Okay. I had numbers that showed you that in one church, only 5% of the people were reflecting on scripture everyday. I have never seen a number, Randy, I don't think higher than 45%.

Randy Frazee:

Wow.

Cally Parkinson:

And what's important about that, back to measuring things, right? Is that you get a sense of, okay, where are your people? We know how many people and I can tell you, Westside Church, 34% of your people are reflecting on scripture daily, at least based on the survey that you did recently, how does that compare to other things? You're doing great relative to our database average, which is around 22%, not quite at that 45%, right? So it's just, now I'm running on about this.

Randy Frazee:

No.

Cally Parkinson:

But it's a very powerful catalyst of growth. And it has been reinforced over the years. We've been doing this 15 years now, and has just continued to be reinforced the further and further we go.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah, we've done it twice here. And we're going to use Westside as a little bit of a case study on this, but we've done it twice in the three and a half years I've been here, to try to, and the second time it's really exciting because you get a benchmark, not against only other churches, but against the last couple of year that you did it last. And so where's there movement in your congregation? And I also want to skip down to this idea that, in REVEAL, there are these movements, right?

Cally Parkinson:

Sure.

Randy Frazee:

Can you describe those? Because it wasn't just Bible engagement or reflection of scripture, which is more than just saying the Bible's important and it's more than just giving a sermon, right? It's the people personally reflecting on scriptures to find hope for their life, to find direction for their life. It wasn't just for a certain group of Christians in the church.

Cally Parkinson:

Not at all.

Randy Frazee:

Explain that a little bit.

Cally Parkinson:

Okay. So just briefly, all right? It was one of the hallmark findings actually, of REVEAL is that all churches, frankly, have people who are in one of four groups of spiritual maturity, if you will, the first group is the exploring Christ group. That's about 10% of the database. Those are people who are really just kicking the tires. Actually, I can tell you, a bunch of churches have a whole bunch of people who've been kicking those tires for years, all right? So a lot of people can get stuck in that group.

Cally Parkinson:

The next group is called the growing in Christ group. That's the loudest voice in most churches because about 40% of the database is in a growing in Christ group. Those are people who figured out Jesus is who he said he was and they're just starting to get to know Him, but they are very dependent on their church for everything, for teaching, for inspiration, for motivation, for guidance, all that stuff. So they are very dependent on the church.

Cally Parkinson:

The next group is called the close to Christ group. That's about 25% of the database. And that group has figured out that Jesus is in the passenger seat when they're driving off campus on Sunday and that they can access Jesus into their life and they do every day or regularly throughout their week. So they have a real relationship with Jesus that is growing.

Cally Parkinson:

The Christ-centered group, another 25%, is the most mature group we have and they have surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ.

Randy Frazee:

They're all in.

Cally Parkinson:

They're all in. But then to your point, there are these movements. What does it take to go from exploring to growing? What does it take to go from growing to close or close to Christ-centered?

Cally Parkinson:

And what's interesting about this is there's only one catalyst that was in the top five of every one of those three movements. And it was reflection on scripture, back to the vanilla of spiritual growth. That's what reflection on scripture is. However, it's not number one, right? The number one catalyst for growth, this is interesting, between exploring and growing in Christ is salvation by grace. Believes in salvation by grace. And that makes a lot of sense. Why would you get to know Jesus if you didn't buy into that?

Cally Parkinson:

But this and I'll just tell the second story, because it's important, is that between that big 40% group, that growing Christ group, so dependent on the church to get to the close to Christ group, their number one catalyst is a belief in a personal God. In fact being in the passenger seat, leaving the church campus, if you don't believe God is personally active in your life, why would you engage with Him throughout the week? And that's really the straw that moves that, breaks and moves that group into a place of really growing a relationship with Jesus, because otherwise, if you're stuck in that growing in Christ group, sometimes, and I've seen many churches like this, people are more on a journey to develop a relationship with their church than they are in a relationship with Jesus. Does that make sense?

Randy Frazee:

Oh no. I feel like I need an Altar call here.

Cally Parkinson:

No, but that happens. And people and pastors can get very, to some extent, misled because these people will sign up to do everything. They'll volunteer, they'll do all this stuff, but they're really more engaged in a relationship with doing what their church wants them to do and not really connecting the dots to a relationship with Christ.

Randy Frazee:

Wow. Again, I forgot that we're doing a podcast. I was getting ready to take a pen out and start making some notes down again, because I've been in this stuff a lot and I thought, "Oh, that's right. Salvation by grace and personal God." And looking at the church I serve we'll talk about in a moment in that second bucket, if you will, growing in Christ, our numbers are higher than the average. And so even more so it informs me that, "Hey, what am I going to be preaching on? Well, I probably need to do a lot of preaching on what does it mean that God is a personal God that he's involved in our daily lives? That he cares about us and He's got a plan and He's far away and bigger than your problems, but He's really close. And he is really near." And then do it in a way that causes people to reflect in scriptures and putting a one, two punch together, right? Would be pretty beneficial.

Randy Frazee:

Hi, this is Randy Frazee host of the Bible Roots Podcast, which is brought to you by my friends at Harper Christian Resources. Harper Christian Resources, equips you to understand the scriptures, cultivate spiritual growth and disciple your people with Bible study resources from today's most trusted voices.

Randy Frazee:

There was another learning. So one is the reflection on scripture, Bible engagement is the vanilla, but there was another learning I remember you guys sharing about what ... Why don't you just go on?

Cally Parkinson:

It goes back to the two buckets we look at, which are the unseen things that in the hearts of people as they experience their faith outside of the church and the other one is how they feel about how the church is helping them. And what we found is, what people want most from the church has helped me understand the Bible in depth. That's the number one thing. We measured at least a dozen things, if not more than that. And that was the number one thing for all of these groups, the exploring the growing, the close to Christ center, that's what they want their churches to be doing. Help me understand the Bible in depth. The second thing they want is help me develop a personal relationship with Jesus. And that's true across all these denominations, all of them. This is not something that is just part of one group versus another. This is across the board.

Randy Frazee:

Well, what I like to say when you guys share this, is that the number one thing that people need, and the number one thing people want, is the same thing.

Cally Parkinson:

It's the same thing. That's exactly right.

Randy Frazee:

You put the two together and it just really makes your strategic planning session with your church council or whatever, pretty easy to say, why don't we focus on vanilla because it's really what they need and what they want. And if we can do an effective job at, and I think the church in so many ways has tried to get really fancy or get out of its lane. And I think the church people are screaming, "No." The church should do what the church has been commissioned to do. And to really get better and better at that. Right?

Cally Parkinson:

You know what though? I will tell you, it goes back to this personal God thing, the Bible reading and even scripture reflection can get on its own treadmill thing. It can become another activity. I want my people to be ... You know what I'm saying?

Randy Frazee:

Yeah.

Cally Parkinson:

And I remember this church in San Diego and this pastor calls and says, "I've been trying to get my people to read the Bible and I just can't get it going." And I just said, "I don't know what to tell you, but I will tell you this, the Bible is not the number one catalyst in that big group. It's the belief in personal God. It's the belief that you're developing a relationship with someone. And that's what all of this is about. Reflection on scripture just happens to be the thing that really advances that, but that belief has to be in place first."

Randy Frazee:

So yeah, the belief is there and the reflection of scripture is really more of the tool to really highlight that particular belief, right? It's the most effective spiritual discipline that's going to catalyze this belief that will mostly catalyze that growing a Christ group into closeness to Christ.

Cally Parkinson:

Correct.

Randy Frazee:

Which is pretty cool. Let's talk about Westside and bring this down to something personal.

Cally Parkinson:

Absolutely.

Randy Frazee:

So that we can take it down to instead of 2,500 churches down to one church that has done it actually three times. They did it once before I came and then we did it once as I first came, and now we've just done it recently and unpack a little bit of that for us, because I tell you, Cally, when we did a Zoom call with you, our team, particularly our executive pastor just was beside himself with excitement as we debrief this with our-

Cally Parkinson:

I'm going to ask you a question, Randy, when we had that conversation, how often did we talk about attendance?

Randy Frazee:

I don't think at all.

Cally Parkinson:

How often did we talk about tithing?

Randy Frazee:

Not at all.

Cally Parkinson:

Not a bit. That's the thing. I have had just this tremendous gift of talking to hundreds of pastors. I spent an hour with a big Tucson church last week, not one reference to attendance, to tithing. And those are not bad things. You need to count those things, right? But we had an hour and you and I had an hour just talking about where your people's hearts are at, where their beliefs are at, how're feeling about how well you're helping them with all of those things. Just phenomenal. Let's talk about your results, okay?

Randy Frazee:

Yeah.

Cally Parkinson:

So what was interesting is that you had taken it two and a half years before, helps me understand the Bible in depth, the number one thing people want. I'm going to give you a number here, okay? You guys were at 45. What does that mean? I'm comparing you to all of our churches and you guys were doing as well as 45% of the churches in our database. So right in the middle, right?

Randy Frazee:

Yeah.

Cally Parkinson:

Okay. Then you took it again and the number almost doubled to 81. So you moved from 45 to 81 in terms of helps me understand the Bible in depth. I already talked about reflection on scripture, the first survey, it was at 20%, one out of five we're reflecting on scripture daily. When you took it again, it was 34%, one out of three. So good movement in terms of that, this is one I really love. This is the best practice for the church that we look at, we call it, embeds the Bible in everything. Do you embed the Bible in everything? Not just teaching, but in the culture of the church, right?

Cally Parkinson:

And you guys in your first survey, were at 31. So you were doing about as well as a third of the churches in the database. The next time you were at 75, you really just zoomed up in terms of help. And we see that all the time. We see numbers like reflection on scripture and beliefs move, but more often than not the first thing that moves is how people feel about the church. And they are just applauding all the way, embeds the Bible and everything, 31 to 75. That was great.

Cally Parkinson:

And we have a measure, which I'll just throw out there, but called the spiritual vitality index, which in brings it all together. And in the first survey yours was 68. So you're probably doing pretty well, I would call it a strong average. Okay. And the next one, you went up to 81. So really strong movement. I don't know what you did, Randy, but whatever you did, we saw this. And what I love about this is, it's not about one number, what we see is a consistent pattern, a consistent movement that should give you a confidence that what you're doing is really advancing people's journey.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. I'd like to stop there for a second.

Cally Parkinson:

Sure.

Randy Frazee:

And I didn't intend on doing this, but I keep this with me all the times where I go, is that when we take the REVEAL survey, now of course most people are going to be listening to this, but anybody watching on YouTube or are more visual is that we put together an annual ... This is a 2022 plan. And it's just now finalized. It's got a little scratches on it. And if you look in the very middle, it talks about focus. And it's basically our understanding of REVEAL for the 2022 based upon the results. And we're showing how the teaching we're doing. And the engagement is connected and answering the question as to where our congregation is at. So in 2018, when we took REVEAL and we saw that our archetype was average and we knew where we wanted to be in Bible engagement, we specifically chose not only series that we're embedding the Bible more aggressively, but we did it with the execution on values with Bible and then also engagement.

Randy Frazee:

And as you know Cally, with Zondervan, I'm the story guy and then followed up with believe, and it's not just about giving the preaching, but really engaging the entire church in the experience. So we went through the believe experience. And I think that those initiatives that we did, coupled with the Holy Spirit's favor, we were able to see some pretty good movement. So, yeah.

Cally Parkinson:

Yes, I agree with that. Now you've tipped into something. You mentioned your archetype, right?

Randy Frazee:

Yes. Let's talk about that. Yes.

Cally Parkinson:

Let's talk about those, okay? Because one of the most recent breakthrough findings from REVEAL and this came about actually, as the book, Church Unique was becoming really popular with all of its great wisdom, but we were finding that there were patterns of churches in our database, we were finding, or I was sensing in these consulting conversations I was having, that you would talk to a church like a big church in Florida and a tiny church in Montana and then another church, and they'd all be having similar problems. And then I talked to another church in another church and they'd be having similar problems that were very different from that first group of churches. And what our statisticians did is, they dug into the database and sure enough, they found there were eight patterns of churches, church personalities.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah.

Cally Parkinson:

The first pattern you fit in, at least in the last survey was average. Average is really a tough archetype. We have about, I think 13% of our churches fall into that. It's a flat line. Yeah. It's like, nothing's going anywhere, right?

Randy Frazee:

Yeah.

Cally Parkinson:

And it's just like, "What do you do with that? Where do you go?" And your second archetype was, and this one is a little less what I'd call intuitive, but was the self-motivated, self-motivated meant you really motivated your people to grow spiritually. And they did. We saw it in the numbers I just talked about, but now they want more from the church. There's this hunger that you've created that they want more from the church. And just briefly, some of the other personalities that are out there, I talked about the churches where I see a lot of people who are on a journey to develop relationship with the church. A lot of complacent churches, 20% of our database is in that complacent category where people were pretty happy with their church, but they are not growing their faith. They're using it. I had a pastor reference it as a social club sometimes.

Cally Parkinson:

And then we have a lot of introverted churches. That's another 20% of the database. Introverted churches are churches where they are very strong on the intellectual side of faith. They're very strong on Bible study, if you will. But the heart transformation, you just don't see in their attitude, the transformation and the movement, if you will, into a place of really deep surrender to Christ, but that they are not moving in that direction. They're stuck in this intellectual place that hasn't become a heart thing for them. So introverted churches, I've seen them really grow though. Once pastors get a hold of this stuff, they can really move the dime on this stuff.

Cally Parkinson:

So another group I'd talked about well, which was my Tucson church I talked to, was a vibrant church. Just all guns blazing, people are on fire spiritually and they just love their church. All right. So we have eight different personalities. I've just mentioned some of them, but what I love to see, because sometimes we think, "Our personality, we can't change very much." Churches can change. They can change. And I have seen in every group, I've seen complacent churches become energized churches, which is another archetype. I've seen introverted churches, many of them become vibrant. I've seen energized churches become vibrant. We have troubled churches. That's 14% of our database, really. Then you've got a weak spiritual foundation in the people and they're mad at the church. That's a tough place to be. But I've seen them become average. And that's a really good place for them to get to and go beyond.

Cally Parkinson:

So all of this should be an encouragement. The churches know where they've got challenges, but the opportunities we see are that we know churches can get better. All of them can get stronger. And that's what we want for the whole kingdom to have that.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. Cally, I've got so many bombs going off right now. I had 20 things to say, and I might only remember, but a couple of things, number one, you mentioned the introverted church.

Cally Parkinson:

Introverted. Yeah.

Randy Frazee:

Introverted church. And that may be really good at the Bible. And that church archetype needs to understand that maybe they haven't gone as far with reflection on scripture that they may think, "Oh, we're really into the Bible." But it's-

Cally Parkinson:

Study. Right.

Randy Frazee:

... Doing the bible study, but it's not study that leads to reflection and engagement that leads to transformation, right? So, don't deceive yourself and really be willing to. And the other thing I thought of is that, it's really important to take the survey and just let it speak for itself. And just like, as a pastor, we tell our people, you got to deal with the truth about where you're at in your life. The beginning of wisdom is to call something by its right name. And when I came to this church and our archetype was average, I decided not to actually use that language with them, because it's not really like, "I pastor an average church."

Cally Parkinson:

It isn't very fun. No.

Randy Frazee:

But we dealt with the reality of what that meant. And January, 9th is when we'll be doing our state of the church address in a series called The Essentials and I'm going to impact REVEAL. I've impacted to the staff, we've impacted it to our advisory teams and all, and now we're going to go to the congregation and give them the highline of where they're at and we're going to celebrate that we've moved to self-motivated, right? Because it's a move in a great direction.

Cally Parkinson:

It's absolutely. Yeah.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. But we're also going to say, "But we also are hearing you loud and clear. And you said this Cally, you said, "It's like you've motivated us to grow in our faith, but now we'd really like some help with our homework, right?"

Cally Parkinson:

Right.

Randy Frazee:

So that's I think another piece. And then the third thing of the 20 things that are popping off in my head, but I think is real important is that you said, is that, every church, no matter where you're at in your archetype, face the truth of that and then realize that there is hope and there are initiatives because you guys wrote another book out of your research of what's the number one thing a church in this space needs to do. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Cally Parkinson:

Well, what we did is we interviewed churches that we knew had moved from one archetype to another. So we talked to a complacent church that had become energized. So we talked to them and said, "What did you do?" Right? And we talked to several of them. So this is less statistical and more what I call qualitative in its basis. But we would find two or three things that a complacent church had done to become energized. We found things that a troubled church had done to become average. And we did it for every one of the archetypes. And that's in this book and the name of it is Rise, where we talk about all these strategies. And frankly, if you take the survey like you did, we give you your three strategies when you take the survey, here are the three things we found, at least, that seem to move a church in your position to a stronger place.

Cally Parkinson:

And one of the big strategies we saw, which you'll love because you have been on this for so many years is to create a Bible based campaign, have some season where everything from the weekend teaching, to the small groups, to the children's ministry, where all of it is unified and everyone is learning the same types of Bible stories or talking about the same beliefs or something where you can unify it through small groups, through the family, through all the teaching of the children, all of it is all coming together. And those things can be very powerful catalyst. It's the number one strategy for a complacent church.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. I've read that in Rise. And I got involved in Bible engagement first with the story which you're familiar with and then with believe, and then some other ones that I've helped out now with the new Testament challenge, our new one coming out called The Bide on different ways to engage with scripture. And then some other ones that we're looking at with Harper Collins down the road. And I got into it with trying to help an individual person engage with scripture in a very effective way. And then I found at the same time, it just really elevated the church in every single way, which is really cool.

Randy Frazee:

And what I like about what you're giving people, and in the show notes, we'll link to all of the different books from REVEAL to Follow Me, to Rise, I just want to encourage people to really check out what you guys are doing and say, "I'm probably your biggest fan. I'm your poster pastor for this?"

Cally Parkinson:

You are.

Randy Frazee:

I really am. Because it just takes the guesswork out for me. I go to the congregation in confidence and say, "Hey, listen, when it comes to prayer, we're below average and that's pretty devastating." And I got a lot of work to do. And in our new REVEAL results showed that they grew tremendously in the area of prayer and finding direction for their daily life. We put a lot of energy toward that and I just feel I'm going after that spiritual warfare on behalf of our people. I really can't imagine not having this research. It's so elegant. And when our people take it, they get an initial feedback too, which is an improvement.

Cally Parkinson:

It is. Yeah.

Randy Frazee:

It is improved because they get some immediate feedback, which in your partnership with Gloo, a person who does something, wants immediate feedback on where they're at in their journey. For sure. Hey, I want to be the Queen Elizabeth for the day and just tell the people that are going to be listening to this, a lot of leaders, pastors and we can take it, just speak what is on your heart about your biggest frustration that as you've worked with churches or whatever, the biggest frustration you have. And then wrap up with the biggest encouragement.

Cally Parkinson:

Okay. All right. Well, the biggest frustration goes back to what was going on when we started this, which is the trap that church leaders fall into, on this activity based counting heads. We are counting heads all the time. And even though we know we're trying to change hearts, it's very hard to break out of those habits. Even when you have REVEAL, it's very hard to break out of that and I'll give you a really good example. This church, it was a Presbyterian church in California. And they took REVEAL and I was doing a consultation with them. And this pastor was mad at me. That doesn't happen very often. He was truly raising his voice. He was not happy, "Cally, I did all this stuff that you wrote about and I did all this and we had our people do this and blah, blah, blah. And our numbers are ..." And he was a complacent church.

Cally Parkinson:

So I said, "Okay." So until he told me a little bit about stuff they'd done and you know what I said to him, I said, "You know what it feels like to me? It feels like maybe you went from one set of activities to another set of activities. You just went activity to activity without back to the why of it. Okay." And we hung up that phone call and he was still not happy with me. All right. But he took the survey again, two years later, their numbers skyrocketed. I couldn't believe it, skyrocketed. And they asked for consultation and I called him, all right? We connected. And I said, "What happened?" And you know what, he didn't say anything, but his staff did. They said, "He changed his language completely. He started talking about surrender, humility, sacrifice. He started talking about a relationship." And how you grow a relationship." Completely changed that church.

Randy Frazee:

Well, I've been doing this for, this is my 33rd year. And I don't think I can hear that enough because we get into our intrigue with the activity and the tactics. And that's what we share with the congregation, but they want to go deeper, don't they? They want to know the why, the values, the character. And I think some people listening, watching might be actually doing the right thing, but approaching it the wrong way possibly, right?

Cally Parkinson:

Well, all of this is a means to an end. The end is our relationship with Christ and growing that relationship with Christ. And if you lose the message of the end and leave it back here in the doing, there can be disconnects and that [inaudible 00:40:47].

Randy Frazee:

And that's why the four segments, I guess we could call them, all of them have to do with your relationship with Christ.

Cally Parkinson:

Exactly.

Randy Frazee:

Exploring Christ. And that's why you didn't do it as moving from a disciple to a leader it's not about those things. It's really all about this personal relationship.

Cally Parkinson:

Exactly. Where is your relationship with Christ? How would you describe your relationship with Christ? That's what people get on the survey.

Randy Frazee:

How about encouragement? You've been doing this now for-

Cally Parkinson:

[inaudible 00:41:11]. My biggest encouragement, well, right today is, you, it's pastors. Yeah. It's pastors, but it really, to be it explicit, it's the heart of the pastors. I do not talk to pastors. I've talked to hundreds of them now. They love their people. I've talked to thousands probably, but they love their people, they want them to grow in their relationship with Christ. I've had pastors in tears. I had one pastor who was going through his average church report and he was just tearing up saying he and his staff had just determined a couple of weeks before that they were like the church of Ephesus in Revelation where you've done all this work and I love all this work you've done, but you've lost your first love.

Cally Parkinson:

And it was just so moving and that's the thing, for 15 years, I have seen the hearts of pastors and they are all sold out. They wouldn't be in ministry if they weren't. And I know ministry is tremendously frustrating, but extraordinarily rewarding as well. I've seen that as I've talked to churches more than once. So that's, my encouragement is that the hearts are out there and if they can get off that activity model train, I think we can really do some wonderful things for the Kingdom of God.

Randy Frazee:

That's a wonderful thing to hear, talking to so many pastors to see where their hearts are at. And it's been certainly a very difficult season with this global pandemic. And I know there's a lot of discouraged pastors. But I think at the end of the day, most of us got into this because we were transformed and we wanted to use whatever gift we had to see other people transformed, but sometimes you lose your way. And I just think REVEAL has been just such a big help to me. And I think we've done a good job today of laying the case for Bible engagement, for reflection of scripture, as being one of the top strategies. If someone wanted to connect with you or take the REVEAL survey or learn more about it, where might they go?

Cally Parkinson:

You'll have a link for them to click onto if they want to, but it's really the REVEAL for Church website. So REVEAL for Church and just type REVEAL for Church in the browser and you'll get there. And there's a website where they can find out all about the survey and they can sign up for it. And thanks to Scott Beck, it's free. And that's new. That's only been a few months in the works.

Randy Frazee:

I think that's news for me as well.

Cally Parkinson:

Aha. There you go.

Randy Frazee:

That is really cool. Well, Cally, I cannot thank you enough. We could just chat forever and ever. I totally enjoyed the years that I got to work with you in Chicago and I'm so grateful to continue to partner with you. And I just think we need to probably do this again to dive in a little deeper if you'd be open to that.

Cally Parkinson:

Great. Awesome.

Randy Frazee:

Awesome. Well, thank you.

Cally Parkinson:

You're welcome.

Randy Frazee:

Well, everybody, I hope that you've enjoyed episode one of our podcast sponsored by Harper Collins Resources. If you enjoyed it, I'd like to ask you to leave us a review and share it with a friend. And here's a sneak peek of some upcoming episodes. We're going to have Scott Beck, who we just talked about, the founder of Gloo to talk to us about the science of how people grow. And of all the people that I know, Scott knows how things grow. He's the one who scaled things like Blockbuster video and Einstein Brothers Bagels and Ancestry.com just to name a few. And he's converted all that energy from bagels and videos to growing the body of Christ. And he's turned his full-time attention to helping the church and nonprofit organizations stimulate growth in their people inside and outside of the church. It's going to be a fascinating episode.

Randy Frazee:

And we also have Kyle Idleman. Kyle is the senior pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville. One of the largest churches in America, a personal friend of mine. And he's the author of some of the greatest books, like Not a Fan. And he's also one who works with most of the Christian movies that have come out like I Can Only Imagine and I Still Believe on Jeremy Camp and really puts engagement strategies around those. Wonderful. So we're going to talk about the role of story in the area of Bible engagement. I think you're going to enjoy that as well.

Randy Frazee:

So thank you for joining us. I'm Randy Frazee. See you next time.

Randy Frazee:

Thanks for listening to the Bible Roots Podcast. We hope you were encouraged and energized by our discussion today. If you enjoyed this episode, we'd love for you to leave a review. This small gesture will help more church leaders discover our conversations around Bible engagement and don't forget like and subscribe to our podcast, so you'll never miss a new episode. May your faith be strengthened through God's Word today and every day.