

STEERING THROUGH CHAOS:  
MAPPING A CLEAR DIRECTION FOR YOUR CHURCH IN THE MIDST OF  
TRANSITION AND CHANGE

By Scott Wilson  
Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2010 (224 pages)

Book Review  
Chapter Synopsis

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December 1<sup>st</sup> 2010

From title page to bibliography Wilson's material is a must for any original and authentic church leader but could be seen as authoritarian to the insecure and timid who holds a position of leadership without the desire to actually lead. Wilson states that *vision* is not something he discovers or predetermines. It is Jesus vision for his church. Therefore the strong leader steers *into* chaos while the employed and insecure man steers *away* from it to avoid all forms of confrontation. Wilson is clear that confrontation is inevitable. He calls this *relational tension* stating that most pastors avoid this. His refreshing approach challenges the old dictate of helping the pastor *with his vision* to the people *are the vision*. Again, Wilson addresses personal security to carry this forward into chaos. Is the vision of the church the vision Jesus has for the church?

To answer that dilemma, Wilson takes the reader through an appreciative inquiry into a lifestyle of prayer and gratitude towards God for all He has already done and for what He is going to do. Therefore, Wilson encourages corporate prayer in the church, especially when steering into chaos. Wilson brings a strategic approach in *how* to do this. He communicates to other leaders who, in turn, communicate to every increasing circle of friendship and relationship to the whole body on praying the same way. This is something Wilson calls the *cascading effect*.

But how does a leader become confident and secure as a person? Wilson encourages the principle of a *mentor* or *coach* to act as a mirror and trusted confidant. This creates a remarkable change between a *declining* church in front of you to *momentum* behind you. Throughout the material Wilson keeps a common language of a *journey* using navigating terms that compliment the graphic of a GPS and map on the front cover. This will draw the reader into clear thought on the subject of chaos – brilliant! Through ten chapters

Wilson navigates the reader through ideas that challenge the leader to change himself / herself. In brief, here is the summary of Wilson's ten ideas.

Turning points and transition: This sets the tone like a coach telling the leader he / she will face pain and discomfort. Wilson cites the four stages of a leaders decline (that results in church decline) from *I'm ready; show me the way* to a step back in *it's good enough* then further back to *never again* with the final retreat of *is it always this hard?* The point Wilson makes is the personal pain of transition. He quotes Larry Osborne in *changing staff structures* as the greatest transition.

Vision – Where are you leading us: Wilson ties the leader's ability with personal strength and passion to lead other leaders, not just followers and people who want a paycheck. He encourages leaders to articulate and put into print clear vision. He quotes Dino Rizzo and his example of *changing the churches name* to align with the vision.

Timing your change for growth: Using a four-point graphic, Wilson maps the journey of a church from vision, growth, decline and finally nostalgia. At the point just before decline the leader makes changes to renew vision for greater growth.

Quoting Sam Chand and his honest *cold sweats* and *restlessness* as a leader is an excellent conclusion to this chapter.

Authenticity - Motivating people to follow the vision: This is the section that deals with a declining church in front of you or a momentum of vision behind you.

Quoting Tom Stevens on the *economic effect* on our churches he encourages leaders to be proactive knowing their surroundings. Not every church is the same.

Corporate prayer – Trusting God together: Just when the reader thinks that Wilson is more *corporate* than *Biblical* in leadership philosophy, he brings out the non-negotiable aspect of corporate prayer. Using the key word *together* Wilson explores how this keeps the people centered on Jesus' vision for the church. Through his own church he has seen board members, staff, volunteers and congregation align together. Quoting Chris Seidman in leading *from* blessing the reader is drawn to the reality of not being too concerned what people think of you as a leader – if the church is actually praying together. The alternative is a ballot vote of individualism and not *together*.

Recognizing opportunities and avoiding obstacles: This lengthy chapter charts the church throughout a calendar year encouraging leaders not to jump to conclusion but see problems as normative and sometimes repetitive. Wilson's point is that opportunity will come *knocking* but it will also knock you as a leader. Don't see this as an obstacle.

Celebrate every step of the way: Using a common catch phrase Wilson explores the sheer power of celebration by explaining the hopelessness a church will feel between *launch* and a significant accomplishment. He calls this the *horizon* and the distance between the *unmet* needs and *unreached* hopes of people. The journey towards the horizon has to embrace the stories of the people to speak the language of the people.

The leadership gap – Finding a great coach: Wilson addresses the isolation a pastor can feel in leadership but meets that need with three criteria in a coach or mentor.

They have to stretch the leader, be an accurate mirror but most of all a trusted confidant. Quoting Troy Grambling he explores the area of personal loss.

Keep the vision fresh: In this section Wilson explains his church strategy for discipleship in a four-part model that is easy to understand. Each component may change as time goes by but *simple* is always the way. Wilson suggests four principles of *give, share, explain* and *remind* as a means of keeping vision fresh.

Randall Ross explains the story of how he became the Senior Leader in his church through a consistent and simple model of change.

Endurance – Staying the course: The final chapter is personal to every leader who reads this book. He quotes Greg Surratt and his three simple lessons on transition that read as *absolutes* for change. Wilson inspires to press on forward and keep running as a great conclusion to *Steering Through Chaos*.

## Summary

If the reader is serious about organizational leadership, this book is transferable to almost any form of influence that has to navigate through chaotic structures, or lack of them. Specifically, Wilson speaks to Pastors who want to turn-around a chaotic local church organization to realize its most effective position in the community.