

CHARTING ONE'S OWN COURSE: HOW THE CHURCH CAN FOSTER
ENTREPRENEURIAL FORMATION IN A CHANGING WORLD OF WORK¹

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Introduction

Christians have callings. Broadly speaking, Protestant scholars agree that Christians have central and particular calls. First, we as Christians have a *central call* to follow Jesus into and participate in the kingdom of God. Second, scholars broadly agree that Christians have *particular calls*—specific contexts to participate in the kingdom often through our work.² God called Moses and Aaron to their work in ushering in liberation for God’s people (Exodus 3:4; 28:1). God called the prophets Samuel (1 Sam 3:10), Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-5), and Amos (Amos 7:15). He called people such as Joseph, Gideon, Saul, and David to political leadership.³ In the New Testament, Jesus called his disciples. In Acts, the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul to be missionaries (Acts 13:2). There is evidence for God’s particular callings throughout Scripture.⁴

The church has long seen itself as a body interested in the formation of Christians for God’s callings in the world. Because scholars agree that God’s callings include particular work, the church must ready itself to engage deeply with people’s work. This includes attuning to shifts in systemic realities and the implications those shifts have for individuals. The purpose of this paper is to interpret an emerging social reality for the church. The emerging social reality is that the economic context⁵ and thus the nature of work have changed so that there are more independent workers, ranging from freelancers to entrepreneurs, and that these workers must adopt an entrepreneurial posture. In short, the economic context includes more and more workers who will have to think and act like entrepreneurs. Therefore, the church, which engages in vocational formation, must now include an emphasis on an entrepreneurial posture.

A Changing Landscape of Work: A Shift Toward Independent Workers

The world is changing—at a rapid and disruptive pace. These changes have implications for nearly every part of human life. As Thomas Freidman puts it, “the three largest forces on the planet—technology, globalization, and climate change—are all accelerating at once. As a result, so many aspects of our societies, workplaces, and geopolitics are being reshaped and need to be

² See Lee Hardy, *The Fabric of This World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); Labberton, *Called*; Guinness, *The Call*; Schuurman, *Vocation*.

³ William Messenger and Gordon Preece. “Calling: A Biblical Perspective,” in *Calling: A Biblical Perspective* (Theology of Work Project, 2013), 7-9.

⁴ Messenger and Preece, “Calling,” 9.

⁵ “A context is composed of the social and natural systems in which a situation unfolds. A system is a network of interacting and interconnected parts that give rise to properties belonging to the whole, not the parts. The congregation as an organizational system is one of the contexts in which a situation can unfold. But this system is nestled within other systems that are local, regional, national, and global. Context, thus serves a flexible purpose, calling attention to micro and macrosystems that are relevant to a given case. Moreover, systems are open and dynamic. They are influenced by other systems. Contextual analysis, thus is an important dimension of practical theological interpretation.” Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 12.

reimagined.”⁶ In other words, as societies and industries are disrupted, people will have to reimagine nearly everything they do. This includes the work of particular callings. Christians seeking to engage God’s callings for them will have to re-imagine how to do so in a changing landscape of work.

The changing landscape of work is a wide and varied topic. It includes areas such as automation, access to credit, industry trends, immigrant work habits, consumer habits, effects of technology, and much, much more. However, for the sake of scope, this paper will focus on just one change: the rise of independent workers, often labeled as the gig economy.

The first widely used reference to gigs in the American economy was in the 1920s as jazz music became popular. Musicians would call the work they did with their band, whether for a night or a month, a gig. In the same vein, someone who made money through jazz on top of a regular job might call his or her music work a side gig.⁷ But until recently, gigs—and the people who work them—have not been a dominant force in the American economy. Diane Mulcahy writes, “Only one generation ago, most workers could expect to be full-time employees in secure full-time jobs, working for just one or two companies over the course of their careers.”⁸ By contrast, in 2005, reports estimated that 10.3 million people, or 7.4% of the American workforce, were independent workers.⁹ Studies estimate that in the American workforce today, nearly 40 million people are active in the independent economy. This number is predicted to increase to 48.9 million by 2021. If this happens, Americans working independently will make up “just over 40% of the private, non-farm workforce.”¹⁰

The shift toward more independent work has both systemic and individual implications. This paper will favor discussing the individual implications as individual implications adhere most closely with current mental models of vocation. This topic and focus has been chosen for two reasons. First, the church’s theology of vocation is not currently calibrated for a system in which upwards of 40 million people engage in independent work.¹¹ Second, this shift toward more independent work requires individuals to lead with new skills—or as this paper argues have an entrepreneurial posture. This is a posture not currently emphasized by the church and thus deserves attention.

⁶ Freidman, *Thank You For Being Late*, 3-4.

⁷ Marion McGovern, *Thriving in the Gig Economy: How to Capitalize and Compete in the New World of Work* (Wayne:, 2017), 28.

⁸ Diane Mulcahy, *The Gig Economy: The Complete Field Guide to Getting Better Work, Taking More Time Off, and Financing the Life You Want* (New York: Amazon, 2017), Kindle Location 68.

⁹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Independent Contractors in 2005,” July 29, 2005, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2005/jul/wk4/art05.htm>.

¹⁰ MBO Partners, *America’s Independents: A Rising Economic Force*, 2016, 3.

¹¹ MBO Partners, *America’s Independents*, 3.

Independent Workers Need Skills Not Emphasized in Education

The economy's shift to include more independent workers holds various adaptive challenges for individuals.¹² This paper will take up one such challenge, the fact that people charting their own course need skills not emphasized in education.

A 2016 study published by the Knight Foundation in collaboration with Fast Company, addresses that the way American educational institutions currently educate people—the way we form them for work—does not adequately set people up for independent work.¹³ The study identified thirteen qualities that independents need in the changing economy. They are: grit, tolerance for ambiguity, creative problem solving skills, collaboration skills, network savviness, self-awareness, business-finance literacy, resourcefulness at getting help, sophisticated ability to learn continually and intentionally, business-development skills, adroitness at personal branding, communication skills, and design awareness.¹⁴ Of the thirteen, they write that the most essential characteristic of a successful independent worker is grit, defined by them as “the ability to endure setbacks, recognize, and correct mistakes, and learn from failures.”¹⁵ Using their definition, another word for this might be resilience. On resilience, Sheryl Sandberg writes, “Resilience comes from deep within us and from support outside us. It comes from gratitude for what is good in our lives and from leaning into the suck.”¹⁶

In their report, the Knight Foundation offers strategies for teaching resilience and the other twelve qualities they identified. Among these strategies are: (1) teach students how to create jobs, not find them, and (2) teach entrepreneurship to everyone, starting in elementary school.¹⁷ First, the report argues that the ability to create jobs will be critical in the coming decades. They describe that education institutions have over focused on business plan

¹² Leadership scholars agree that, broadly speaking, there are two types of challenges: technical and adaptive. Technical challenges are problems that have clear solutions or can be solved by experts or through established patterns. Adaptive challenges, on the other hand, are ones that have unclear solutions. Adaptive challenges require wrestling with deeply held assumptions and experimenting with the unknown. Ronald A. Heifetz and Donald L. Laurie, “The Work of Leadership,” *Harvard Business Review* (1997): 124-127.

¹³ The Knight Foundation and The Solo City Project, “Solo City Report: A New World of Work Is Here, and We Are Not Ready,” 2016, 12.

¹⁴ The Knight Foundation and The Solo City Project, “Solo City Report,” 12.

¹⁵ The Knight Foundation and The Solo City Project, “Solo City Report,” 12. The Knight Foundation's usage of grit differs from that of the widely known researcher on grit, Angela Duckworth. Duckworth describes grit as the combination of passion and perseverance. Duckworth, too, argues that grit is core to success in work and in life. The research that generated her book, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, was with highly successful people across industries. Her research included but was not limited to independent workers. In her research, she found that “First, these exemplars were unusually resilient and hardworking. Second, they knew in a very, very deep way that this is what they wanted. They had not only had determination, they had direction.” Angela Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* (New York: Scribner, 2016), 6.

¹⁶ Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant, *Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resiliency, and Finding Joy* (New York: Knopf), 27.

¹⁷ The Knight Foundation and The Solo City Project, “Solo City Report,” 33. They offer two additional strategies: work locally with organizations that do prepare people for the new world of work, and make education more American, not less. These are both valid but less helpful for the ultimate goal of vocational formation that this dissertation takes up.

competitions and education on how to build high-growth firms. Quoting Darden professor Saras Sarasvathy, they argue educators should “teach students to go out in the community and, working with local under-resourced small businesses, imagine jobs that don’t exist yet.” Next, the Knight Foundation describes the need for everyone to learn entrepreneurship, not necessarily so that everyone can start a business, but so that everyone can learn different ways to “think about, and create, a life.”¹⁸

Even those not technically working as independents will need the skills named above. Certain leaders argue that the traditional career path is all but dead.¹⁹ Everyone will be required to chart their own way forward on some level. Reid Hoffman, cofounder of LinkedIn, describes the traditional career path like an escalator. A person got on the career escalator after college and, with enough hard work and goodwill, rode upward in status, pay, and security. Around the age of 65, people stepped off the escalator, supported by a pension and a social security check. Hoffman describes that now the escalator is “jammed at every level.”²⁰ People, even the highly educated, are stuck at the bottom without enough work or without work at all. Simultaneously, people in their sixties and seventies without enough money in their pensions are staying in or rejoining the workforce. Hoffman writes, “Today, it’s hard for the young to get on the escalator, it’s hard for the middle-aged to ascend, and it’s hard for anyone over sixty to get off.”²¹

So, what is the church’s role in the midst of this changing landscape of work? The church has a role in forming people for vocation, for both their central and particular calls. However, the church is not currently calibrated to help people face the adaptive challenges that independents face in their work or cultivate the type of qualities that the Knight Foundation suggests will help a soloist thrive. Some of these skills are quite technical: network savviness, business-finance literacy, business-development skills, personal branding, communication skills, and design awareness. But others seem to be about personal formation and thus one could argue fit within the church’s sweet spot to form people for vocation. These include grit or resilience, tolerance for ambiguity, creative problem solving-skills, collaboration, ability to seek help, self-awareness, and ongoing learning.

Adopting an Entrepreneurial Posture

Thus far, this paper has argued that Christians have callings, which include work and that the landscape of work is shifting to include more independent workers. This shift requires individuals to lead with skills not currently emphasized in traditional education. Now, this paper will argue that the church will need to teach about and create space for vocation formation that takes seriously many people’s needs to think and act entrepreneurially. In other words, people will need an entrepreneurial posture.²² This section will describe three elements of an

¹⁸ The Knight Foundation and The Solo City Project, “Solo City Report,” 33.

¹⁹ Reid Hoffman, *The Start-up of You: Adapt to the Future, Invest in Yourself, and Transform Your Career* (New York: Crown, 2012), 5.

²⁰ Hoffman, *The Start-up of You*, 5.

²¹ Hoffman, *The Start-up of You*, 5.

²² Hoffman, *The Start-up of You*, 7.

entrepreneurial posture derived from synthesizing the literature on creativity, innovation, and social entrepreneurship. These elements are: *creativity*, *confidence*, and *resiliency*.

First, an entrepreneurial posture includes creativity. Entrepreneurial creativity occurs when the generation and implementation of novel and useful ideas are applied to a new venture.²³ This new venture can be a formal business, a new project within an organization, or the even the project of one's career.²⁴ While each of these instances is helpful for the church's overall understanding of vocation, exercising creativity in the project of one's career is especially helpful for the context of independent work. People in a shifting world of work will have to literally create their own way forward. At its core, creativity is an action and mindset rooted in participation, anticipation, and collaboration within the kingdom of God. When we create, we do as an act of *participation* in God's kingdom. Andy Crouch writes, "We always start in the middle of things, working with raw materials given to us by God and the generations before us. Culture is what we make of the world, not what we make out of pure imagination."²⁵ One of the primary contexts in which we participate in God's ongoing creation is through the human task of work. Lee Hardy argues that God continues God's own creativity through the work of human hands.²⁶

Additionally, when humans create, we do so in *anticipation*—anticipation of God's final and coming kingdom.²⁷ Not only do we create in reflection of God's established work, but God also beckons us to create in hope of what is to come. It is a common theological expression to say that we live in the tension between the now and the not yet—that we are fully present in this world, but understand that our final home with God will be in God's coming kingdom.²⁸ Finally, when we create we do so in *collaboration*—collaboration with and for others in the Kingdom. Scholars agree that great ideas are birthed in collaboration, not isolation.²⁹ Even the most seemingly fresh ideas usually come about as the result of already existing information and

²³ Teresa M. Amabile, "Entrepreneurial Creativity Through Motivational Synergy," *Journal of Creative Behavior* 31, no 1 (1997): 20. Tom Kelley and David Kelley argue that people who are creative have a greater impact on the world around them. On creativity they write, "We think of creativity as using your imagination to create something new in the world. Creativity comes into play wherever you have the opportunity to generate new ideas, solutions, or approaches." Tom Kelley and David Kelley, *Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All* (New York: Crown, 2013) ,3. Amabile argues that people exercise entrepreneurial creativity are motivated to do so. She argues that this motivation is mostly intrinsic but also extrinsic at times. Amabile, "Entrepreneurial Creativity," 22. Eric Ries argues that in order to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset within organizations, leaders have to create conditions that help people to experiment. Ries, *The Lean Startup*, Kindle location, 176

²⁴ Amabile, "Entrepreneurial Creativity," 20; Hoffman, *The Start-up of You*, 7.

²⁵ Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 104.

²⁶ Hardy, *The Fabric of this World*, 48.

²⁷Jurgen Moltmann. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and The Spirit of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 54.

²⁸ Moltmann. *God in Creation*, 54.

²⁹ Steven M. Smith , David R. Gerkens, Jami J. Shah, and Noe Vargas-Hernandez, "Empirical Studies of Creative Cognition in Idea Generation," in *Creativity and Innovation in Organizational Teams*, Leigh L. Thompson and Hoon-Seok Choi, eds. (New York: Psychology Press, 2006 4.

structures—often cobbled together over a period of time and sometimes simply formatted in a new way.³⁰ And, because God’s own Trinitarian makeup predicates an understanding of human creativity as collaborative, we can embrace the notion that when we create together we do so with dignity and meaning.

Second, an entrepreneurial posture includes creative confidence, or the confidence to take risks (referred to here and throughout as confidence). The work of Tom and David Kelley helps frames confidence within the context of work and an entrepreneurial posture. The Kelley brothers argue that everyone has creative capacity; the only thing that holds people back is confidence.³¹ Kelley and Kelley name four fears that often prohibit creativity: fear of the messy unknown, fear of being judged, fear of the first step, and fear of losing control.³² Charting one’s own course in work will be unpredictable, nonlinear, and even potentially chaotic. The risks of failure, embarrassment and loss of self-identity can be overwhelming.³³ People often miss out on creative opportunities and expression because of fear of taking the first step. For many people, coming up with ideas is easy; executing them is difficult—so difficult that when we imagine the task in front of us, we give into the sensation of being overwhelmed and resist starting anything at all. Kelley and Kelley speak to this by urging people to start small and start quick.³⁴ They note that we lack creative confidence because we fear losing control. The risk of moving into the unknown comes with it the possibility that although people will be required to chart their own course forward, they will likely not be in control. The Kelley brothers argue that this fear of losing control holds people back from jumping in.³⁵

Finally, an entrepreneurial posture includes resiliency. According to a Harvard Business Review report, resiliency is “a set of personal skills and processes that enable individuals at all levels to reduce stress but perform well under it, learn continuously, and keep their work and life responsibilities in harmony.”³⁶ Resiliency is helpful both for both dealing with the challenges associated with independent work as well as the hope that one’s work would serve as a context in which individuals might create with confidence as a part of their overall flourishing. Independent workers face stress and setbacks in part because they need skills not emphasized in education. Independent workers must adapt quickly and with fluidity in their work. However, independents must also cultivate the ability to know when too much stress threatens to be unhelpful in their

³⁰ Smith, Gerkens, Shah, and Hernandez, “Empirical Studies,” 9; Teresa M. Amabile and Mukti Khaire, “Creativity and the Role of the Leader,” *Harvard Business Review* (October 2008), 104.

³¹ Tom Kelley and David Kelley, *Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All* (New York: Crown, 2013), 2-5.

³² Tom Kelley and David Kelley, “Reclaim Your Creative Confidence,” *Harvard Business Review* (December 2012), 2.

³³ Kelley and Kelley, *Creative Confidence*, 6.

³⁴ Kelley and Kelley, *Creative Confidence*, 7.

³⁵ Kelley and Kelley, *Creative Confidence*, 7.

³⁶ Mindy Bostick and Walt McFarland, “Building Resilience from Disruption,” *Harvard Business Review*, <https://hbr.org/resources/pdfs/comm/northhighland/northhighland9.25.17.pdf>.

overall flourishing.³⁷ Additionally, resiliency is foundational for people's ability to create with confidence as part of their overall flourishing. This is because, as the literature suggests, entrepreneurs experiment often and quickly in order to learn their way forward.³⁸ This aspect of resiliency is captured in an often quoted Thomas Edison idiom, "I haven't failed...I've just found 10,000 ways that do not work."³⁹

Research on Principles and Practices of an Entrepreneurial Posture

In addition to a literature review, the author conducted an original research project with 49 participants for her dissertation. In this mixed methods project, certain core principles and practices emerged as helpful in the formation of an entrepreneurial posture. The principles derived from the data include: *relationships are core to vocational formation; people with an entrepreneurial posture embrace risk and failure; and empathy/listening can lead to creativity.*

Additionally, certain practices⁴⁰ emerged as common to the participants in the study. These practices include: *listening to God; listening to others; listening to self; imagining; risk-*

³⁷ Thomas Chamorro-Premuzic and Derek Lusk, "The Dark Side of Resilience," *Harvard Business Review* (August 16, 2017).

³⁸ The literatures on innovation, entrepreneurship, and creativity suggest that iterative experimentation gives way to learning, which paves the way for meaningful products, ideas, experiences, and even mindsets in the world. For example, see: J. Gregory Dees, Jed Emerson, and Peter Economy, *Enterprising Nonprofits: A Toolkit for Social Enterprise* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2001), 157-159; Jeff Dyer, Hal Gregersen, and Clayton M. Christensen, *The Innovator's DNA: Mastering the Five Skills of Disruptive Innovators* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011), 133-156; Steve Graves, Dave Blanchard, and Josh Kwan, *From Concept to Scale: Creating A Gospel-Minded Organization* (New York: Praxis Media, 2013), 27-28; David S. Kidder with Hanny Hindi, *The Startup Playbook: Secrets of the Fastest-Growing Startups from Their Founding Entrepreneurs* (San Francisco: Chronicle, 2012), 275; Eric Ries: *The Startup Way: How Modern Companies Use Entrepreneurial Management to Transform Culture and Drive Long-Term Growth* (New York: Currency, 2017), 146-185.

³⁹ Thomas Edison quoted in Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen, *The Innovator's DNA*, 139. The quote here has appeared in different forms, many of which are not directly traceable back to Edison. This paragraph is from a biography on Edison captures the essence of the quote: "I found him at a bench about three feet wide and twelve to fifteen feet long, on which there were hundreds of little test cells that had been made up by his corps of chemists and experimenters. He was seated at this bench testing, figuring, and planning. I then learned that he had thus made over nine thousand experiments in trying to devise this new type of storage battery, but had not produced a single thing that promised to solve the question. In view of this immense amount of thought and labor, my sympathy got the better of my judgment, and I said: 'Isn't it a shame that with the tremendous amount of work you have done you haven't been able to get any results?' Edison turned on me like a flash, and with a smile replied: 'Results! Why, man, I have gotten a lot of results! I know several thousand things that won't work.'" Quoted in Frank Lewis Dyer, *Edison: His Life and Inventions* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1910), 340.

⁴⁰ The word practices means different things to different scholars. Gilbert I. Bond writes, "Christian practices are inherently ambiguous. Yet it is precisely in their intrinsic weakness that their strength is located." Gilbert I. Bond, "Liturgy, Ministry, and the Stranger," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, edited by Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). Bond's point is that a lack of fixedness leaves space for transformation. With too rigid of a structure comes a stifling of the Spirit. Although using common terminology, the participants in the present study did not always reflect on their practices in a way that mirrored the criteria for practices set forth by the literature on Christian practices which often includes criteria such as: (1) practices are communally defined and historically rooted within a tradition; (2) practices have internal goods; (3) practices have standards of excellence; and (4) practices shape our loves and longings. Cormode, "Recalibrate," 2. Richard Osmer has a much looser way of framing good practice, which is helpful in that it allows for the ambiguity that Bond references. Osmer suggest that good practice is simply a model of behavior that helps form

taking; and gratitude. For the sake of scope in this paper, the paper will briefly address the principles that emerged and reserve comments about certain practices for the section on entrepreneurial formation method.

Principle One: Relationships are Core to Vocational Formation

The data in the author's dissertation revealed that for the participants in the study, relationships are core to vocational formation. These relationships included connections with mentors, family members, peers, other entrepreneurs, pastors, and church communities. At its heart, this finding is reflective of the common truth that we are, as Brené Brown says, are hardwired for relationship.⁴¹ As Christians, this hardwiring is rooted in having been made in the image of God to exist in relationship with God and with one another. But how exactly do relationships help vocational formation? This section argues that relationships are helpful in vocational formation because relationships form people to follow the Spirit's leading, and relationships catalyze creativity.

Miroslav Volf argues that, in work, we have the opportunity to bear the fruit of God's Spirit, thus living more deeply into our primary call to live as kingdom participants. This is in part because we are made in the image of a relational God and are able to sense the Spirit's leading in community. We are made in the image of a relational God. This, of course, is rooted in the Christian profession of a Triune God. We can therefore understand that God created human beings in the likeness of the Triune God (Gen 1:26). On this, theologian Craig Van Gelder argues that being made in God's image is the most important thing about human design.⁴² This design allows us to accept the profound relational invitation we have in Christ. We are invited into loving communion vertically with this Triune God, but also horizontally with our neighbors (Luke 10:27). Theologian Christine Pohl argues that the best testimony to our having accessed God through Christ is the quality of our life together. She writes, "Jesus risked his reputation and the credibility of his story by tying them to how his followers live and care for one another in community (John 17:20-23)."⁴³ In other words, being made in the image of God is not just a characteristic; it is a commission. Because we image an active, relational, and missional God, we are commissioned to image these qualities.⁴⁴

Additionally, we can sense the Spirit's calling in community. Our communal sensing of the Spirit pertains to both group and individual decisions. We know that God the Father sends Jesus (John 3:16), and that the Father and Jesus send the Spirit (Acts 2). Craig Van Gelder argues that the Spirit sent by the Father and the Son is primary for the community of God. He writes,

present actions. He argues that models of good practice can result in "new understandings of God, the Christian life, and social values." Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 152.

⁴¹ Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are* (Center City: Hazelden, 2010), 19.

⁴² Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 91.

⁴³ Christine D. Pohl, *Living into Community: Practices that Sustain Us* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 2012), Kindle Location 38.

⁴⁴ James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 172.

While the calling, saving, sealing, gifting, and empowering works of the Spirit can be developed biblically from the perspective of the individual, this is not the New Testament's primary focus in defining the relationship between the Spirit and the church. The Bible's focus is not on individual Christians but on the formation of a new type of community, a humanity that is indwelt by the Spirit.⁴⁵

For Van Gelder, the church is always in process and thus is dependent on the Spirit's leading as it seeks to participate in God's mission in the world. This is helpful in that we understand that God both forms the church and forms individuals in an ongoing manner to sense and follow the Spirit.

In addition to forming people to follow the Spirit's leading, relationships are helpful in vocational formation because they can catalyze creativity. Earlier, this paper argued that creativity—rooted in participation, anticipation, and collaboration—is an attribute of an entrepreneurial posture. Whether a person is working as an independent or in a corporation, creativity is key to success in a changing economic context.⁴⁶

Andy Crouch argues that no one ever creates alone.⁴⁷ Reflecting on the concentric circles of Jesus's disciples portrayed in the Bible, Crouch notes that culture making is done in groups. He focuses especially on the biblical examples of groups of 3, 12, and 70.⁴⁸ He suggests that, today, we might prioritize finding a relatively small and intimate group in which to practice creativity.⁴⁹ His position is that, however complex and daunting a context's challenges are, creativity will almost always come from a relatively small and intimate group of people.⁵⁰ One example of such a group is Pixar's Braintrust. The Braintrust exists to help identify and solve problems for upcoming Pixar movies⁵¹ by giving feedback and ideating to as, Ed Catmull puts it,

⁴⁵ To illustrate his point, Van Gelder outlines key imagery used in the New Testament for church: holy temple/dwelling place for God (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph 2:19); living stones in a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5); members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19); and citizens with the saints (Eph 2:19). Van Gelder argues that these passages signify that the church is always in process. Van Gelder, *Essence of the Church*, 112-113.

⁴⁶ On this, Kelley and Kelley write, "One recent IBM survey of more than 1,500 CEOs reports that creativity is the single most important leadership competency for enterprises facing the complexity of global commerce today." Kelley and Kelley, *Creative Confidence*, 4.

⁴⁷ Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 247. Additionally, Steven Johnson argues that ideas are the result of building on the ideas of others. Ideas are never birthed out of the mind of one person; rather, we cobble together the ideas that have preceded us from others. He writes, "but ideas are the works of bricolage; they're built out of that detritus. We take the ideas we've inherited or that we've stumbled across, and we jigger them together into some new shape. We like to think of our ideas as \$40,000 incubators, shipped direct from the factory, but in reality they've been cobbled together with spare parts that happened to be sitting in the garage." Steven Johnson, *Where Good Ideas Come From: That Natural History of Innovation* (New York: Riverhead, 2010), 28.

⁴⁸ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 239.

⁴⁹ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 240. Crouch suggests three as the optimal number for this group, although four or five may also be desirable.

⁵⁰ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 105.

⁵¹ Ed Catmull with Amy Wallace, *Creativity, Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces that Stand in the Way of True Inspiration* (New York, Random House: 2014), 86-87.

help a film move from “suck” to “unsuck.”⁵² It is almost as if the Braintrust holds a story and its tellers through a metamorphic like process of creativity that moves from inception to chaos to finished film.⁵³ The Braintrust works in part because of Pixar’s communal values of trust and candor. The people in the room are fully committed to the community and the story. Rooted in these commitments, participants have learned that candor is the best way to catalyze creativity among one another.

Principle Two: Embracing Risk and Failure

The second principle of an entrepreneurial posture derived from the data is the embrace of risk and failure.⁵⁴ This section argues that embracing risks and failure is helpful for an entrepreneurial posture because risk and failure pave the way for God’s liberating grace, and risk and failure can pave the way for learning.

First, embracing risk and failure pave the way for God’s liberating grace. Twenty-first century American Christians are uncomfortable with failure and therefore risk. People want to have secure solutions and preserve their self-image. Theologian Dwight Zscheile argues that this can manifest as a flight to authority. His point is that people look to leaders to provide quick fixes and solutions that “will get us out of this wilderness and back into what was comfortable and familiar.”⁵⁵ In other words, many people are embedded in a narrative of perfectionism and fear of the implications of mistakes. Fear of failure stunts relationships, opportunity, creativity, and our sense to bravely follow the Spirit’s leading to embody justice and shalom. Kelley and Kelley note that the biggest hurdle in overcoming the fear of judgment is resisting the urge to judge one’s self.⁵⁶ This fear of judgment is rooted in our inability to deal with shame, limits our embracing risk and failure in our vocations.⁵⁷ But because embracing risk and failure have been widely cited as precedents for innovation,⁵⁸ it is important for the church to cultivate a culture that faces shame and judgment.

⁵² Catmull with Wallace, *Creativity, Inc.*, 90.

⁵³ Catmull with Wallace, *Creativity, Inc.*, 91. When I use the term “holding” here, it is to deliberately reference the work of D.W. Winnicott and Ronald Heifetz. Heifetz defines a holding environment as a psychological space that is safe enough to confront deeply held assumptions but challenging enough to be motivated toward change. The concept originates with psychologist D.W. Winnicott.

⁵⁴ The previous chapter summarized this theme citing data from the research, but in summary, embracing risk and failure are evident in how participants in stage one of the research ranked the helpfulness of risk-taking and failure. Of the seven practices ranked most helpful overall (when responses of “very helpful” and “somewhat helpful” were counted together), risk-taking was ranked third out of twenty-three and failure was ranked fourth out of twenty-three. Additionally, the practice of learning, which the entrepreneurs in stage two of the research linked to failure, was ranked second of twenty-three. In the second stage of the research, this theme presented in that participants were comfortable talking about failure and participants linked risk taking, failure, and learning together—seemingly talking about the benefits of failure.

⁵⁵ Dwight Zscheile, *The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age* (New York, Morehouse: 2014), 60.

⁵⁶ Kelley and Kelley, *Creative Confidence*, 6.

⁵⁷ Zscheile, *Agile Church*, 92.

The church can do this in part by helping people leaning into grace in moments of failure and or shame. In an interview with the Work of the People, Researcher Brené Brown reflects on how the parable of the workers in the vineyard is both a bitter pill for her to swallow and yet a crucial model of God’s grace for humankind.⁵⁹ Her point is that in a world that prioritizes earning and perfectionism, God’s radical grace is extended only on the merit that we are God’s beloved. God’s grace is at the heart of both the creation of the world and the climactic event of our faith.⁶⁰ God’s grace does more than simply permit failure and any ensuing shame. God’s grace promises to liberate through new life. In that grace, we find a hope that outweighs the fear that so often accompanies failure. Embracing God’s grace is the path to facing shame. Embracing God’s grace is the path to withholding self-judgment and thus more easily being able to embrace risk.

Risk taking and failure can also lead to learning. Learning is at the heart of what it means to be an entrepreneur. This sections outlines that risk and failure can lead to learning. Such learning will be discussed through the model of prototyping.

Design thinking teaches that prototyping is the process of moving ideas from our heads into the physical world.⁶¹ Prototypes are quick versions of a product or idea—something to increase empathy, promote exploration, test, and learn.⁶² In the context of design thinking, Stanford’s d.school explains that a “prototype is anything in physical form—be it a wall of post-it notes, a role-playing activity, a space, an object, an interface, or even a storyboard.”⁶³ According to the founders of Praxis Labs, an incubator for gospel-minded entrepreneurs, prototyping is the “intentional use of resources to answer outstanding questions.”⁶⁴ Bill Burnett and Dave Evans argue that people should even engage in prototyping their lives. They point out that most people, when approaching their work, default to the belief that if they research the best plan, they will achieve success. Instead, these authors suggest that people should build prototypes to explore questions.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Ed Catmull discusses at length about the need to embrace fear and failure. Like the Kelley brothers, he believes that much of our shame around failure comes from our days in school. However, he sees the freedom to fail as a key component of Pixar’s creativity and success. This is largely because the process of developing something great is a process of discovery, a journey that people must feel safe to embark on. Catmull with Wallace, *Creativity, Inc.*, 106-128.

⁵⁹ The Work of the People, “Grace is not Attractive,” interview with Brené Brown, accessed January 20, 2018, <http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/grace-is-not-attractive>.

⁶⁰ Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry: Forming Leaders for God’s People* (Louisville: Westminster, 1997), 52-53.

⁶¹ d.school, “Bootcamp Bootleg,” Hasso Planter Institute of Design at Stanford, accessed February 12, 2018, <http://longevity3.stanford.edu/designchallenge2015/files/2013/09/Bootleg.pdf>, 8.

⁶² d.school, “Bootcamp Bootleg,” 8.

⁶³ d.school, “Bootcamp Bootleg,” 4.

⁶⁴ Graves, Blanchard, and Kwan, *From Concept to Scale*, 28.

⁶⁵ Bill Burnett and Dave Evans, *Designing Your Life: How To Build A Well-Lived, Joyful Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), 111.

So, how does one prototype their vocation? Burnett and Evans suggest two ways to prototype: conversation and experiences. First, they offer a model for conversation that they call a Life Design Interview.⁶⁶ The purpose of a Life Design Interview is to collect someone's story and mentally try it on for size. The point is to interview people who have a career one is imagining having—or, put in the language of vocation, someone who appears to have a similar call as the interviewer. In a process of discerning work, one would be wise to conduct dozens of Life Design Interviews. The brilliance of these prototyping interviews is twofold. First, the goal of the process is listening and empathy—two practices that can catalyze creativity. Second, the nature of conducting many interviews allows for iterative learning (which is the next theme in this section; reflections on these practices will be reserved until then).

Next, Burnett and Evans suggest prototyping experiences.⁶⁷ In this, they demonstrate how prototyping is not only helpful for products, but also other aspects of work and life. Because their focus is on careers, they offer examples such as shadowing someone at work, a one-week unpaid project, or an internship.⁶⁸ This concept of prototyping is congruent with the praxis-theory-praxis rhythm found in practical theology. Because this dissertation is a work of practical theology, it assumes that the formation of an entrepreneurial posture starts with experimentation, moves to reflection, and returns to experimentation.⁶⁹

Principle Three: Empathy/Listening can Lead to Creativity

The third principle of an entrepreneurial posture is that empathy can lead to creativity. This section will address two questions: What is empathy? And how does it lead to creativity? First, though empathy is a word used widely, it is important to unpack. Mark Lau Branson and Juan Martinez describe empathy in this way, “Empathy requires the bracketing of our own perceptions and emotions in an effort to problematize and enter into the world of another.”⁷⁰ Through the work of researcher Brené Brown, the concept of empathy will be further defined here. Then, through the frameworks and processes of design thinking, we will explore how empathy can lead to creativity.

Brené Brown has researched shame and developed seminal theories on bravery and wholehearted people. Woven into several of her books are the concepts of compassion and empathy. Thus, in order to understand empathy, we must understand compassion. On

⁶⁶ Burnett and Evans, *Designing Your Life*, 111.

⁶⁷ For additional literature on prototyping, see Tom Kelley with Jonathan Littman, *The Art of Innovation: Lessons in Creativity from IDEO, America's Leading Design Firm* (New York: Currency, 2001), 101-118; Tim Brown, *Change By Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation* (New York: Harper Business, 2009), 87-108.

⁶⁸ Burnett and Evans, *Designing Your Life*, 118.

⁶⁹ Zscheile writes about disciplines for an agile church, one of which is improvisation. He likens improvisation to jazz music. In jazz there are basic rules—melody, rhythm or song—that set the basis for a group of musicians to improvise together. He suggests that a church learn to trust the Spirit in a way that allows them to improvise. Zscheile, *Agile Church*, 107-109.

⁷⁰ Branson and Martinez, *Churches, Cultures, Leadership*, 199.

compassion, Brown roots her definition in the work of Buddhist nun Pema Chödrön. Brown's book *The Gifts of Imperfection* quotes Chödrön, saying, "When we practice generating compassion, we can expect to experience the fear of our pain. Compassion practice is daring. It involves learning to relax and allow ourselves to move gently toward what scares us."⁷¹ Brown explains that her research participants taught her that the heart of compassion is acceptance. She writes, "The better we are at accepting ourselves and others, the more compassionate we become."⁷² She goes on to argue that people are able to be most compassionate when they have good boundaries.⁷³ Allowing others to cross boundaries prevents people's future ability to be compassionate.

Brown argues that compassion is important for people because we are wired for connection.⁷⁴ Leaning on the work of Daniel Goleman, Brown argues that connectedness (or lack thereof) to other people influences how the brain develops and functions.⁷⁵ Empathy then, is the skill set that brings compassion alive.⁷⁶ Brown argues that the skill of empathy has four qualities: perspective taking; staying out of judgment; recognizing emotion in others; and communicating understanding.⁷⁷ Because Brown understands empathy as a skill, she encourages intentional practice of it, especially by asking good questions and taking the time to listen. Furthermore, Brown encourages mutually empathetic relationships as a way to combat shame and live into resiliency.⁷⁸ In other words, empathy can help people build capacities to deal with setbacks and

⁷¹ Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, 15; Pema Chödrön, *The Places That Scare You: A Guide To Fearlessness in Difficult Times* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2001).

⁷² Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, 16

⁷³ Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, 16

⁷⁴ Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, 19

⁷⁵ Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, 19.

⁷⁶ The Work of the People, "Boundaries with Brené Brown," interview with Brené Brown, accessed January 20, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSbOlas6jFc>.

⁷⁷ The RSA, "Brené Brown on Empathy," accessed January 20, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEvwgu369Jw>. Brown roots her understanding in the frameworks of Teresa Wiseman. See Teresa Wiseman, "A Concept Analysis of Empathy," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 23.6 (June 1996): 1162-1167. These aspects are congruent with researcher Daniel Goleman's frameworks of empathy. Daniel Goleman parses empathy into three categories. First, cognitive empathy is a mental practice that Harper Lee's Atticus Finch would suggest: trying to walk a mile in someone else's shoes. This is most congruent with Brown's first quality of empathy. Second, Goleman argues that social empathy is an internal sense of what someone else is going through. This is congruent with Brown's third quality of empathy. Goleman's third category is empathetic concern, which goes beyond feeling with someone and involves being motivated to help. "Daniel Goleman on Three Kinds of Empathy," *Super Soul Sunday*, Oprah Winfrey Network, accessed January 20, 2018, <http://www.oprah.com/own-super-soul-sunday/daniel-goleman-on-the-three-kinds-of-empathy-video>. See also Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004).

⁷⁸ Brené Brown, "Shame Resilience Theory: A Grounded Theory Study on Women and Shame." *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 87, no. 1 (2006), 43-52. Brown argues that shame resilience can be cultivated by recognizing and accepting personal vulnerability; raising critical awareness regarding social/cultural expectations; forming mutually empathetic relationships that facilitate reaching out to others; and speaking shame.

overcome failure. Brown writes that mutually empathetic relationships are about “mutual support, shared experiences, and the freedom and ability to explore and create new options.”⁷⁹ This exploration—and thus empathy—paves the way for not only creativity but also confidence and resiliency.

Next, how does empathy lead to creativity? The frameworks and processes of design thinking are helpful here. The Kelley brothers explain that design thinking is a tool for “finding human needs and creating new solutions using the tools and mindsets of design practitioners.”⁸⁰ The goal of design thinking is innovation—an outcome rooted in creativity. Empathy is at the start of human-centered design thinking and processes.⁸¹ Although design thinking is never linear and never rigid, it is helpful to discuss the five movements of design thinking to understand how empathy fits in. The four movements are to empathize, define, ideate, and implement.⁸² Because design thinking centers on human problems, empathy is the root of inspiration.⁸³ In this primary activity, empathy is the “work you do to understand people, within the context of your design challenge. It is your effort to understand the way they do things and why, their physical and emotional needs, how they think about the world, and what is meaningful to them.”⁸⁴ Observing people in real life situations helps designers understand what they care about and what they need. Engaging people through observation (and not just conversation) unlocks learning in that people are not always able to articulate their needs.⁸⁵

The second activity is to define.⁸⁶ In this activity, designers work to understand patterns observed through empathy as well as draw connections to the market, clients, and technology. In this phase, it is common to move from concrete to abstract to narrative and back to concrete again.⁸⁷ The next and third activity is to ideate. In this stage, designers produce as many ideas as possible come up with lots of ideas. Resourcing tools like group or individual brainstorming, the idea is to go wide and think of every possibility. Even though designers usually do not follow the most outlandish ideas to fruition, they are important to work through. Judgment is the enemy of

⁷⁹ Brown, “Shame Resilience Theory,” 47.

⁸⁰ Kelley and Kelley, *Creative Confidence*, 24-25.

⁸¹ Hasso Planter Institute of Design at Stanford, “An Introduction to Design Thinking Process Guide,” accessed January 20, 2018, <https://dschool-old.stanford.edu/sandbox/groups/designresources/wiki/36873/attachments/74b3d/ModeGuideBOOTCAMP2010L.pdf>.

⁸² Design thinking manifests itself in different processes. Because they all use slightly different language to talk about similar concepts, I have synthesized their frameworks into four activities: empathize, define, ideate, and implement. Another noteworthy design process not synthesized above is the Google Sprint process, meant to produce a product in a very short period of time. Its steps include mapping, sketching, deciding, prototyping, and testing. See Knapp with Zeratsky and Kowitz, *Sprint*.

⁸³ Brown, *Change by Design*, 40.

⁸⁴ Hasso Planter Institute of Design at Stanford, “An Introduction to Design Thinking Process Guide.”

⁸⁵ Kelley and Kelley, *Creative Confidence*, 22.

⁸⁶ “Bootcamp Bootleg,” d.school, 2.

⁸⁷ Kelley and Kelley, *Creative Confidence*, 23.

creativity in the ideation phase. The point is to push beyond the obvious, unlocking the potential for innovation.⁸⁸

The fourth activity is to prototype, which involves building, evaluating, and refining prototypes through a fast-paced iterative process. Prototyping helps designers continue to build empathy for customers and to explore, tangibly moving from imagination to reality.⁸⁹ The fifth activity is testing, which helps designers obtain feedback. In design thinking, it is thought better to build five quick and dirty prototypes for five rounds of testing than one beautiful prototype for one round of testing. The more iterations and feedback there are, the better the final outcome.⁹⁰ This dynamic is true for teams creating products and for individual people iterating their own sense of vocation.

Design thinking teaches that empathy is at the heart of how people create, especially with others in mind. Empathy can lead to creativity. This is especially true if people put forth the effort address what holds them back from being able to empathize with others—things like shame and perfectionism. Like other attributes of an entrepreneurial posture, growing skills in empathy should be thought of as an ongoing process.

Entrepreneurial Formation Method

Here, the paper turns to describe an original method intended for use in congregations and Christian education. The method is called the *entrepreneurial formation method* and is original to the author. The author developed the entrepreneurial formation method from principles and practices of an entrepreneurial posture (that extend beyond the scope of this paper) that emerged from her dissertation research. The process that ensues is meant to serve as a framework. Within the method are both the freedom and hope that congregational leaders and Christian educators might contextualize it to suit the particular needs of a community.

⁸⁸ d.school, “Bootcamp Bootleg,” 3.

⁸⁹ d.school, “Bootcamp Bootleg,” 4.

⁹⁰ This list combines activities from IDEO and Stanford’s d.school. Tom Kelley defines the details of the work at IDEO, a leading design firm in innovation, as understanding, observation, visualization, evaluation and refinement, and implementation (*The Art of Innovation*, 6-7). Tom and David Kelley’s book *Creative Confidence* lists the following phases: inspiration, synthesis, ideation and experimentation, and implementation (22-24).

Stanford’s d.school uses empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test as their activities. In addition to this five-step process Stanford’s d.school increasingly emphasizes the abilities of design thinking, alongside the activities involved in it. These skills include navigating ambiguity (“the ability to name and navigate in the midst of not knowing”); learn from others (“the ability to empathize with and embrace diverse points of view, new ideas, and unfamiliar contexts”); synthesizing information: the ability to make sense of divergent information and to find insight and potential within the different ideas; rapidly experimenting (“the ability to quickly generate ideas and to make the ideas come to life”); moving between concrete and abstract (“the ability to understand stakeholders as well as zooming in and out on the technical aspects of a product’s features”); intentional building and crafting (“the ability to thoughtfully build and show work at levels that make sense for the audience and product”); communicating deliberately (“the ability to form ideas, capture stories, and tell them to audiences”); and designing one’s design work (“the ability to frame a problem as a design challenge and resource the appropriate people”). Carissa Carter, “Let’s Stop Talking about THE Design Process,” October 6, 2016, Stanford d.school, accessed February 10, 2018, <https://medium.com/stanford-d-school/lets-stop-talking-about-the-design-process-7446e52c13e8>.

In addition and similar to these frameworks, the Google Sprint offers a method for design thinking in a five-day process that moves through the activities of mapping, sketching, deciding, prototyping and testing (see Knapp with Zeratsky and Kowitz, *Sprint*).

However, for as varied as the method might become in different contexts, there are four underlying principles embedded in the process that congregational leaders and Christian educators should work to keep central. These include relationships as central to vocational formation; the praxis-theory-praxis approach to learning; practices as helpful for forming an entrepreneurial posture; and a bias toward quick, iterative learning.

First, any application of the method can structure into it the principle that relationships are part of vocational formation. The previous chapter argued that relationships are core to vocational formation because both form us to follow the Spirit's leading and also catalyze creativity. Thus, people who go through the process together are an *entrepreneurial formation group*. Additionally, although the method does not require that a leader facilitate the process, the process assumes that because change is involved, the process and the participants would benefit from the presence of a leader. Thus, this chapter will assume the presence of a leader in iterations of the entrepreneurial formation method.

Next, any application of an entrepreneurial formation method should follow the rhythm of praxis-theory-praxis learning. This is because the goal of Christian learning can be framed as *lived* Christian faith.⁹¹ In other words, what we do matters. Praxis-theory-praxis, the move from our experiences to theoretical information back to our experiences, is based on this assumption that we approach new theoretical materials not as “blank slates,” but as beings already in possession of certain mental models and life experiences.⁹²

Third, working to contextualize an entrepreneurial formation method assumes that practices can help form an entrepreneurial posture. James K.A. Smith argues that our habits calibrate our loves.⁹³ We are calibrated toward what our actions have taught us to love. Practices are not simply something activities *we do*. They also do something *to us*.⁹⁴ Therefore, any application of an entrepreneurial formation method should include practices.

Finally, the entrepreneurial formation method has a bias toward quick, iterative learning. The literature on design thinking—a process intended to catalyze innovation—teaches that doing is better than thinking. The goal of learning is to move iteratively through trial and error, success and failure. In this, problems, strengths, and new questions present themselves. Therefore, an entrepreneurial formation process seeks to move quickly and iteratively through movements, rather than work toward perfectly planned or executed tasks.

The entrepreneurial formation method is original to the author's dissertation. The method includes five stages. The stages are (1) the brief; (2) empathy; (3) imagination; (4) risk; and (5) reflection. Each stage is discussed in detail below. With the exception of the first stage, the researcher developed the model from the principles and practices of an entrepreneurial posture that emerged from the normative task of Osmer's method. In this method, participants are meant to cycle through each of the five stages multiple times as part of a singular vocational formation

⁹¹ Groome writes, “In its most complete expression, *lived* Christian faith is the action of agent-subjects who through an interdependent community of Christian faith engage in a threefold dynamic of historical activities: *believing, trusting, and doing* God's will.” Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry, the Way of Shared Praxis* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 18.

⁹² Mark Lau Branson, “Critical Reflection on Praxis: A Theoretical Framework for Reflection,” Working paper, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, 1.

⁹³ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 19.

⁹⁴ Craig Dykstra, *Growing in Life of Faith* (Louisville: Westminster, 2005), 56.

process. Stage one is meant to catalyze the process, and stages two through four follow the rhythm of action-reflection-action-reflection. With the exception of the first each stage emerges in part as a result of the original data and reflection presented in chapters five and six. Stage one is a mechanism intended to catalyze the work of stages two through five. This is a mechanism used commonly in business, including design thinking—a process that promotes innovation. Because chapter six offered theological reflection on the themes embedded in this method, this section will focus on helping congregational leaders and Christian educators to imagine how they might implement the method in their context.

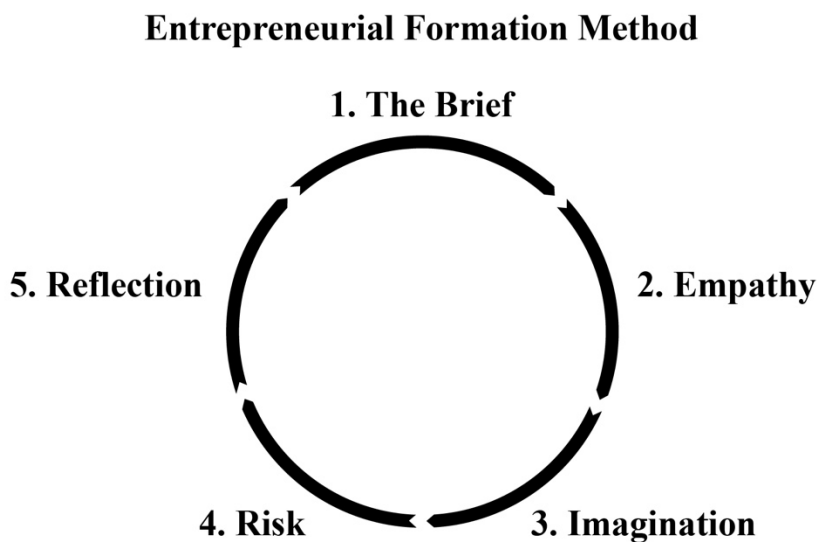


Figure 1. O’Donnell Long’s Entrepreneurial Formation Method

Stage One: The Brief

The entrepreneurial formation method begins with a brief, what designers and businesspeople use to understand the scope of a project. Tim Brown of IDEO writes, “The brief is a set of mental constraints that gives the project team a framework from which to begin.”⁹⁵ The goal of the brief is to provide direction and some structure to a project’s process. Briefs can be posed as either a problem or question, to⁹⁶ set the stage for exploration and problem-solving. Briefs should be specific enough that people can work quickly toward possible solutions but also open enough that people feel both the freedom and motivation to experiment their way forward. Brown writes, “A well-constructed brief will allow for serendipity, unpredictability, and the capricious whims of fate, for that is the creative realm from which break-through ideas emerge.”⁹⁷ In an entrepreneurial formation process, briefs exist to catalyze particular experiments intended to help people think and act like entrepreneurs.

⁹⁵ Tim Brown, *Change By Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation* (New York: Harper Business, 2009), 22.

⁹⁶ Kelley and Kelley, *Creative Confidence*, 28.

⁹⁷ Brown, *Change By Design*, 23.

Because the goal of the entrepreneurial formation method is for participants to adopt an entrepreneurial posture, briefs should help people cultivate the skills of creativity, confidence, and resiliency by engaging in empathy, imagining, risk-taking and reflection. With iteration as an embedded priority (see above), briefs can serve as a catalyst for participants cycling through each of the movements several times. As another option, participants may find value in moving through the entire process multiple times, each time focusing on a different brief. This choice is up to the congregational leader, Christian educator, and/or the entrepreneurial formation group. In both cases, briefs should be limited enough in scope that they can be experimented with in a relatively short amount of time. This way, in the context of any given entrepreneurial formation method, a congregation leader or Christian educator can direct participants in several divergent directions with the intent to weave the skills practiced into convergent meaning making.

Additionally, briefs can take on either an individual or a group form, meaning that sometimes participants will work through briefs on their own while other times the entrepreneurial formation group will work through briefs together. However, even when individuals work through briefs independently, the process intends for stages two and five (imagining and reflection) to happen in the context of the entrepreneurial formation group.

Sample Briefs for Groups:

- Start a project/business that will solve a neighborhood problem.
- Develop a strategic partnership with another organization in the community.
- Reinvent the worship service at your church.

Sample Briefs for Individuals:

- Re-write your job description.
- Build a side-hustle business in which you can earn at least \$500 a month.
- Design a networking experience for people in your field/desired field/jobs you admire.

Stage Two: Empathy

After briefs are solidified, the second stage of the entrepreneurial formation method is for participants to intentionally practice empathy. The author leans on Brené Brown's framework for empathy: perspective-taking, staying out of judgment, recognizing emotion in others, and communicating understanding.⁹⁸

First, participants can work to take the perspective of another. Mark Lau Branson argues that embedded in empathy is the assumption that other people think and feel differently than each other. By working to “bracket their own perceptions and emotions, [attempting] to see the experiences through the eyes and feelings of others,”⁹⁹ participants may learn new information about a problem, context, and/or themselves. Observing people in real-life situations, collecting stories, and asking questions can all help participants learn about the brief at hand.

In working to take the perspective of another, participants can also work to stay out of judgment. Brené Brown encourages people to ask good questions and take the time to listen.

⁹⁸ The RSA, “Brené Brown on Empathy.”

⁹⁹ Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez, *Churches, Cultures, Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Leadership* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 2011), 199.

Instead of judgment, Brown encourages recognizing emotion in others through the act of compassion. She argues that people resist compassion, sometimes by defaulting to judgment, because compassion requires people to feel their own pain.¹⁰⁰ However, for Brown, acceptance is only reached through the heart of compassion.

Finally, participants can work to communicate the understanding, first with the person or group participants are intentionally working to listen to in response to their brief. Communicating one's understanding in this way means reflecting back to the community with which one is empathizing whatever insights one has developed to this point in the entrepreneurial formation process, probably verbally or in an informal conversation. This also includes space for those with whom one is empathizing to validate or reject the insights of the one empathizing. This helps participants gauge their interpretive skills. In addition to communicating the understanding back to those one is listening to, participants can communicate what they understood to the entrepreneurial formation group. Processing with the group allows for additional feedback.¹⁰¹

Stage Three: Imagination

After participants work to intentionally empathize, the next stage in the entrepreneurial formation method is imagination. Imagining helps people access and name the deeply seeded internal pictures of how they imagine the world should be.¹⁰² James K.A. Smith writes, "Our ultimate love is oriented by and to a picture of what we think it looks like for us to live well, and that picture then governs, shapes, and motivates our decisions and actions."¹⁰³ The goal of this stage is for participants to intentionally practice imagining in light of the empathy stage. This includes attention to the internal pictures already within people, as well as collective imagination in an ongoing attempt for an entrepreneurial formation group to orient their activity to the Spirit's guidance. The goal of imagination is to imagine multiple ways forward, not just one. The next stage, risk-taking, will encourage participants to narrow. In this stage, the goal is to keep options open. As participants work to imagine, the role of the group is to co-imagine, help sense the Spirit, and serve as a sounding board for individuals. There will be natural ebb and flow between these roles as different strategies for imagining are enacted.

One specific strategy for imagining is brainstorming. While brainstorming is used widely in business, Tom Kelley argues that it is undervalued in the larger culture. He suggests that the way toward a great idea is by having many ideas, and the way to have many ideas is to brainstorm.¹⁰⁴ He starts by describing what brainstorming is not: it is not a regular meeting or a

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, 15.

¹⁰¹ For examples of how entrepreneurs enact empathy to find solutions see Martin and Osberg, *Getting Beyond Better*; and Richard Pascale, Jerry Sternin, and Monique Sternin, *The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2010).

¹⁰² Smith describes three models of humans: humans as thinkers, humans as believers, and humans as lovers. He argues that the first two models are insufficient for understanding how humans orient action and thus how Christian education can seek to form people. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 46.

¹⁰³ James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, Baker: 2009), 53.

¹⁰⁴ Kelley and Littman, *The Art of Innovation*, 55.

formal presentation to take notes on. People do not speak in an orderly fashion or for long amounts of time.¹⁰⁵ Instead, good brainstorming sessions start with a well-articulated purpose and are playful, so that people can work to leverage one another's insights.¹⁰⁶ The point of brainstorming is to help stretch mental muscles. Brainstorming can also be a way to creatively engage and discern God's Spirit. Chapter six presented a framework for discernment in which people test out different options, working to sense the Spirit's leading. Brainstorming is a way to enhance options and widen a group or individual's imagination of the dynamic presence of the Spirit in any given context.

Stage Four: Risk

After practicing empathy and imagining, participants move to stage four in the entrepreneurial formation method, risk. Taking risks hinges on the ability to let go. Tom Kelley and David Kelley write, "It takes courage to leave the land of certain outcomes and the comfort of what we know to try a new approach or share a wild idea."¹⁰⁷ Although risk can take multiple forms, in the entrepreneurial formation method, risk takes the form of an experiment. The assumption in doing experiments is that they will teach participants about the brief, themselves, and help invite new questions. Because what we do affects what we think, this method anticipates that experiments can change people.¹⁰⁸ Alan Roxburgh writes, "One cannot predict upfront what experiments will do to people's imaginations."¹⁰⁹

One model for experimentation is prototyping. Design thinking teaches that prototyping is the process of expressing imagined mental ideas in the real world.¹¹⁰ Prototypes are quick versions of a product or idea—something to increase empathy, promote exploration, test and learn.¹¹¹ Participants can engage in prototyping within the entrepreneurial formation method by either building actual physical things or by doing as Burnett and Evans suggest and "building" prototype elements of their lives, to explore questions and possibilities.¹¹²

Stage Five: Reflection

The final stage of the entrepreneurial formation method is reflection. Reflection is an opportunity for participants to reflect on what they have learned with gratitude, rooted in

¹⁰⁵ Kelley and Littman, *The Art of Innovation*, 56.

¹⁰⁶ Kelley and Littman, *The Art of Innovation*, 56-59.

¹⁰⁷ Kelley and Kelley, *Creative Confidence*, 57.

¹⁰⁸ Dykstra, *Growing in the Faith*, 56.

¹⁰⁹ Roxburgh, *The Missional Leader*, 101.

¹¹⁰ d.school, "Bootcamp Bootleg," 8.

¹¹¹ d.school, "Bootcamp Bootleg," 8.

¹¹² Burnett and Evans, *Designing Your Life*, 111.

listening to God together and listening to themselves. Each of these categories of reflective listening helps a group or individual shape the next iteration of the entrepreneurial formation process. First, participants can work to reflect on their learning with gratitude. For Christians, gratitude stems from appreciating and embodying the costly grace of God in the form of Jesus Christ.¹¹³ Pohl argues that gratitude is a posture for life—a response that frees us to accept people for who they are and relish what God has given us.¹¹⁴ Gratitude for both success and failure is at the heart of an entrepreneurial posture. In success, the glory goes to God. In failure, Pohl writes, “Gratitude involves knowing that we are held secure by a loving God, and that the God we worship is trustworthy, despite the nearly unbearable sorrow we might encounter along the way.”¹¹⁵

Next, participants can work to listen to God together. Earlier, this chapter argued that leaders should work to guide communal interpretation. While the leader does have a role in this step, the burden of responsibility for discerning God together falls to the entrepreneurial formation group members. Rooted in a posture of reflection, participants can work with one another to make meaning of episodes, situations, and contexts. Branson argues that people have within them the collective ability to participate with God’s work in the world.¹¹⁶ Therefore, they have the ability to collectively discern God’s Spirit, who leads and equips for the work they are sent to do.

Finally, participants can practice listening to themselves. Barton writes, “There comes a time in the spiritual life when one of the major things God is up to is to lovingly help us see ourselves more clearly.”¹¹⁷ Self-reflection is the ability to look at the past to understand what happened and how one’s own presence affects an episode or situation.¹¹⁸ One such model for listening to one’s self is the practice of *examen* of consciousness rooted in Psalm 139. Barton outlines the practice as involving the following steps: (1) preparation (spending time in silence to allow one’s self to be still before God); (2) invitation (inviting God’s presence in the process of search for self-discovery); (3) reviewing the day (asking, “How was God present with me today? What promptings did I notice? How did I respond or not respond?”);¹¹⁹ (4) give thanks (thanking God for each part of the day, and especially for God’s presence); and (5) confess (inviting God to bring to mind things that need confession).¹²⁰

¹¹³ Pohl, *Living into Community*, Kindle location 328.

¹¹⁴ Pohl, *Living into Community*, Kindle locations 345-347.

¹¹⁵ Pohl, *Living into Community*, Kindle location 517.

¹¹⁶ Branson and Martinez, *Churches, Cultures, Leadership*, 56.

¹¹⁷ Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2009), 91.

¹¹⁸ Scott Cormode, “Leading My Self and Building Our Team,” *The Next Faithful Step*, Fuller Theological Seminary, accessed January 10, 2018, http://leadership.fuller.edu/Leadership/Resources/Part_1__Leading_My_Self_and_Building_Our_Team.aspx.

¹¹⁹ Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 95.

¹²⁰ Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 108.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that because the world of work is changing to include more independent workers, the church must recalibrate to include an emphasis on an entrepreneurial posture as it seeks to form people for vocation. By engaging in the entrepreneurial formation method, participants can practice thinking and acting like entrepreneurs. In this, they can take steps toward adopting an entrepreneurial posture.

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