

**Necessary Endings**  
**By Dr. Henry Cloud**  
**Summary Written by Mark Elliott\***

Dr. Henry Cloud is probably best known in church circles for his co-authorship of *Boundaries* with Dr. John Townsend. For those who attended the 2011 Willow Creek Summit, Dr. Cloud's presentation on *The Evil, the Foolish and the Wise* is an oral presentation of Chapter 7 in this book. In *Necessary Endings*, Cloud uses several excellent metaphors to explain the various dynamics of what is involved in initiating individual and organizational transitions in a timely and appropriate manner.

***Chapter 1—Endings: The Good Cannot Begin Until the Bad Ends:*** The first chapter provides an overview for the book both in its content and its title.

1. “real leaders have to...make the hard decisions” (4).  
Q: When was the last time you were called upon to make a “hard decision”?  
How would you describe the experience?
  
2. “Whether we like it or not, endings are part of life...for us to ever get to a new level, a new tomorrow, or the next step, *something* has to end” (6).  
Q: When was the last time you were given the opportunity either in your personal life or in your ministry role to say yes or no to additional responsibilities or to something new?  
Q: Did you take time to evaluate the opportunity, and did you base your decision on your previously established priorities? Or did you just say yes and add it onto your to-do list?
  
3. “Some endings are not a next natural step but are just as necessary...They come about not in pursuit of growth or the next level, but because something has gone wrong. It's been said that some things die and some things need to be killed” (7).  
Q: In your ministry setting, how often do you “pull the plug” on an activity, a program, a leader, etc. that has outlived its effectiveness?
  
4. “In the personal realm, we can get stuck in situations or relationships that are hurtful, problematic, or toxic and must be ended. Or sometimes it is not relationships we need to end but behaviors—destructive patterns and practices that hold us back (7-8).

Q: Today, which is a greater need in your life: to end a relationship or to change a personal behavior? Explain.

5. On page 9 he lists a number of reasons why we avoid endings. Great rationalization material—as if we really need more. However he hits the bottom line on page 11 when he states, “The real reason is this: *Something about the leader’s personal makeup gets in their way.*” And then he hammers home the point and the need to read the rest of the book when he states, “When we fail to end things well, *we are destined to repeat the mistakes that keep us from moving on* (12).

Q: How would you rate your overall comfort & practice of executing necessary endings?

**Chapter 2—Pruning: Growth Depends on Getting Rid of the Unwanted or the Superfluous:** This chapter utilizes the analogy of pruning and then lays out the first of three steps that Cloud identifies in the process of having a clearer vision for identifying when a situation requires a necessary ending. Chapter 3 and 4 lay out the subsequent steps with chapter 5 providing a summary as well as a challenge to step up and prune when necessary.

1. “The gardener intentionally and purposefully cuts off branches and buds that fall into any of three categories:
  1. Healthy buds or branches that are not the best ones.
  2. Sick branches that are not going to get well, and
  3. Dead branches that are taking up space needed for the healthy ones to thrive” (15-16)...

...In the simple word pruning is the central theme of what a necessary ending is all about: *Removing whatever it is in our business or life whose reach is unwanted or superfluous*” (17-18).

Q: On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the best, how good are you at prioritizing your time and resources?

Q: Is your natural tendency to expect the best even after you’ve experienced multiple disappointments or are you quick to cut your losses and move on—or maybe too quick?

Q: Do you have anyone around you who lost their effectiveness years ago, but is still occupying a position of leadership in your ministry?

2. Cloud calls the first step in identifying a necessary ending as a “Gut Check”. He says, “ask yourself a few questions. Really ask. And if you are doing this with your team, ask those questions together:

- What is your intellectual response to the idea of pruning? Do you affirm or question the three kinds of pruning described above...If you are on a team, are you all in the same place on the issue? If not where is the misalignment?
  - What is your emotional response to the idea of pruning?...Does it feel mean or uncaring when people are involved? Does it make you anxious in some way? Is it energizing?...If you are on a team, how do your emotional responses differ from that of other team members? (19)
3. Having experienced two hip replacement surgeries, I can relate very well to Clouds challenge that we must be able to differentiate between hurt and harm. Believe me having hip replacement surgery has a high degree of “hurt” associated with it, but the surgeries have clearly helped me not harmed me in the long run. Cloud defines them this way: “Harm is when you damage someone. Facing reality is usually not a damaging experience, even though it can hurt.” (21)
- Q: As you work with people who are clearly underperforming, how would you compare and contrast the ideas of hurt and harm?
4. Cloud suggests, “There are only three possible results” of letting someone know they are not right for a position, and “two of them are good.”
1. First, if they find out that they were not performing, they may get better...and turn into someone who can achieve...So you helped them face the truth about themselves and get better.
  2. Second, it may be that they are just miscast. And they need to find that out...You helped them get off a road of failure and onto one of success.
  3. ...third...they do not see that they need to improve or that they are trying to do something they are not cut out for and they blame you or the company for their failure and go away bitter...If that happens, you find out that your had someone in a key position who was probably not a learner...and you have protected the company and yourself from their effects going forward.
- It is sad but true that some people just cannot face the truth when it causes them discomfort, *but that cannot be a reason that guides your decisions.*” (22-23)
- Q: Can you describe a time when you have experienced each of these three results?
5. Cloud points out that both churches and individuals will begin, gather, and have more activities than they can reasonably sustain (25). This reality speaks to the challenge of prioritization. What are the MOST important things in your life?
- Q: As you look at your personal calendar how well does it reflect your stated priorities?

Q: Now look at your church's activities. What activities don't match your priorities?

6. "The very nature of people is that there are some good ones who are not right for you, some sick ones in denial who are not going to change, and some who are adding nothing. *Always*. So if no one ever leaves your organization or your life, then you are in some sort of denial and enabling some really sick stuff all over the place. And it probably is accumulating. I have found this to be rampant in companies that have a high "people value" The value is good, but sometimes it keeps them from doing what is truly valuing to people" (27).

Q: Churches are organizations that place a high value on people. How do you respond to Cloud's statement that without necessary endings we will end up "enabling some really sick stuff all over the place?"

7. "In your business and in your life, don't just 'cut back' and think you have pruned. The kind of pruning I'm talking about has to do with *focus, mission, purpose, structure, and strategic execution...Pruning is strategic...It is intentional toward a vision, desires, and objectives that have been clearly defined and are measurable. If you have that, you know what a rose is, and pruning will help you get one of true beauty*" (29-30).

Q: For your church, describe "what a rose is." In other words, what is your "*focus, mission, purpose, structure, and strategic execution?*" For your church how do you differentiate between simply "cutting back" and what Cloud would call "strategic pruning?"

**Chapter 3—Normalizing Necessary Endings: Welcome the Seasons of Life into Your Worldview:** Cloud says, "The second step is this: *Make the endings a normal occurrence and a normal part of business and life, instead of seeing it as a problem*" (38). "Let's look at three organizing principles that will help you make endings both necessary and normal:

1. *Accept Life Cycles and Seasons*...Nothing lasts forever...Everything has a life cycle...Each season also has its own set of activities...The problem comes when we do not accept or we willfully ignore these seasons.
2. *Accept That Life Produces Too Much Life*...I love it when I hear leaders finally figure out that they are not investing enough time in some of their key relationships or direct reports, because they are trying to interface with too many activities or people. They have realized that their success depends on having the time and energy resources to go deep with a few relationships and they have to end the wish to go deep with everyone, as it leads to skimming the surface with almost everyone.

3. *Accept That Incurable Sickness and Evil Exist...your life will change when you really, really get it that some people are not going to change, no matter what you do, and that still others have a vested interest in being destructive” (40-48).*

Q: Of the three organizing principles above, which have you best accepted and incorporated into your daily leadership style? Explain.

Q: Which gives you the greatest challenge? Why?

***Chapter 4—When Stuck Is the New Normal: The Difference Between Pain with a Purpose and Pain for No Good Reason:*** Sometimes we are stuck and are experiencing pain we should not embrace for reasons that are truly outside of our control. But more times than we realize, we are avoiding an ending because of *internal factors, not external ones (53-54).*

1. Cloud illustrates what happens when we “accept” chronic pain caused by an unexecuted necessary ending with what he observed in business consultations during an economic downturn. He found that in highly sales driven businesses, some salesmen *feel that there is nothing they can do about it.* At the same time he observed some high performance occurring too. He asks a rhetorical “Why” and then provides an answer: *The difference was in the brains, the mental models, of the ones who were performing versus the ones who weren’t.*

Continuing, he describes the “learned-helplessness model” in which we begin to interpret things in a negative way. First we Personalize it (I am a bad salesperson). Second we assume it is Pervasive (everything I do, or every aspect of the business is bad). And then we assume it is Permanent (nothing is going to change). These are often called the three P’s.

Besides the negative thinking of the three P’s, Cloud points out that often individuals slide into *a sense of loss of control over things that were, in fact, still in their control.* He suggests the following exercise:

- **Take a piece of paper and divide it into two columns.**
- **In column one, write down all the things you cannot control that are affecting you...**Now worry about all of that, HARD! for about ten minutes. Then stop for the day. You can worry about it again tomorrow. It won’t have changed much.
- **In column two, write down all of the things you do have control over.**
- **In teams, begin to share, brainstorm, and take action on the things you can control during the rest of your hours at work (55-57).**

Q: How helpful was the above activity for you? How could it help your

ministry team?

2. With that background in mind, Cloud comes to the third step in making necessary endings a part of our repertoire: *Identify the internal maps that keep you from the endings you need to execute*. He then lists five of the most common internal maps (mental maps) that keep necessary endings from happening.
  - (1) **Having an Abnormally High Pain Threshold**—you might be able to handle the daily drama around you, but it is driving others away or to disengagement and ineffectiveness.
  - (2) **Covering for Others**—some of us have learned that it *all depends on me* so we just do it, even if it wasn't our job.
  - (3) **Believing That Ending It, Means I Failed**—for those of us who want to stick it out to the bitter end, we need to learn that “failing well means ending something that is not working and choosing to do something else better.”
  - (4) **Misunderstood Loyalty**—“if your map says that you are responsible for other adults as if they were your children, then something is wrong with your map, and no doubt some well-needed endings are not taking place.”
  - (5) **Codependent Mapping**—“I do not see this mental map in...all companies, but I do see it in three instances quite often: (a) private companies that profess ‘we are family’ cultures, (b) family-owned companies, and (c) many churches.” Cloud challenges us that “if you are going to be a ‘family’ culture, which is great, then at least don't be a dysfunctional one!” (60-68)

Q: Do you have a good handle on what Cloud is calling mental maps? Could you explain it, quickly and easily, to a ten year old?

Q: Which of the five mental maps listed above best describes your normal thought process? What are some things you can begin to do TODAY to change that pattern?

**Chapter 5—Getting to the Pruning Moment: Realistic, Hopeless, and Motivated:** This chapter summarizes and makes application of the principles/steps outlined in the preceding three chapters. The following quotes touch at the heart of the content:

- Successful people and successful leaders all have one thing in common: *They get in touch with reality*. If you are looking for the formula that can get you motivated and fearless, here it is: *you must finally see reality for what it is*...If something isn't working, you must admit that what you are doing to get it to work is hopeless. *This chapter is about the lifesaving virtue of hopelessness* (74).

- So hopelessness can bring us closer to fearlessness, *as it does not take courage to stop doing what you know is not going to work* (82).
  - With hope, we can endure almost anything...Hope keeps us going. *And that is the problem* (84).
  - Hope buys time, and spends time...In a false reality, hope is the worst quality you can have (85)!
  - *In the absence of real, objective reasons to think that more time is going to help, it is probably time for some type of necessary ending* (89).
  - *What reason, other than the fact that I want this to work, do I have for believing that tomorrow is going to be different from today* (90)?
- Q: From the quotes above, what part do reality, hopelessness, and motivation have in initiating necessary endings?

**Chapter 6—Hoping Versus Wishing: The Difference Between What’s Worth Fixing and What Should End:** Cloud states that a person’s past behavior is the best predictor of their future behavior. He says, “Hope comes from real, objective reasons that the future is going to be different from the past.” He then outlines the type of people who deserve your hope and trust.

1. **“Look at the Reality of the Person**—Are they able to meet the demands of the reality that you are entrusting to them?” He also suggests, “It is often irrational to listen to a seemingly good idea from a proven nonperformer” (100-101)
2. **Look for the Objective Reasons to Hope**—He then provides nine objective factors to help you determine whether you can have hope that tomorrow will be any different from today.
  - *Verifiable Involvement in a Proven Change Process.* (i.e. a 12 Step Program)
  - *Additional Structure*
  - *Monitoring System*
  - *New Experiences and Skills*
  - *Self-sustaining Motivation*—look to the degree to which you are having to drive the process.
  - *Admission of Need*—What you want to hear from someone is not only “I have a problem and need to change,” but also “I need help and am looking for it.”
  - *The Presence of Support*—if someone desires change but is still hanging around people who work against that change, the risk is much greater.
  - *Skilled Help*
  - *Some Success* (102-108)

- 3. Where is the Energy for Change Going to Come From to Change Things?**—“If you have energy without intelligence, it will be wasted and not go toward a direction or a path. But likewise, intelligence or a plan without energy is not going anywhere at all. Even the best-laid plans will stagnate without a force driving them...*You need enough of a dose of energy to make it effective, and you need the right interval of time so the effects are not lost before the next bit of energy is injected*” (112-115).

In other words, there are some who are worth fixing and others who through their demonstrated behavior are not—no matter how you wish it would be different, it isn't!

Q: Apply Cloud's definitions of the words hope and wish to a person you are working with right now. Being perfectly honest with yourself, are they worthy of your hope and trust or are you simply wishing for something that will never happen? Explain.

**Chapter 7—The Wise, the Foolish, and the Evil: Identifying Which Kinds of People Deserve Your Trust:** The last chapter helped us to be able to discern between hopeful and wishful situations. This chapter deals in depth with the types of people who are worthy of our hopes and dreams. “If you are a responsible and loving person, then *you might assume that other people are like you—responsible and loving*...But this is planet Earth. And if you are going to succeed in life and business, you have to succeed on this planet, not Mars. The truth is that not everyone on planet Earth is like you...

Although predictions made from weather satellite data are not always right, they are right most of the time. They can see what is on the horizon and headed our way, though something still may change. And here is the good news: *there is a weather satellite for people, which will help you be right more than you are wrong...The satellite that will give you the most accurate predictions is the ability to diagnose character*”(120-121).

- 1. Wise People**—*When truth presents itself, the wise person sees the light, takes it in, and makes adjustments.*
  - Someone who can learn from his own experience or the experience of others, make that learning a part of himself, and then deliver results from that experience base.
  - Wise does not mean smartest, brightest, most talented, most gifted, most charismatic, or charming.
  - The bottom line with a wise person is that talking helps (124-131)

2. **Foolish People**—The fool tries to adjust the truth so he does not have to adjust to it.
- Whereas the chief descriptor of the wise person is that when the light shows up, he looks at it, receives it, joins it, and adjusts his behavior to align with the light, the fool does the opposite: he rejects the feedback, resists it, explains it away, and does nothing to meet its requirements.
  - Ironically, a fool actually may be “the smartest person in the room,” or the most gifted or charming.
  - Talking about a problem with a fool does not help at all. Therefore, further talking about problems is not the answer. So stop talking.
  - Stop talking about the problems, and talk about a new problem...no change is happening and that is the [new] problem...[You might ask] how can I give you feedback so that you will listen to it and do something about it?
  - The strategy with a foolish person is to stop talking and move to two important interventions: *limits* and *consequences*...limits on yourself in terms of what you will allow yourself to be exposed to in terms of the fool’s collateral damage...consequences are the last step that may cause the person to hit bottom and “see the light.” Consequences are for their sake, perhaps to get them to turn things around.
  - What you can do is stop or at least minimize the effects their refusal to take personal responsibility is having on you or others...Most times, with someone who is not responsive to feedback, their company, team, boss, co-workers, or loved ones are the ones who are suffering the consequences of their behavior...With these kinds of people, the only time they get it is when it begins to cost them (137-141).
3. **Evil People**—There are some people whose desire it is to hurt others and do destructive things.
- Cloud’s short and sweet advice when dealing with an evil person is use lawyers, guns, and/or money.
  - Do not hope for the evil persons to change. It could happen, and it does, but it does not happen by giving in to them, reasoning with them, or giving them another chance to hurt you (143-144).
- Q: Think about an individual you worked with in the past that would fall into each of these three categories. Would Cloud’s advice have helped you deal more effectively with them?
- Q: How will Cloud’s advice help you as you deal with similar people in the future?

**Chapter 8—Creating Urgency: Stay Motivated and Energized for Change:** What we will do now is look at some of the *accelerators* that will get you moving, and some of the *in-the-moment thinking patterns* that slow you down and keep you from making the changes you need to make. In essence, this chapter is about two forces: *time* and *energy* (149-150).

Cloud states, “to create an ending, and getting the people around you to do the same, *is going to take both the fear of the negative and the draw of the positive.*” In the balance of the chapter, he lays out eight specific strategies that you can use to create urgency.

- **Make the Threat to Our Future as Real in Our Minds as It Is in Reality**—How do you make the brain smell the smoke? How do you get the heart to align with the needed change? My suggestion is “play the movie”...Make your heart and mind feel the reality today that is surely coming tomorrow...Ask your team if they want to be where they are now a year from now or if they want a different reality. Then ask them what endings will be necessary to bring that about.
- **Create “Ending Alliances”**—Who are your change agents, either for yourself or your church, who will help initiate the necessary endings that need to happen?
- **Create Vision**—Whenever people have to do a necessary ending, they need sustainable motivation. They have got to have enough fire in their bellies for the new to put an end to the old. Otherwise, when it gets tough, they want to go back and pull out of the change.
- **Set Deadlines**—Remember, a deadline without consequences is not much of a deadline. So promise consequences for making and missing the deadline, and deliver them.
- **Create Structure**—The more years that I spend in leadership consulting, the more I value the role of creating structure that aligns with urgency around the vital, as well as getting rid of structure that keeps the non-vital going.
- **Stay Close to the Misery**—What issue(s) are you shielding yourself from so that you are not close enough to the pain that you need to motivate you to change?
- **Measure, Measure, Measure**—Research shows that one of the important aspects of getting to the highest level of performance is the degree that someone gets immediate feedback.
- **Use Authority and Make an Executive Decision**—At some point, if you are a leader,...you have to lead, even when no one wants to

follow...Sometimes urgency is created when the sheriff rides into town (151-172).

Q: Which of these strategies do you think would help you the most to deal with the “necessary ending” you need to implement today?

**Chapter 9—Resistance: How to Tackle Internal and External Barriers:** Part of maturity is getting to the place where we can let go of one wish in order to have another. The immature mind “wants it all.” But the truth is that the most valuable things come with a cost. To win, we have to give up some things for others (173-174).

So if you feel resistance about executing a certain ending, figure out what two or more desires are in conflict, admit to yourself that you can have only one, and then ask yourself this question: *Which one am I willing to give up to have the other one* (175-176)?

- **Internal Resistances**

- No Attachment to a Certain Outcome—This is a fundamental truth about endings: *you have to be able to face losing some things you might want in order to be free to do the right thing. If you can't, you are stuck* (177).
- Medicating Thoughts—These two thoughts, *I might need that* and *I will miss it* are examples of “medicating thoughts”...*The hoarder mentality thrives not only in garages, but in business, [church], and people's lives, as well...*getting to a point of follow-through requires that you...become aware of the ways that you are lying to yourself. (179-181)
- Maturity is always about seeing both, the positive and the negative, and dealing with all of it. Sometimes that sum total is “good enough,” but sometimes it is not, and an ending must occur. But you really won't know which situation applies—and you will suffer from both false positives and false negatives—unless you can see the whole picture in reality (185-187).

- **External Resistances**

- Self-absorbed Resisters—this type of person can appear friendly, offering “advice” to “help” you, but he is really a wolf in sheep's clothing.
- Threatened Resisters—someone who is threatened personally by what you are doing.
- The NoNos—John Kotter [author of *Leading Change*] distinguishes between skeptics who oppose change because they have real questions and NoNos who are “highly skilled urgency killers.”
- Stuff Happens When You Change—for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction (187-191)

Q: When you have found yourself resisting a necessary change, which of the internal resistances above have given you the greatest challenge? What can and will you do next time to avoid this problem?

Q: Which of the external resistances have you encountered?

Q: Could someone else describe you as an resister to a necessary ending?

**Chapter 10—No More Mr. Bad Guy: The Magic of Self-Selection:** Many people stall out instead of executing a necessary ending because they do not want to be in the position of being the bad guy, rejecting someone, or saying that person is not “good enough”...You like the person and don’t want to be the bad guy...So let him self-select.

Self-selection means we establish a standard; we draw a line in the sand for people to deal with. Whether or not they choose to live up to the standard is up to them. Sometimes people step it up, other times they don’t. Either way, the pruning has happened, and you did not reject anyone, and you didn’t have to be the “bad guy.”

Another person you sometimes have difficulty saying no to might be **yourself**...we get attached to certain strategies, hopes, projects, businesses, or whatever. And we go back and forth, using all of the resistance strategy we know and we stay stuck.

It is a good idea to know how much of your life or resources you want to spend on something before you lose them all. What matters is that you are in charge, and sometimes having a standard to self-select against takes the decision out of your head and makes it objective (196-198).

Q: How easy has it been in the past for you to be “the bad guy?”

Q: Does the idea of helping someone “self-select” appeal to you?

Q: What are some of the issues or areas where you need to “self-select?”

**Chapter 11—Having the Conversation: Strategies for Ending Things Well:** Even after all the deciding has been done, and a leader is certain that he needs to go forward, sometimes he will still sit on it. The reason? They dreaded the conversation....What gets them through it? One key ingredient *is to be prepared for the conversation itself*...Let’s look at how you can be prepared for the difficult conversation of a necessary ending (201-202).

- **Begin with the End in Mind**—before you have the conversation, make sure you are clear in your head what you want the result of the conversation to be. Have specific goals for the conversation (203).
- **Integrate Care and Truth Inside Yourself**—Your sense of concern for the person must be integrated with the truth of what you need to say...Remind

yourself that you care about the person and truly want the best for him...The truth is painful but best in the end (204).

- **Practice and Role-Play if Necessary**—It may help you to write out your comments beforehand (205).
  - **Get the Tone Right**—If your tone is soft and caring, fewer fight-or-flight reactions get triggered in the other person, and more rational responses are likely to be evoked (206).
  - **Validate the Person and the Relationship**—Let the other person know that you care about them and your relationship...Likewise, be clear about the issue itself (206-207).
  - **Get Agreement**—At the end of the conversation, get agreement on what has happened and what is to follow, if any further steps are required (207).
  - **Deal with Defensiveness and Reactions**—Many times...the person will not like hearing what you are saying and may not even get it. But the only person you can control in the conversation is yourself, so stay on message (207-208).
  - **You May Need Others**—Sometimes there is so much danger of distortion by some personalities that you should make sure that you have someone in the conversation with you—especially if there is danger of litigation or other bad outcomes (208).
  - **Often the Outcome is Good**—The clearer and kinder you are in your communication of endings and bad news to people the better the people you will find yourself surrounded by in life and work. You attract what you are. So do this for them but also for you. You'll be glad you did (209).
  - **Except in Rare Cases, Don't Burn Bridges**—With evil people...burn the bridge. But with everyone else, make the ending one that leaves an impression and a real understanding that you are someone who is kind, honest, and respectful (210).
  - **Above all Don't Be Squishy**—End it and leave it clearly over (210).
- Q: Describe a conversation you are postponing, because you are dreading it?
- Q: Which of the above strategies will be most helpful to you when you have “that needed conversation” in the near future.

### ***Chapter 12—Embrace the Grief: The Importance of Metabolizing Necessary***

**Endings:** Cloud uses the analogy of how our body metabolizes food to illustrate how we should intellectually and emotionally deal with necessary endings. He says, “Think of what you do when you metabolize food: You take it in (ingest it), and your body breaks the food down and recognizes its components as falling into two big groups. The first group is what is usable to you, the vitamins, minerals, and

other nutrients...The second group, the parts of food that are not usable, is called waste. And what do you do with waste?

In love and in work, experience is the “food” of life. Just as “You are what you eat,” you are what you experience as a person...To metabolize experience, whether in significant relationships or in business, you have to do what your body does with food: *keep what is usable to you, and eliminate what is not.*

If you properly metabolize necessary endings, “then you will be ready for whatever is next, having learned and benefited from what you have gone through, positive and negative, and you will show up in your next deal or relationship fully ready, *even readier than you would have been had you not gone through it* (217-218).

Q: Describe a past necessary ending. As you reflect on it (“metabolize it”), what were some of the positives and negatives you were able to glean from the experience?

Q: What project, strategy, loss, or other initiative should you and your team spend some time “metabolizing”?

### ***Chapter 13—Sustainability: Taking Inventory of What Is Depleting Your***

***Resources:*** If you are doing something that is using you or your resources in a way that is depleting you or damaging you, you can’t keep it going...What does this look like in real life? It is what we see when people do not do the necessary endings that their hearts, minds, souls, bodies, and bank balances are telling them over and over that they need to do.

If you are doing anything that by definition cannot continue because the source itself is being depleted or damaged, an ending is not only necessary, it is vital and urgent. He then asks the following questions with significant elaboration (221-225).

- (1) Are you in an emotional state right now that is not sustainable?
- (2) Are you in a physical state right now that is not sustainable?
- (3) Are you in a state right now in your relationships that is not sustainable?
- (4) Are you in a professional state right now that is not sustainable?
- (5) Are you in a spiritual state right now that is not sustainable?
- (6) Are you in a financial state right now that is not sustainable?
- (7) Are your energy reserves being depleted in a way that is not sustainable?
- (8) Are you letting your strengths fall into disuse in a way that is not sustainable?
- (9) Do you find yourself in a situation where you are overextended in some way, one that began as an anomaly but now has become a pattern?

Q: Check all of the above that apply to you TODAY.

Q: What necessary endings (personal and professional) need to take place to get you back into sustainable circumstances?

**Chapter 14—Conclusion: It's All About the Future:** In the concluding chapter Henry describes a dinner conversation he had while writing the book. A conversation that almost perfectly parallels the key points he was including in the book. He concludes with the statement, “Your next step always depends on two ingredients: how well you are maximizing where you are right now and how ready you are to do what is necessary to get to the next place. And sometimes that depends on ending some of what is happening today (230).

Q: Are you maximizing where you should be right now?

Q: How ready are you to do what is necessary to let God get to the next place?

Q: What necessary endings that will need to happen for that to take place?

\*Mark R. Elliott served as a Director of Missions (Associational Mission Strategist) in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska for almost three decades. He is a strong advocate for obedience and Biblically based disciple making. As such, he knows that making healthy disciples requires Christian leaders to be constantly pursuing spiritual maturity—be lifelong learners. Because of the time constraints of ministry, most pastors focus their reading list on resources that assist them in teaching and preaching the Word of God. As such, books focusing on church health, leadership development, and church growth tend to find their way to the bottom of the stack. With that reality in mind, Mark has written discussion summaries on several books that have helped him to personally grow in Christ and that tend to find themselves on the bottom of most pastor's stack. Many pastors have found them helpful as they are able to more quickly process great insights from other pastors and authors.