

CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN RURAL AMERICA

UNDERSTANDING THRESHOLDS

THRESHOLD - the place of entering or **beginning**. We step through this threshold.

- the magnitude or **intensity** that must be exceeded for a certain reaction, result, or condition to occur. We endure this threshold.

- a limit below (**under**) which a stimulus causes no reaction. We recognize this threshold and see what adjustments need to be made.

ROM. 8:18-39.

I. INVESTIGATION. Investigating the three "types" of thresholds will help you and your church grow into healthier ministry.

† **BEGINNING** or step through thresholds - No one can do what you or your church is *called of God* to do.

☛ Not identifying the specific call will create pain and difficulty!

☞ Consider strength and weaknesses.

☞ Everyone has a starting point. The "before" picture is just that!

☞ Set better goals - realistic - vision based - easily attainable & impossible.

1 COR. 4:1-5

☛ You should not do what others are called to do – knowing the difference is powerful. There is no "one-size-fits-all" in the Body of Christ.

☛ You cannot hire staff to do "effectively" what you are called to do!

☛ You cannot effectively recreate another church's approach!

† **INTENSITY** or endurance thresholds. There will always be a threshold needing recognized and it will be accompanied by unanswered questions.

☛ Ministry is a contact sport. You and your church are going to get hit! Hurting people hurt people; they will leave your church and talk! Life is not fair; fairness is not really a Biblical identity to strive for!

☛ Faith and trust is all about unanswered questions! How you respond is the issue! How you help train your church to respond is the issue!

☛ Tomorrow will have enough problems of its own (**MATT. 6:34**). If Jesus' theology doesn't fit your world, guess who is wrong?

☛ Embrace warning signs rather than ignoring them!

☞ Frustration is often a kind way to say anger!

☞ Distractions from excessive people pleasing.

☞ Accountability resistance. *Anything you "use" to get away from the pressure that you are unwilling to submit to accountability!

☞ Excessive desire for comfort, money, and also works focus are all warning signs. You shall be known by your fruit not your works!

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† **UNDER** or recognized limits. Conflict can be helpful in measuring and increasing capacity. We can also get so "used to" some conflict that we no longer are stimulated to proper results!

☛ If you don't come face to face with adversity and conflict you may not be going in the right direction.

✚ **MOSES FACED A TIME OF IDENTIFYING PAIN THRESHOLD- EX. 18:13-23.**

Vs. 14, What is this thing that you are doing for the people?

BEGINNING THRESHOLD - Am doing what I'm called to do?

Why do you alone sit?

INTENSITY THRESHOLD - What options do I have?

Vs. 15, Because the people come to me to inquire of God.

UNDER THRESHOLD - It is the people's fault, they have so many problems and I can hear God.

Vs. 16, The thing that you do is not good.

Vs. 18, You will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself.

Vs. 21, Rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

Vs. 22, Great matter - theological emphasizing God's great acts redemption.

Vs. 22, So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you.

✚ **ELIJAH FACED A TIME OF IDENTIFYING PAIN THRESHOLD.**

1 KINGS 19:4, NKJV, "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, **"It is enough!** Now, LORD, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers!"

INVESTIGATION PRINCIPLES

† God will not give you more than you can bear – **ACCORDING TO HIM!**

- ☞ You may think He will never give you more than you can handle, but in reality He is always giving you more than you can handle! He does this to increase your perception of His ability in you AND your willingness to trust Him!
- ☞ This concept in ministry means that the higher you go in leadership, the greater understanding you must have of God's "opinion" of your threshold, and the greater your threshold skills must be.

† Investigating and embracing your threshold skills will help not hinder your growth.

1 COR. 10:12-13, NKJV, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. **13** No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*."

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II. INCREASE. Increasing your understanding of thresholds will increase growth.

- † Don't pretend the threshold isn't there. Create a proper perspective; see threshold for what it is – as a part of our expression of Christ living in us in ministry.

2 COR. 11:23-28, NKJV, “Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. **24** From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. **25** Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; **26** in journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; **27** in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—**28** besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”

- † Recognize the production room of increase. My soul is the production room of increase! Identify the “gaps” in your tolerance levels by examining your inside responses to the difficulty of thresholds.

PS. 42:11, NKJV, “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.”

HEB. 12:3, NKJV, "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."

JAMES 1:21, NKJV, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."

- † Chart a course - you will rarely move towards something you don't believe exists!

- ‡ Without a chart you will likely miss the turns!
 - ☉ Desire is different than planning.
 - ☉ Forward is different than backwards.
 - ☉ Focus is different than confusion.

- † **Remember ministry has a price tag.** There may need to be the painful reminder that laying down your life in the call of ministry will cost you! (Review 2 COR. 11:23-28 on preceding page)

- ‡ Spiritually.

ACTS 13:2, NKJV, “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

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☞ Mentally

ROM. 8:5-6, NKJV, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. **6** For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. **7** Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."

☞ Physically.

1 COR. 6:19-20, NKJV, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? **20** For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

† Celebrate!

- ☞ From the smallest to the largest - detail life changes within the individual and corporately.
- ☞ Who over how many!
- ☞ Who are you reaching out to?
 - ☞ Age, generation, and believing or not.
 - ☞ Are they connecting?

INCREASE PRINCIPLES

- † We cannot deal with what we pretend doesn't exist!
- † The production room of our soul is one of the most important considerations available to us.
- † You cannot escape the price of ministry; you are far better off cooperating than resisting.

MATT. 15:15-20, NKJV, "Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain this parable to us." **16** So Jesus said, "**Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.**"

MATT. 12:34-37, NKJV, "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. **35** A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. **36** But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. **37** For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

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III. EMBRACE. Embracing the recognized thresholds will guarantee growth.

WHY GUARANTEED?

- Words help determine thinking.
- Thinking helps determine feeling.
- Feelings help determine decisions.
- Decisions help determine actions.
- Actions help determine habits.
- Habits help determine character.
- Character helps determine destiny.
- Destiny is achieved by cooperation with His Words.

So if we cooperate with His word to develop our thinking, which in turn determines our feelings, creating our decisions, focusing our actions, producing our habits, leading us to His character, our destiny is guaranteed!

† **Watch for the trigger points in our threshold .**

- ☛ Performance is not our focus! Don't let performance focus trip us up. Embrace where you are and the FACT that you are endeavoring to grow.
- ☛ People are not the problem. Regardless of the flesh and blood stuff, stay focused. Embrace the "I recognize no one after the flesh" principle.
- ☛ Problems are opportunities for finding solutions not complaining. If you find yourself overwhelmed by problems, embrace the opportunity to find solutions.
- ☛ Perfection is what is accomplished through religious effort, excellence is a kingdom principle. Embrace excellence and shun perfectionism.

† **Talk about the issues.**

- ☛ Get your indentified threshold issues out in the open.
- ☛ Cover ups are never good and are based in deception.

† **Decide the obvious.**

GAL. 2:20, NKJV, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

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† **People won't get it. They don't like pain, difficulty, change, or many of the things represented by walking through the thresholds of life.**

☛ People will not understand, so get used to it.

☛ When you embrace your threshold, you will be different! Develop and maintain a clear strategy for thriving as you embrace the different thresholds you face.

☛ Transparency is attractive when the right things are visible.

† **Protect each other from blind spots.**

2 KINGS 5:10-13, NKJV, “And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and *you shall be clean.*” **11** But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, “Indeed, I said to myself, ‘He will surely come out *to me*, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.’ **12** Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage. **13** And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, “My father, *if* the prophet had told you *to do* something great, would you not have done *it*? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?”

EMBRACE PRINCIPLES

† When you talk about, increase, and embrace your pain threshold you will be inviting the very help you need. Others can help if they only know where to be available.

† Our greatest vulnerability is when our strengths become weaknesses and no one notices.