

## Emerge Chapter Excerpts

The following is text from the book

**emerge**, Equipping College Leaders to Continue a Life of Vision and Purpose  
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### **Excerpt from the Preface:**

Kevin was thankful to have grown up in the local church, attending whenever the doors were open. Having the tremendous blessing of preaching from the Bible, complete with teaching and doctrine, he also grew up in his own personal devotions. Attending a small group with other teens, and serving in the leadership of his youth group, Kevin also served in other ministries of the church. This truly prepared him for the next stage in life – college.

Once in college, Kevin committed to a campus group, which challenged him in discipline and service. As a sophomore he rose to leadership in the organization. Leading Bible studies, meeting one on one, and witnessing were typical weekly, even daily activities.

As a senior, Kevin met Jennifer, who was also a student leader, although in another organization. She also grew up in the church, and was a student leader in high school, and college. She excelled at Scripture memory and music.

They were married and together they looked forward to a dynamic and exciting ministry. They each felt the conviction that continuing in collegiate ministries was not the direction God was calling them. Somehow they knew that they were called to be self-supporting missionaries – whatever that

meant. Recognizing that college debt was a significant deterrent, they set about eliminating their debt – which they accomplished in just 15 months.

At this point, Kevin and Jennifer were transitioning into the church. This shouldn't have been too difficult, since they had been attending a good church for the last three years. The pastor of that church had married them. They had "adopted parents" from that church, and had served in music ministries.

But Kevin and Jennifer slowly began to realize that post-campus life did not look very much like the campus life that had quickly grown them into student leaders. They began to feel isolated and disoriented. To make matters worse, life began to "happen" to them. Jennifer was in a car accident that put life on hold for several years. Family issues and young married issues dogged them. They did not even realize that the vision, the longing for a calling from the Master, was slowly fading from their hearts.

The ton of bricks was dropped after five years of marriage. While in a birthing class for their first child, Kevin and Jennifer befriended another young couple, Bill and Susan. Bright eyed and bushy tailed, Bill and Susan were serving a local church as intern pastor and wife. After meeting just a few times they found a true kindred spirit in this other young couple. Bill and Susan were pursuing their calling. Finally after serving barbecued chicken one evening, Bill asked, "So why did you two not go into full time Christian service?" Kevin honestly did not even know anymore. He had told God he would go anywhere, anytime. Now that seemed so far away. All he wanted was a call – a clear direction of where to go and what to do. But that had not happened. He felt betrayed and disillusioned.

This is my story. This is not the experience of every campus student leader that attempts to transition into the local church. Yet as I look around among my peers and existing emerging leaders, I see a lot of consistent patterns. It appears to be more typical than not.

Still, can it be different? Are there some simple things that can be done to improve the transition of these talented young leaders? Are there principles that, if followed, emerging leaders will be more likely to keep courage, stay in the game, and continue to develop as leaders – whether they stay in their campus ministry, go over seas, or serve in the local church? I am convinced that the answer is YES!

It may sound a little crazy to write a book to multiple audiences. Yet, I feel it is necessary, because it takes a team effort from multiple groups to pull it off.

- The first group is comprised of Emerging Collegiate Leaders. My intent is to address the issues that impact their transition off the campus world. This is the primary teaching of the book. It may be used as a curriculum for small groups – whether in the collegiate world or the local church. I also know there are many leaders, like myself, that got lost for ten or more years. I hope this section gives you courage to get back on track.
- The second group is the Local Church. My intent is to equip the local church to serve emerging collegiate leaders. Obviously, the local church stands a lot to gain by having more leaders.
- The third group is the Campus Organizations. My intent is to describe what part they play, and why it is to their advantage to help these key leaders transition well.

I truly believe that by working together, all three groups can benefit. If this is not a win-win-win, it won't work.

## **Excerpt from Chapter 4: Transition to the Local Church**

For months the engaged couple looks forward to that great day – when the wedding planning is over and the “I DO’s” have been said. The guests have eaten the cake and gone home happy to have welcomed another couple into the holy state of matrimony. In spite of the months of planning and anticipation, however there’s no way for the new couple to know how it will feel to be married until they get there.

For months, the expecting couple looks forward to that great day – to meet their own flesh and blood for the first time. Delivery notwithstanding, it is an amazing thing to take home that first baby – the one that’s yours – the person that you will know better than any other human on earth. Yet again, in spite of the birthing classes, the preparation of the nursery, and the baby showers, there’s no way to know how it will feel to hold their own baby until they do. We must each experience these things for ourselves.

Going out of the country for the first time is another example. Burying a parent or close friend is another. Other life transitions include buying your first house, taking your first 5-year-old to kindergarten – and standing there dumb-founded with all the others as their babies walk into the school for the first time. How about your first child graduating from high school or college, or getting married, or your first grand-child – YIKES!

Isn’t transition a great thing? Every transition is a little reminder that life is never static. Life will never be what it was. What we have just gotten used to is gone forever. Each stage in life is more complicated than the last. I really think that the longing for “the good life” whether it is by looking back at the good old days, or looking forward to “having finally made it” – these longings are here to remind us that there is a spiritual reality that is constant. “And so, we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thess 4:17-18 We are ultimately longing for heaven.

Still, though we cannot anticipate what it will feel like, we can set our expectations for what will most likely happen. We can prepare for it in some ways. Emerging collegiate leaders, either upper classmen or recent grads, must face this transition of moving out of the college environment that they have become used to. There are four big areas of transition that they are likely to face: free time, fellowship, enduring the left turn, and ministry.

## **Excerpt from chapter 5: Finding Your Sweet Spot**

Every now and again as I look around, I see someone in their sweet spot. They are usually pumped with energy. Sometimes I wonder if they are working too hard, but they don't seem tired or worn down. They typically have a big smile, especially when they talk of their passion. I have yet to see someone in their sweet spot who has an attitude problem. They don't seem to complain; they aren't cynical; they don't tend to hang around the water cooler and gossip about what's not going well.

As I talk to emerging collegiate leaders, you better believe that the sweet spot is paramount on their minds. But, amazingly enough, it seems to be a deep desire with just about everybody I've described it to. Why do some find it, while most of the rest do not? It doesn't seem that finding your sweet spot should be a random event, so are there steps that one could take to discover it? I'd like to approach this from three angles: Vision generation, focus, and endurance.

### **Vision Generation**

Vision frequently starts as crazy talk. Idea generation is a time of dreaming. What would you like to see change about your world? Wouldn't it be amazing if \_\_\_\_\_ could happen? If you could change anything in the world, what would it be? My ten year old daughter asked me that question the other day, and I was amazed at how hard it was to answer.

Imagination and creativity need to flow in ways that get you thinking differently. Some dream easily. It just seems natural. For the rest of us, it is important to stack the deck in our favor. Where do you dream best? Is it with a friend, or by yourself in the wilderness? Maybe you need to take a wilderness trip. Or maybe you should take a trip to visit a visionary friend.

Make sure you're well rested. Take plenty of paper to record the process. Record ideas, and refine them. Don't dismiss something that sounds crazy. Watch for "seed" themes that come up over and over. Don't take side projects to do in your down time. Avoid distractions. Expect that this will take more than an hour or two. If you find that you have no idea where God is leading you, make it a routine habit that you carve out time for vision generation on a monthly or quarterly basis.

## **Excerpt from Chapter 7: Emotional Wellness**

Yet, there are bigger drains than these two types, temporal and transition. These have to do with our beliefs – especially what we believe about ourselves, about God, and our closest relationships. As we have grown up through childhood and young adulthood, we have accidentally picked up these beliefs along the way. Some can be quite self-destructive. Things like:

I must be deeply flawed and unlovable.

I must perform to be accepted. I must act like I have it all together.

I'm really not part of this group. In fact, I don't belong anywhere.

If only I had [this car, that girlfriend, the other career] I'd be happy.

I'll deal with this anger some other time. Christians don't get angry.

Good Christians don't have this sort of problem.

Good Christians are friends with everybody.

Deep down I'm a bad person. I hope nobody finds out.

I will never allow myself to be hurt like that again.

Crying or showing any emotion is a sign of weakness.

Usually, these beliefs are hidden from our conscious minds. Getting back to the illustration, these self beliefs are like cracks in the plastic bottle. If you hold the glass just right, it will hold water pretty well. However, if someone presses in just the right place, as in pushing our buttons, the result can be immediate and irrational loss of emotional well being. We blow our tops; lose our cool. These events leave us feeling guilty and embarrassed for blowing up. Sometimes we even try to cover it up.

Some people prefer to stuff it. This looks better, and even feels better at the time. This, of course, is a form of denial. It takes more emotional energy in the future to keep those things buried. And, it usually takes more energy to deal with them years later.

Either way, self beliefs tend to drive our behavior. They create within us a civil war. Our mind believes one thing about ourselves, but our spirit, which is in communion with God's Spirit, knows the truth.

### **Gideon's self beliefs**

Let's take a look at the story of Gideon, from Judges chapters 6 - 8. He started with some pretty debilitating self beliefs, but eventually believed God, and went on to do some amazing things.

All Israel had left the God of their fathers to worship Baal. As a result, they were being oppressed by the people of Midian, who moved into Israel's

territory during harvest and took all Israel's food. God sent a prophet to warn them of this. This is the backdrop for the introduction of God's chosen leader for just this time - Gideon. (Judges 6:1-10)

Gideon was thrashing out wheat in a wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. A wine press is not an ideal tool for threshing grain, but Gideon was surviving under the oppression of Midian. (Judges 6:11)

The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said to him, "The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior." I suspect that at this time, Gideon did not look very much like a valiant warrior. He was hiding out somewhere trying to eke out a living. (Judges 6:12)

"Then Gideon said to him, 'O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.'" (Judges 6:13)

Gideon disagrees that the Lord is with him. He is looking at his circumstances. Notice that he blames God for their situation. Have you ever felt abandoned by God?

"The Lord looked at him and said, 'Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?'" (Judges 6:14)

All of us long for a clear call from God. However, we would want it to happen when we feel good and ready.

He said to Him, "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house." (Judges 6:15)

Again Gideon disagrees. God called Gideon a valiant warrior, but Gideon has bought a subtle lie – that he is insignificant and helpless. He is a victim due to what he believes about himself.

But the Lord said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man." (Judges 6:16)

God continues to call him out by promising to be with him. He also promises that Gideon will be successful. Isn't this amazing! God answers Gideon's two core fears – that he is abandoned and ineffective.

Gideon asks for a sign – a sacrifice, which Gideon offers to the Angel of the Lord. (Judges 6:17-24)

Gideon asked for a sign again – the fleece. (Judges 6:36-40)

God gave him another sign to encourage him – He instructed Gideon to go down to the Midian camp and listen to two men talk about their dream that Gideon would destroy the camp of Midian. (Judges 7:9-24)

This is an amazing passage where God encourages Gideon three different ways – and at three different times. One of these times is totally initiated by God. Nobody else in Scripture uses a fleece like this. There are some similarities with sacrifices and dreams, but it is clear that this is not about some magic method. There are times that we need God to speak to us, and He does.

In Judges 7, we see God whittled down Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300. God proceeds to destroy the army of Midian, 120,000 men, with these 300 men. OK, this is getting pretty high on the valiant scale. We don't know where Gideon got the idea of the torches and clay pitchers, but we know that God was working for them.

Finally, in Judges 8 we see the true valor of Gideon. He is not content to have routed the army of Midian. He wants their kings. These kings are the ones who dreamed up the plan of invading Israel, and even killed Gideon's own brothers. Bordering on insanity, he chases the retreating army of 15,000 with his 300 men. Two different Israelite towns refuse to give him food for his men. In the end, Gideon proves that he is indeed a valiant warrior, and captures the Midianite kings. He also disciplines the two towns. Gideon believed God, and discarded his self beliefs. Indeed, choosing what God believes over what we believe is true faith.