

Foreword by Will Mancini

Bruce B. Miller

Your **Church** in **Rhythm**

The Forgotten Dimensions of Seasons and Cycles



What Time Is It in Your Church?

Table of Contents

Cover

Table of Contents

Praise for the book

Title page

Copyright page

LEADERSHIP NETWORK TITLES

**ABOUT THE JOSSEY-BASS LEADERSHIP
NETWORK SERIES**

FOREWORD

PREFACE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**INTRODUCTION Time: The Forgotten
Dimension**

**Part ONE: Identifying What
Time It Is in Your Church**

1 Why Do Church in Rhythm?

A BIBLICAL SENSE OF TIME

DEVASTATING CRITICISM: A SEASON OF REFLECTION

CHRONOS CYCLES FROM THE BEGINNING

RESEARCH INTO A NATURAL SENSE OF TIME

FOCUSED AND ENJOYABLE MINISTRY

WHAT TIME IS IT?

2 Kairos and Chronos Rhythms

THE WINDOW OF LANGUAGE

THE WINDOW OF THEOLOGY

THE WINDOW OF EXPERIENCE

3 Discerning Your Organizational Stage

THE REALITY AND UBIQUITY OF LIFE CYCLES

ORGANIZATIONAL STAGES IN CHURCHES

THE IMPACT OF CRISIS

DISCERNING YOUR CHURCH'S STAGE

4 Recognizing Your Ministry Seasons

THE NATURE OF MINISTRY SEASONS

RECOGNIZING COMMON MINISTRY SEASONS

COMMONSENSE MARKERS

Part TWO: Kairos Rhythm Strategies

5 Release Expectations

LIVE FULLY IN THE NOW

**RELEASING EXPECTATIONS IN
ORGANIZATIONAL STAGES**

**RELEASING EXPECTATIONS IN MINISTRY
SEASONS**

6 Seize Opportunities

BENEFITS OF SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

DISCERNING FITTING OPPORTUNITIES

**SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES IN
ORGANIZATIONAL STAGES**

**SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES IN MINISTRY
SEASONS**

7 Anticipate What's Next

**GRASPING THE STRATEGY: FUELING HOPE
WITH ANTICIPATION**

**ANTICIPATING WHAT'S NEXT IN
ORGANIZATIONAL STAGES**

**ANTICIPATING WHAT'S NEXT IN MINISTRY
SEASONS**

Part THREE: Chronos Rhythm Strategies

8 Pace Your Church

WHAT IS PACING?

SETTING APPROPRIATE FREQUENCIES
MAXIMIZING FLOW

9 Build Mission-Enhancing Rituals

CONCEPT AND VALUE OF RITUALS
MISSION-ENHANCING TRADITIONS IN THE
LONGER CYCLES
MISSION-ENHANCING HABITS IN THE
SHORTER CYCLES

10 Oscillate Intensity and Renewal

CONCEPTS AND BENEFITS OF OSCILLATION
OSCILLATION IN SPORTS TRAINING
THE PRODUCTIVITY OF OSCILLATION
OSCILLATE INTENSITY AND RENEWAL IN
EACH OF THE FIVE CYCLES

CONCLUSION Rhythm Solution
Process for Your Church

A RHYTHM SOLUTION PROCESS FOR
CHURCHES
TAKING IT HOME

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION AND PART 1
PART 2: KAIROS RHYTHM STRATEGIES
PART 3: CHRONOS RHYTHM STRATEGIES
CONCLUSION: RHYTHM SOLUTION PROCESS
FOR YOUR CHURCH

RHYTHM OVERVIEW

REFERENCES

THE AUTHOR

Index

More Praise for *Your Church in Rhythm*

“The myth of a perfectly balanced ministry is just that, a myth. Worse, the pursuit of it is a certain recipe for needless frustration and discouragement. Bruce Miller offers an alternative that is true to both Scripture and creation—a powerful force called rhythm.”—Larry Osborne, author and pastor, North Coast Church, Vista, California

“*Your Church in Rhythm* will stop you in your tracks and then move you forward in a more healthy way. We all struggle to refine and sustain our leadership. Bruce Miller brings critical insights into seasons inherent in the life and the leadership of the church. Rhythmic understanding can make the difference between success and failure, creative vitality, and resigned mediocrity. *Your Church in Rhythm* will ultimately change the way you lead.”—Jim Garlow, lead pastor, Skyline Church, La Mesa, California

“Any pastor who has struggled finding ‘balance’ will benefit by discovering ‘rhythm’ instead. Grow past the nonstop hype of making every Sunday ‘the greatest Sunday ever!’ *Your Church in Rhythm* brings ministry back to reality.”—Geoff Surratt, pastor of ministries, Seacoast Church, Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina

“Bruce Miller leads a healthy, growing church because he lives a healthy, ever-growing life that is in step with the Spirit. He has discovered what so many pastors and leaders search for—a Spirit-directed rhythm within the Body that brings forth sustained growth over the long haul. Every pastor and church leader needs to read this book!”—Jeff Warren, senior pastor, Park Cities Baptist Church

“This very practical book will help all pastoral leaders carry out Paul’s powerful exhortation—to make ‘the most of every opportunity’ (Ephesians 5:16).”—Dr. Gene A. Getz, Center for Church Renewal, Plano, Texas

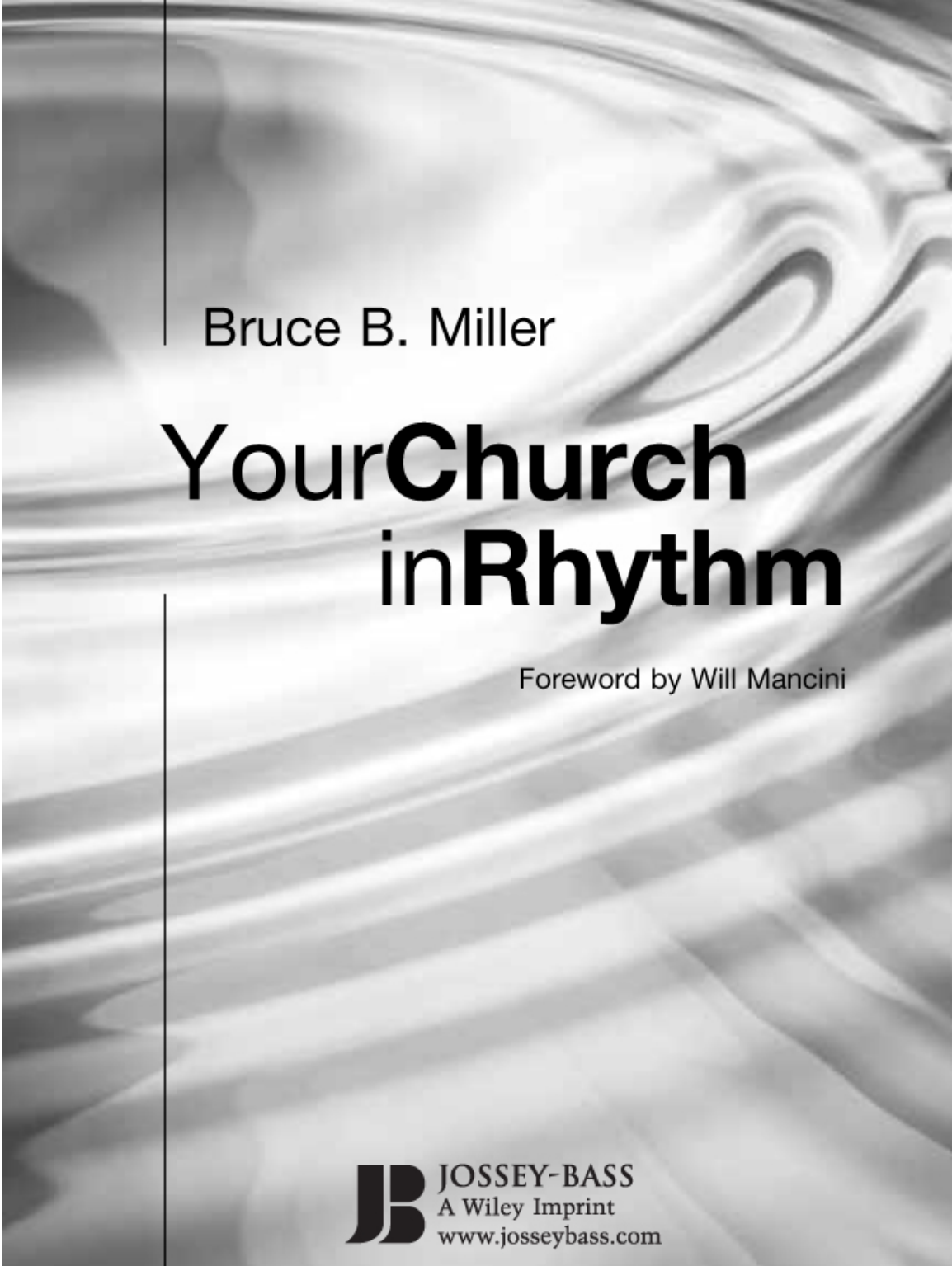
“As a pastor, I’m constantly searching for the best resources to train and equip my staff and church leaders.

Your Church in Rhythm just moved to the top of my list.”—
Dr. Chip Henderson, pastor, Pinelake Church, Brandon,
Michigan

“In *Your Church in Rhythm*, Bruce Miller unpacks a truth that I believe can not only save a pastor a lot of heartache, but can inject a lot of life into the heart of a church. Recognizing the ‘seasons’ in the life of our church has been very liberating and energizing for us. My prayer is that you’ll find yourself more excited about the present and the future of your church than ever before as you read this book.”—
Dino Rizzo, lead pastor, Healing Place Church, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

“Mandatory reading for pastors, staff, church leaders, and members for Bruce’s rich insight to engaging the rhythms of church life rather than fighting against the rhythms. His description of how God has woven rhythms into the life of every ministry is a priceless principle.”—Bryan L. Carter, senior pastor, Concord Church

“One of the signs of a good book is that as you are reading it you want to thank the author for writing it. *Your Church in Rhythm* has been that kind of book for me. This provides a common language from which church leaders can have robust conversation around where their church is at, and what God is calling them to do and not to do. Most of all, *Your Church in Rhythm* invites the reader to establish a new definition of health for themselves, their leaders, and their church. Thank you, Bruce.”—Scott Wilson, senior pastor, The Oaks



Bruce B. Miller

YourChurch inRhythm

Foreword by Will Mancini

 **JOSSEY-BASS**
A Wiley Imprint
www.josseybass.com

A Leadership  Network[®] Publication

Copyright © 2011 by Bruce B. Miller. All rights reserved.

Published by Jossey-Bass

A Wiley Imprint

989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741—

www.josseybass.com

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400, fax 978-646-8600, or on the Web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, 201-748-6011, fax 201-748-6008, or online at www.wiley.com/go/permissions.

Readers should be aware that Internet Web sites offered as citations and/or sources for further information may have changed or disappeared between the time this was written and when it is read.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where

appropriate. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Jossey-Bass books and products are available through most bookstores. To contact Jossey-Bass directly call our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 800-956-7739, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3986, or fax 317-572-4002.

Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Jossey-Bass also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Miller, Bruce B., date

Your church in rhythm : the forgotten dimensions of seasons and cycles / Bruce B. Miller.

p. cm. – (Jossey-Bass leadership network series ; 52)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-470-59887-0 (hardback); 978-0-470-94721-0 (ebk); 978-0-470-94722-7 (ebk); 978-0-470-94723-4 (ebk)

1. Church management. 2. Time management—Religious aspects—Christianity. 3. Time. 4. Time—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BV652.M555 2011

254-dc22

2010043459

LEADERSHIP NETWORK TITLES

The Blogging Church: Sharing the Story of Your Church Through Blogs, Brian Bailey and Terry Storch

Church Turned Inside Out: A Guide for Designers, Refiners, and Re-Aligners, Linda Bergquist and Allan Karr

Leading from the Second Chair: Serving Your Church, Fulfilling Your Role, and Realizing Your Dreams, Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson

Hybrid Church: The Fusion of Intimacy and Impact, Dave Browning

The Way of Jesus: A Journey of Freedom for Pilgrims and Wanderers, Jonathan S. Campbell with Jennifer Campbell

Cracking Your Church's Culture Code: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision and Inspiration, Samuel R. Chand

Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders, George Cladis

Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens, Neil Cole

Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church, Neil Cole

Journeys to Significance: Charting a Leadership Course from the Life of Paul, Neil Cole

Off-Road Disciplines: Spiritual Adventures of Missional Leaders, Earl Creps

Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them, Earl Creps

Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation, Mark DeYmaz

Leading Congregational Change Workbook, James H. Furr, Mike Bonem, and Jim Herrington

The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community, Hugh Halter and Matt Smay

Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults over Fifty, Amy Hanson

Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey, Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr

The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation, Jim Herrington, Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor

Whole Church: Leading from Fragmentation to Engagement, Mel Lawrenz

Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out, Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro, with Warren Bird

Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement, Will Mancini

A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey, Brian D. McLaren

The Story We Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian, Brian D. McLaren

Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church, Reggie McNeal

Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders, Reggie McNeal

The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church, Reggie McNeal

A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders, Reggie McNeal

The Millennium Matrix: Reclaiming the Past, Reframing the Future of the Church, M. Rex Miller

Your Church in Rhythm: The Forgotten Dimensions of Seasons and Cycles, Bruce B. Miller

Shaped by God's Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches, Milfred Minatrea

The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World, Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk

Missional Map-Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition, Alan J. Roxburgh

Relational Intelligence: How Leaders Can Expand Their Influence Through a New Way of Being Smart, Steve Saccone

Viral Churches: Helping Church Planters Become Movement Makers, Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird

The Externally Focused Quest: Becoming the Best Church for the Community, Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw

The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence, Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath

Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America's Largest Churches, Scott Thumma and Dave Travis

The Other Eighty Percent: Turning Your Church's Spectators into Active Participants, Scott Thumma and Warren Bird

The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions, Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree

ABOUT THE JOSSEY-BASS LEADERSHIP NETWORK SERIES

Leadership Network's mission is to accelerate the impact of One-HundredX leaders. These high-capacity leaders are like the hundredfold crop that comes from seed planted in good soil as Jesus described in Matthew 13:8.

Leadership Network ...

- Explores the “what’s next?” of what could be
- Creates “aha!” environments for collaborative discovery
- Works with exceptional “positive deviants”
- Invests in the success of others through generous relationships
- Pursues big impact through measurable Kingdom results
- Strives to model Jesus through all we do

Believing that meaningful conversations and strategic connections can change the world, we seek to help leaders navigate the future by exploring new ideas and finding application for each unique context. Through collaborative meetings and processes, leaders map future possibilities and challenge one another to action that accelerates fruitfulness and effectiveness. Leadership Network shares the learnings and inspiration with others through our books, concept papers, research reports, e-newsletters, podcasts, videos, and online experiences. This in turn generates a ripple effect of new conversations and further influence.

In 1996, Leadership Network established a partnership with Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Imprint, to develop a series of creative books that provide thought leadership to innovators in church ministry. Leadership Network publications present thoroughly researched and innovative concepts from leading thinkers, practitioners, and pioneering churches.

Leadership Network is a division of OneHundredX, a global ministry with initiatives around the world.

To learn more about Leadership Network, go to www.leadnet.org.

To learn more about OneHundredX, go to www.100x.org.

FOREWORD

If genius is the ability to illuminate the obvious, then Bruce Miller is a genius. The insights in this book just might transform how you lead for the rest of your life.

Rhythm is everywhere, in every moment. Your brain cells, this moment, receive life with each heartbeat. In this moment, you are whirling unaware in patterned motion as planet Earth spins like a bike wheel and pedals its orbit around the sun. Inside of you and all around you, reality dances to the cadences of the creator's music. When God painted this world, his favorite brushstroke was rhythm.

Yet we are tempted to miss this fundamental context of our lives. Rhythm to us is like water to a fish. As such, the reality of rhythm becomes something we take for granted. It's always there but rarely explored.

Hence, this book is a wake-up call for every leader who has not yet examined rhythm as a feature of life in general and church life in particular. I know I've been guilty. The alarm clock's ring left a powerful question—both challenging and haunting—echoing in my mind: “What if, in our casual awareness of rhythm's ever-present dynamic, we have missed the deepest wisdom of leadership?”

Prepare for this book to sound the perils of ignoring rhythm. Guilt, busyness, stress, and even despair can win the day in our “rhythm-dumb” approaches. Among many strategies stained with artificial idealism, Bruce Miller debunks the kingpin—the notion of “balance” that marks many of our mental models in ministry.

As you dive into this book, I am particularly excited to commend three other aspects:

First, the principles of this book are incredibly actionable. Bruce boils down six simple and compelling strategies that

you can take and use everywhere you go. Don't be surprised when you get up from your favorite reading nook to find these six new tools strapped to your pastoral tool belt.

Second, the principles of this book are universally applicable. There is no time or place and there is no theological conviction or leadership style where rhythm doesn't apply. If you, like me, are tired of the myriad of "how-to-do-church" books, then be happy! *Your Church in Rhythm* delivers 24-karat gold by transcending models, methods, and trends.

Third, the author of this book is a one-of-a-kind Kingdom laborer. As a leader, Bruce couples the mind of a military strategist with the heart of a willing foot soldier. As a follower of Jesus, he fuses intensity with integrity and honesty with optimism like no one I know. Over the last twelve months, I have enjoyed getting to know Bruce and his team. They glow with a rare spirit that is "*All in*" and "*All together*" for Jesus.

Now, with the turn of each page, journey into this lost river of wisdom. From wet feet to waist deep, you will discover that which is at once strangely familiar and yet completely new.

Will Mancini

Founder, Auxano, and author, *Church Unique*

PREFACE

It was July in Auckland, New Zealand, at a leadership conference, when it first struck me that the idea of a so-called balanced life is unbiblical, impossible, and toxic. Instead, rhythm offers a much richer picture of a healthy life. My earlier book *Your Life in Rhythm* paints that picture of a rhythmic life.

Two friends, Mark Sweeny and Greg Ligon, asked me if “rhythm” could apply to churches. If a rhythmic life is better than a balanced life, would not a rhythmic church be better than a balanced church? It made sense to me. If living life in rhythm leads to less stress and more fulfillment, could it be that doing church in rhythm would also reduce unnecessary stress while increasing effectiveness? These questions took me on a journey that eventually led to *Your Church in Rhythm*.

Along the way our church contracted with Will Mancini and the Auxano organization to consult with us. As the author of *Church Unique*, Will has an amazing ability to help leaders clarify the unique identity of their organization. When Will and I discussed uniqueness and rhythm, we recognized that both rhythm and uniqueness are “metaconcepts.” Metaconcepts are unbounded by the size, age, or theology of a local church. A metaconcept transcends most categories that divide and distinguish churches.

No matter what strategy, model, or approach you take, identity and timing are relevant to your ministry. No matter what its culture, structure, or style, a local church carries out its mission in rhythmic seasons and cycles. To be effective for Christ and for ministry to be truly enjoyable, churches need to know what time it is. In what unique time is your church ministering? I’ve written this metaconcept book for church leaders of all flavors in the hope that it will

contribute to making your ministry more effective and enjoyable.

In the following chapters, we will peer into the forgotten dimension of time and explore two kinds of rhythm: *chronos* and *kairos*. You and your fellow leaders will learn how to discern “what time it is in your church” by identifying your organizational stage and ministry seasons. When you grasp your “time,” you can apply the *kairos* rhythm strategies to focus on what will most advance Christ’s mission in this unique moment for your church. When you recognize the five *chronos* cycles embedded in our natural world, the three *chronos* rhythm strategies will empower you to pace your church, build mission-enhancing rituals, and oscillate intensity and renewal so that you prevail for a lifetime in fruitful ministry. My hope is to open your eyes to a new horizon that offers fresh insights to strengthen your church’s ministry and lighten your burden as you serve Christ.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank God for Jennie Tissing, who aided me in preparing the manuscript and kept step with me in the intense times. Laurie Wright, my excellent assistant, maintained faithful support and kept all communication on track. Most of all, I thank God for my wife, Tamara, without whom I would be lost and this book would not exist. All glory to the King of Kings.

INTRODUCTION Time: The Forgotten Dimension

We want our churches to be effective for Jesus Christ. And yet, we're not satisfied with what's happening. Not enough people are coming to Christ. Average church members are not serious enough about their faith. There is no silver bullet, no one solution. But there is a dimension many church leaders have not adequately considered, a question we've not asked deeply. "What time is it in your church?"

Sometimes a simple question opens new horizons. Questioning timing opens a dimension that has often been neglected. I am not referring to time management, but rather to a deeper sense of appropriate timing, a discerning of the opportune moment and conversely what does not "fit" in this season. We can learn how to dance church to the God-shaped rhythms of life.

Life is not static, linear, or uniform. It moves, oscillates, vibrates, and pulsates. A good church will find ways to harmonize with created and providential rhythms. Churches, like all organisms and organizations, develop through stages, experience seasons, and live in the cycles of creation (days and years). In this book, I attempt to open a new horizon on which we will see six rhythm strategies for wisely leading our churches so that we are more fruitful in ministry and ministry has more joy.

If you ignore rhythm, you can hurt your church by wasting resources on concerns that don't fit this time in your church's life. For instance, if you're a church planter in the early days it's not the time to develop policy manuals or refined processes. Much stress and guilt often come from attempting ministry that does not belong in this stage or season. In contrast, if we employ rhythm strategies, we can