



# Who Moved My Pulpit?: Leading Change in the Church

*Thom S. Rainer*

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## **Who Moved My Pulpit?: Leading Change in the Church** Thom S. Rainer

*Who Moved My Pulpit?* may not be the exact question you're asking. But you're certainly asking questions about change in the church—where it's coming from, why it's happening, and how you're supposed to hang on and follow God through it—even get out ahead of it so your church is faithfully meeting its timeless calling and serving the new opportunities of this age.

Based on conversations with thousands of pastors, combined with on-the-ground research from more than 50,000 churches, best-selling author Thom S. Rainer shares an eight-stage roadmap to leading change in your church. Not by changing doctrine. Not by changing biblical foundations. But by changing methodologies and approaches for reaching a rapidly changing culture.

You are the pastor. You are the church staff person. You are an elder. You are a deacon. You are a key lay leader in the church. This is the book that will equip you to celebrate and lead change no matter the cost.

The time is now.

## **Who Moved My Pulpit?: Leading Change in the Church Details**

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## From Reader Review Who Moved My Pulpit?: Leading Change in the Church for online ebook

### Jimmy Reagan says

The subtitle “Leading Change In The Church” says it all. Rainer is the premier expert on church change as he has exclusively given his life over to helping with local church issues. It’s the same size as his popular “I Am a Church Member”, but this time he aims specifically at those who are actively trying to change churches from a dying model.

Don’t confuse this book with those telling you to change to a specific new model. He only reminds us of our stated mission of reaching people and assumes pastors will seek the Lord about the specific changes needed to bring that out. He focuses on dealing with the inevitable resistance that will be found in most established churches to change.

He reminds us that no matter how needed change may be, change can be badly mismanaged and doomed to failure. The bulk of the book is 8 elements of implementing change. These elements have been beaten out on the anvil of hard experience and seem incredibly wise.

Rainer is a man easy to appreciate. There is a humility and real concern that pervades his writings. He instructs without a heavy hand and seems to be genuinely rooting for you on these pages.

As a pastor, I found real instruction in this volume. It’s another winner from Rainer’s pen.

I received this book free from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255.

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### Corey says

Helpful and practical guide for pastors and church leaders on leading change in their churches. Most churches are declining or not growing, and change is urgent. This book is realistic about how hard it is to lead a church or ministry to change. There are the early adopters (5%), those open to change (20%), the followers who simply go with whoever has the loudest voice or most influence (30%), those who are resistant to change (25%), and those who are highly resistant (20%), who basically are the most critical, divisive and are not fun at all to be around. But Rainer did a good job providing a roadmap for how to most effectively lead your people through change.

Though I am not a pastor, I am leading an organization through change, while also being led through a change process, and I thought The principles that Rainer gave were transferable to other contexts, including my own. I was challenged at points with my own mistakes and failures, while at the same time encouraged that leading will always be hard, will never be universally embraced by everyone you lead, and will require courage as a leader to stay the course in order take people where God is leading. If you are a ministry leader, you probably need the advice contained in this book.

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## John says

Rainer writes with a direct simplicity that I appreciate. "Who Moved My Pulpit" is written to pastors who have struggled with leading their church through change. In other words, it's written to all pastors.

Although I've experienced some success in navigating change, it is my failures in leading change that loom large for me. I need this book.

Rainer begins by pulling apart a case study and examining the many ways we can fail in leading change. He then explains how different types of church members will receive change differently. He categorizes the congregation as five types: the deniers, the entitled, the blamers, the critics, and the confused. Every person has to be led uniquely through change.

Rainer then lays out a road map for change and spends the rest of the book walking through that road map. His road map is: 1) stop and pray; 2) confront and communicate a sense of urgency; 3) build an eager coalition; 4) become a voice and vision of hope; 5) deal with people issues; 6) move from an inward focus to an outward focus; 6) pick low-hanging fruit; 7) implement and consolidate change.

Of those chapters, number 3 was probably the most impactful. My tendency as a leader can be to focus my leadership energy on converting the unconvertable, on inspiring those who have no interest in change. Rainer estimates that 5% are eager for change, 20% are open to change, 30% are followers, 25% are resistant to change, and 20% are highly resistant to change. My tendency is to expend my energy at the bottom, but Rainer wisely advises to expend your energy with the 25% who are eager and open to change.

Balancing that is the call to always put people first. I love Rainer's reminder: "If you love change more than you love people, you have already failed as a leader."

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## Michael Harshman says

Considering changes in your church? This is a must read!

"Who Moved My Pulpit?" is a very engaging book to read. Mr. Rainer covers the different stages that should be covered when making changes within a church. Too often, changes are made too quickly, resulting in resentment, resistance or people leaving the church. This book has such wisdom regarding how to more effectively make changes in a manner that has less resistance and ultimately will give glory to God. Most of our churches in America are in dire need of change as they are becoming emaciated. We need change to happen so we will be more outward focused rather than inward focused. Thom does an amazing job covering this, and I would highly recommend this book to any church leaders or anyone that is interested in helping to change our churches for God's glory. I received a copy of this book in exchange for this review from B&H Publishing and all opinions are my own.

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## Chris Whitehead says

It is sad that many churches across America would need a book like this. As a pastor, I read this book and I hope that our church would maintain the simplicity that would keep us from many of the problems that face those who would need this book.

I give the book 3 stars because while it doesn't really get to the heart of what exact "change" that it is trying to address, it is well written and easy to understand. Though, I think if we maintain the simplicity of what "church" is supposed to be according to scripture and history, we might not need to read this.

The only 2 major points of interest that I took from this book are these- 1. Small changes can happen overnight but big changes should be progressive. 2. Never go into anything without first giving it a lot of thought and prayer.

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### **Justin says**

I am a huge fan of Thom Rainer. I should mention that in the beginning. I have read all his books, read his blog, and follow a lot of his advice. I was so excited to receive this one for review.

This book is about church change and what goes into proposing healthy and church transforming change. Rainer's advice to couch everything in prayer is some of the most sound advice. His other advice, such as get a team to help support seems like a no brainer. It is funny how much of this advice seems intuitive, but so many pastors I know do not follow it.

I really enjoyed this one and thought it was a good companion to his book Autopsy of a Deceased Congregation. I gave this one 4 stars.

\*I wish to thank NetGalley and B&H Books for the opportunity to read this early. I received it for free in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Maarten De vries says**

Who moved my pulpit is geschreven voor leiders in de kerk die op zoek zijn naar hulp bij verandering die ze door willen of moeten voeren. Ik heb het boek gelezen omdat ik naar Rainers podcasts luister.

Het boek is door en door praktisch. Met een stappenplan, korte hoofdstukken en alinea's, vragen om je eigen gedrag en kerk te toetsen aan het einde van elk hoofdstuk en een enquête/test in de bijlage waarmee je je kerk kan inschalen. Rainer zelf noemt het 'een verzameling van verhalen over hoe God leiders heeft gebruik om verandering en vooruitgang te realiseren'. De vele anecdotes maken duidelijk wat mis kan gaan bij het leiden van veranderprocessen, maar ook hoe het wel kan.

Het boek is dun en je leest er razendsnel door heen. Mocht het thema je interesseren en je komt het boek tegen dan is het zeker de moeite waard.

Enkele quotes om het gevoel van het boek aan te geven:

"I simply know that if something is important to the church, it really cannot be over-communicated."

Pagina 12

"Leading change in the church is impossible in your own power. It can be both redundant and

exhausting. There will be days where you will wonder if it's worth it. You will be worn out. You need to pray for God's strength."

Pagina 33

"Here is a simple lesson and beginning point. Change agents are agents of hope. And hope has its being in the heart of God. There is no true hope apart from God."

Pagina 68

"The entire congregation had a sense of arrival. Again, they saw the relocation as the end instead of the means. And when the end is achieved, there is nothing left to do. That is why one of the greatest challenges for a church that has successfully completed change is to enter into a period of complacency."

Pagina 119

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## **Pastor Aaron says**

It is great for what it is. It is a simple, straightforward explanation of a healthy model for leading a church or ministry through change. Much of the content can be described as fleshed-out bullet-points with illustrations. There are other books for detailed analysis of each step and its theological or philosophical underpinnings. However, this is meant to be a quick and easy read. This keeps the points from being obscured or the reader from being bogged down, which easily happens in the larger books.

Unfortunately, it can make it seem very basic and repetitive. However, that is what this book is meant to be. None of it was earth-shattering or new. But it was written in an engaging fashion and pulled me quickly through the material. You might say, as I did, "I already knew most of this," but the question is, "am I mastering it." If not, then it is worth the time. It will also be a great future reference to glance through and quickly focus on steps you need to keep in mind as you lead through future transitions.

In addition, this style of book I see as being most useful as a text-book/guide for working through church changes with other church leaders and lay-people. The book gives the basic outline that the pastor can flesh out with other material that fit that particular ministry's culture and circumstance. I imagine that this is the author's and the publisher's primary intent, anyway.

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## **Chris Wilson says**

Dr. Rainer is a gift to church leadership at all levels. In all honesty I moved this book to the top of my to-read pile because of its relative brevity. However, I ended up being greatly challenged by the need to be in constant consideration of the following from the end of the book, "There will always be change to lead. It is a never-ending cycle of introducing change, implementing change, incorporating change, and introducing the next change."

As a church planter, less than one year in, I have often thought that change would be needed after we became

"established" by whatever metric one can arrive at that destination. People? Money? Permanent Space? What would lead us to be established I wasn't sure but it gave me cover to not want to deal with change even this early in the church planting process.

Dr. Rainer's book is most beneficial because it breaks the need for change down into manageable bites. Often those who desire to be change leaders, like myself, struggle to pull the trigger on some of the initial steps because everything in front of us, the unknowns and unknowables, serve as a way to dismiss pursuing the change needed. The steps Dr. Rainer offers takes the feeling of impossibility and makes it feel not only possible, but necessary and accessible.

I cannot recommend this book enough to those who are in leadership positions in church. It is a trusted guide and resource I plan on coming back to again and again.

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### **Ciro says**

"Who Moved My Pulpit" is meant to be read as a kind of roadmap for ministers and lay leaders who encounter the challenges of leading change within congregations. Rainer's argument claims the church in United States is dwindling predominantly because it is fearful of change and adjustment. He uses his years of experience to reveal the roots of these fears as well as how we should approach the problem of church immobility.

The book is easy to read and approachable. The size is very manageable for those that read on the bus or train, so there is an accessibility about the book that is hard to come by (135 small pages). Also, I don't believe there are many books that address this specific issue, and I feel the theme of the book is meeting a demand that is not often openly discussed. That being said, considering the size of the book, Rainer is very repetitive. I appreciate his constant reminder that we should pray, but we probably shouldn't be reading this book if we don't have a consistent prayer life. For its length, the book should be more dense and compact, instead I felt that what he covers could have been covered in a smaller book or pamphlet.

The book would serve better as an introductory text to a larger series or book, that further elaborates on the theme of leading change in a Christian context.

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### **Brooke Fradd says**

I'm not sure the low rating is deserved by the author, or if it goes deservedly to the American church. I couldn't wrap my mind around how petty church-goers can be.

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### **Michael Boutot says**

#### **WHAT I LIKE MOST ABOUT THE BOOK**

What I liked most was that it was an easy and quick read. Thom addressed some very sensitive and difficult areas that relate to change within the local church. I love how he addressed specific areas and also how to anticipate responses. I really appreciated his ideas about establishing what he calls an "Eager Coalition". I also appreciate his statistical analysis of how people respond to changes. His section on "low hanging fruit" was very insightful. Then at the end of the book he has an excellent survey for leaders and church members.

#### WHAT I LIKED LEAST ABOUT THE BOOK

There really was not anything that I didn't like. Much better than his book "Simple Church".

#### TAKEAWAYS FROM THE BOOK

I wish I had read this book 12 years ago due to how I wrongly handled changes in a prior church. I plan to work towards creating an "eager coalition" at our current church and to identify what he calls "low hanging fruit."

#### WHO SHOULD READ THE BOOK

This book is ideally for Pastors and church leaders.

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### **Daniel Ligon says**

This was a good book, though in my opinion not one of Rainer's best. As usual, Rainer uses a wealth of experience to communicate some helpful, practical tips about church ministry in a readable, storytelling style. In this book, Rainer's subject is change in the church. He doesn't use this book to push for a specific type of change, though he does say that some external changes are always necessary to avoid stagnation. I would tend to agree.

The strengths of this book are its easy to grasp, practical concepts of how to effectively lead change, as well as what strategies to avoid. Particularly helpful to me was Rainer's description of low hanging fruit: achieve easy victories and small changes before attempting change in bigger areas. I did see a couple of weaknesses in this book. First, Rainer doesn't do a great job in finding and articulating scriptural principles to back up his techniques. Thus, he occasionally sounds a bit too much like a self-help author revealing smart ways to deal with people. Second, Rainer doesn't spend much time discussing how a pastor should decide what changes are needed at his church. Each pastor could certainly benefit from some guidelines in this area, though each one must make his own decision. Despite these weaknesses, I found this book both engaging and eminently practical. I can recommend it to any pastor or staff member.

I received a digital copy of this book for free from the publisher and was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I express in this review are entirely my own.

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### **Garrett Trott says**

Thom Rainer provides a great book, with his intriguing title: "Who Moved My Pulpit?" The title comes from a real scenario that arose when a pastor decided to change the pulpit from a traditional lectern to a more conventional pulpit. Rainer uses this as an example that launches his discussion of change and the critical role it plays in the church, providing much needed insight on the significant role that change plays in the church. He states that church leaders do not have an option in leading change, they need to pray for wisdom, courage, and strength in the process of so doing (pp. 41-2).

Rainer suggests a nine-step protocol for change. First, in order to lead change, leaders must stop and pray. Rainer provides several examples where change without prayer has led to havoc. Prayer is a critical ingredient for any change. Second, Rainer states that leaders must confront and create a sense of urgency; they must present the brutal facts to the congregation that are propelling change. Rainer's third suggestion for change to progress is for leaders to develop a team of individuals who are excited about this change and can support the pastor and the church through the process. Rainer suggests that leaders must also become a

vision and voice for hope during change, assisting the church in keeping focus amid change. The next element that Rainer states is critical for successful change is to deal with relational issues that will arise in the midst of the process. The sixth issue that Rainer points out as being a serious protocol for change is that churches must move from a focus solely on individuals in its own congregation to focusing on the community-at-large. In stating this, Rainer points out that churches need to have a focus on the Great Commission and not simply on maintaining a stagnant body of believers. He provides an example where the changes needed in a certain church started with small and incremental changes, what he refers to as “low-hanging fruit.” Often churches need to see success in smaller programs and incentives (i.e. low-hanging fruit), in order to gain the momentum to succeed in larger ones. Rainer’s eighth step involves implementing and consolidating change. In other words, making sure that the change actually happens. His final step is an acknowledgment that leaders need to focus on the eternal in their ministerial efforts. Life is short and time needs to be spent on the eternal.

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## Mike says

Like Rainer's other works, I found this short read to be informative and practical. The author walks the reader through eight principles which are intended to leave lasting change for a stagnant or declining church. After a brief discussion concerning the state of the American church to include those unwilling to change, Rainer devotes a chapter to each particular principle.

If given the opportunity, I would have offered 3.5 stars instead of the 4 listed. Although the book was an easy read, it was informative and contained pertinent (and vital) information for church leaders. That said, I wonder if the author had an expectation in regards to words used, chapters, or pages to write? After a brief introduction to the state of the American church to include a discussion concerning church members unwilling to change, Rainer spends an ample amount of time on each principle. He then writes another chapter summarizing each principle once again. I'm a slow learner, but was this really necessary?

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