

BARNABAS PUBLISHERS REPRINT

Article

Boundary Processing

Looking At Critical Transition Times in
Leader's Lives

by

Dr. J. Robert Clinton

© 1992 (Template Appendix Added 2007)

© 1992 Dr. J. Robert Clinton
(Template giving a simplified procedure to do a boundary was added, 2007)

Abstract

Every leader goes through critical times of transition in his or her ministry. The key to these times is to put them into the perspective of a lifetime of development. Looked at directly, with the narrow focus of the now, the events of the present, they can be overwhelming and discouraging. We can feel like giving up, backing out of leadership altogether. But placed in the context of a lifetime of development they can be seen to serve at least four major purposes. (1) They deepen ones relationship to God. (2) They bring closure to recent experiences--that is, we learn lessons concerning the situation that has catapulted us into the boundary time. We make amends in terms of our inner life--recognize the need for forgiveness and reconciliation, where we can. We put that time behind us with a sense of having gained as much positive from it as we can. (3) They expand our perspectives to see new things. We may be released to consider or to be led into something new and different that we otherwise would never have opted for. We may be taken to a new level of realization of our potential that God has put in us. (4) We will make decisions that will launch us into a new aspect of ministry, or a new ministry altogether, or a new phase of development.

These boundary times are times of confusion, turmoil, sometimes pain, and almost always reflection with uncertain resolution. They last from as short a time as 2 or 3 months to as long a time as six years. There is a pattern to them. There is the (1) entry stage and its characteristic **backward reflection**--a seeking to understand what has happened to bring about the boundary. There is the (2) evaluation stage and its characteristic **upward reflection**--the drawing of God to see the meta goals behind the whole process--the deepening of relationship with the sovereign God. And there is the (3) termination stage with its characteristic **forward look**. The light in the tunnel is ahead, not now behind as it was in stage 1. Decisions are made with a confidence, even though made with details not always clear, that God is moving one forward with excitement to a new time of expansion, of purpose, and of release.

Forewarned is forearmed! Getting perspective on what happens in these boundary times before they happen can make the difference in how we respond in them. Here are some aspects of perspective that this paper aims to give. It will define the notion of boundary in general and three kinds in specific. It will also suggest the shaping processes that happen during these boundaries. Comparative studies of boundaries have identified the three stages just mentioned. If you are in a boundary it is easy to identify at which stage you are presently finding yourself. This three stage pattern is predictive in nature. You can also get a feel for what is going to happen next. And you can deliberately face the boundary with a positive attitude that God is in it. You can learn its lessons and be a better leader for it. And you can use the perspectives to help other leaders through the challenges of their boundary times.

The basic concepts of a boundary (written in 1992) hold but the manner in which we now write up a boundary has been simplified. I have included a **TEMPLATE FOR DOING A BOUNDARY ANALYSIS**, see **Appendix B** which gives the step-by-step simplified procedure for doing a boundary analysis. Included as part of the template is an example. Be alerted that this simplified boundary analysis is the standard being used now.

Outline (To go to any item, simply click on it. Red Font indicates a linked item.)

contents

The Scope of the Paper

I. Boundaries--Transitional Times, 5 Cases

Case A

Case B

Case C

Case D

Case E

II. The Big Picture, A Framework for Boundary Thinking

The Ministry Time-Line

III. Boundary Processing--What Is It?

Defining the Notion of Boundary

Boundary Point

Boundary Time

Phase Boundary

Sub-Phase Boundary

Minor Boundary

Boundary Processing

The Overall Effect of a Boundary--The Boundary Task

Overall Pattern--Three Stages

IV. Specific Boundaries Along The Ministry Time-Line

V. Boundaries and Ministry Philosophy

VI. How To Analyze a Boundary

Analyzing A Boundary While You Are In It

Analyzing A Boundry After The Fact

Closure

Bibliography

Appendix A. Listing of 51 Process Items

Appendix B. Template for Doing a Short Boundary Analysis

Figures

1. The Ministry Time-Line

2. Boundary Points on Dawson Trottman Time-line

3. Boundary Time on Dawson Trottman Time-line

4. A. W. Tozer Time-line

5. Time-Line of George Pierce

6. An Overview of A Boundary

7. The Ministry Time-Line with Boundaries

Tables

1. Boundary Processes

2. How To Analyze A Boundary—While You Are In It

3. How To Do A Post Mortem on A Boundary

Boundary Processing-- Looking at Critical Transition Times in Leader's Lives

The Scope of the Paper

One of the more important lessons¹ about leaders that has evolved in comparative studies of leader's lives concerns perspective.

EFFECTIVE LEADERS INCREASINGLY PERCEIVE PRESENT MINISTRY IN TERMS OF A LIFETIME PERSPECTIVE.

This paper examines *one aspect* of perspective that is crucial to the overall development of a leader. It concerns crucial times of transition for a leader. Leaders can transition from one ministry assignment to another, from one ministry to another or from one phase of their life to another. Each of these transitions involve thresholds² of a kind. They vary in time--some being as short as a few months, others lasting as long as six years. This paper will examine these transitions, called boundaries. It will define the notion of boundary in general and three kinds in specific. It will also suggest the shaping processes that happen during these boundaries. Comparative studies of boundaries have identified three stages. If you are in a boundary it is easy to identify at which stage you are presently finding yourself. This three stage pattern is predictive in nature. You can also get a feel for what is going to happen next. The paper will suggest some attitudes and approaches for analyzing your own boundary times--whether now being experienced or already experienced in the past.

Let me suggest two results I am hoping for in this paper. I'll introduce the first with a story. A couple of years ago, about a week before school began, Marilyn (my wife) and I were on an errand to see Paul and Rosemary Pierson. He's the Dean of my school. He and his wife, Rosemary, just live a couple of blocks from us. We were in the front living room chatting with them, catching up on what had happened during their summer.

¹Comparative studies of more than 600 leaders has resulted in many lessons--some of which are transferrable to other leaders. In fact, seven important ones include: (1) Effective leaders maintain a learning posture throughout life. (2) Effective leaders value spiritual authority as a primary power base. (3) Effective leaders recognize leadership selection and development as a priority function. (4) Effective leaders who are productive over a lifetime have a dynamic ministry philosophy. (5) Effective leaders evince a growing awareness of their sense of destiny. (6) Effective leaders increasingly perceive present ministry in terms of a lifetime perspective. (7) Effective leaders perceive relational empowerment as important in their own and their followers lives.

²All three of Webster's definitions of threshold certainly apply: (1) Boundaries are figurative portals or doorways passing from one part of life to another. (2) They are the place or point of entering or beginning: an entrance; as, on the threshold of a career. (3) They are the point at which a stimulus is just strong enough to be perceived or produce a response. Boundary times signal movement into new beginnings. In effect, the stimulus we are talking about represents God's intervention to move that leader on through the transition and to the new.

Paul, knowing I am a World War II buff, said, "Let me show you what I ran across on my trip up north." He had gone to help his kids fix up their house. He had run across some old copies of magazines. He had ten or fifteen of them. He said, "These are gold mines." They were *Time* magazines from the late 1930s.

The late 30s represents one of the boundaries of the twentieth century in particular and world history in general. It was a pregnant moment before the most devastating war the world has ever known was to strike in fulness. Millions of lives and the face of our global maps were to change. Only recently has some of the map been changed back.

I borrowed those magazines and took them home for a couple of weeks. I browsed through all of them and from time to time dug in on an article. It was so interesting to read them now—in the 1990s. For I know what happened, what actually worked out. But they are writing before it happened and did not know. They are anxious. They speculate. They hope. They describe what they want to happen or what they think might happen. But I know what really happened. I read them with a sure perspective. It is a tremendous feeling to read them knowing the future for them (past for me).

Now that's what a knowledge of boundary processing can do for us. It can give us a sense of calmness in the midst of turbulence and waiting; for we know something of the outline of what is happening to our lives—not all the details, but the overall picture of what God is doing. So result 1, that I am anticipating can be simply stated. *A knowledge of boundaries and boundary processing can give hope.* Many leaders are currently experiencing boundary processing. If they can just see what is happening to themselves and gain an overall perspective of their boundary in terms of a life time of development, there will be hope. They will know that God is working in a special way to move them on in their development. They can take what is happening to them because they know God is in it and that it is a transition forward in their lives.

I will give the second hoped for result in terms of a boundary thesis statement. I hope it will encourage a leader going through a boundary to *make the most of it; to get all out of the boundary time that can be gotten.* For boundary times are special times in which God is working to draw a leader close to Himself. Here in thesis form is the second hoped for result of this paper.

Thesis: **BOUNDARY PROCESSING PROVIDES UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY**

- to bring closure to recent experiences,
- to deepen ones relationship to God,
- to expand one's perspectives to see new things, AND
- to make decisions which will launch one into a new phase of development.

I. Boundaries--Transitional Times, 5 Cases

What is a boundary? What is processing? Why are these critical times in a leader's life? Let me illustrate with some real cases from my files.

Case A

He was a pastor on staff of a large church--call him Pastor A. He was working with singles. Friday night was the weekly event. The setting was around tables--a coffee house type of atmosphere. There was a worship band and several lead singers. His ministry was cutting edge stuff. The worship music was more radical; though not hard rock--it was more that direction than that of the normal church service. The songs were generally written by members of the band and others in the group. Dress was casual. Ear rings were part of the scene. Longer hair was in.

Pastor A was part of a large staff. There was a lot of walk-in traffic at the pastoral administration building. This walk-in traffic could be homeless needing financial help, a person in personal crisis needing counseling, or any one of a number of kinds of emergencies. The walk-in traffic problem was solved by assigning a role called Pastor On Duty. It was a tough job. Naturally nobody wanted it. So they rotated the duty. Each Pastor on the staff was assigned one day about every two weeks to be Pastor on Duty. It was a rugged time usually, emotionally draining, fraught with problems where solutions were not always readily available. Pastor A took his turn along with others.

There was a regime turn-over.³ A new pastor who came from outside the system was given the responsibility for all the pastors on staff. The leadership style of Pastor A was not appreciated by the new regime leader who was more conservative in music and dress. Another leader on the staff, Pastor B, who had the ear of the new regime leader, also felt that the Friday time-slot was prime time and wanted it for his own ministry. The up-shot was that the new regime leader put pressure on Pastor A to change his leadership style and the format of the ministry. A final move in this direction was the merger of his ministry with Pastor B. Of course, Pastor B led the Friday night ministry.

With Pastor A not playing a significant role in the Friday meetings, his following began to dwindle and his singles began avoiding the Friday night service. Pastor A was called in and told that essentially he was not needed for the Friday night ministry--his major ministry and one which had been going rather successful until the merger. He was offered the job of Pastor On Duty as a regular job every day. Pastor A was rather discouraged. But after prayer and counsel with a mentor not in the system he submitted and took the job.

³Regime turn-over is a technical name describing a change in leadership in which a new leader takes over an on-going ministry. It is a corporate boundary time. Usually there are real problems as the new leader brings in his/her philosophy. Where it clashes with leaders carried over from the previous regime there is usually conflict. It is not unusual for leaders from the former regime to be forced out.

Pastor A stayed on staff. He carried out that role for an extended period of time, almost as long as his previous ministry with the singles. He changed roles from that of an up-front apostolic, word gifted leader with a creative music ministry, to that of a counselor/ problem solver dealing with daily walk-on traffic in the office. This change of roles within a given ministry signals a minor boundary within a developmental phase. Pastor A was staying in the same locale, had the same relationships with others on staff, was known by many in the situation. This is a minor boundary. Though in fact it was the initiating activity that would later eventuate in an exit from the church itself into a new ministry altogether.

This boundary represents a *minor boundary* since it is a transition within an existing ministry from one role to another. The type of boundary activity involved *turmoil* (conflict) and *guidance* (negative preparation). This exemplifies a relatively short boundary since the actual transition took about three months.⁴

Case B

Pastor B was in his late thirties and had about 16 years of ministry experience. He was now in a church plant that had lasted 4 1/2 years. During that time the church had grown from a few couples in his home to over 350. The church was using rented facilities--a warehouse type building in a shopping mall environment. There were now several other full time staff workers and numerous lay leaders.

Pastor B was very loyal to the denomination of which he was a part. He was active in the district meetings and had good relationships with his peers and those over him. He did tasks for the district supervisor in a responsible way. It was clear that Pastor B was a comer in the denomination. He demonstrated charisma and giftedness. He was a leader. He made things happen. I knew that eventually he would be asked to move up in leadership in the denomination.

I was operating as a mentor for Pastor B though he lived six hours away. He had trained with me in the leadership concentration for over two years. I had been part of the decision making process which had led to the new church plant. I continued to do distance mentoring with Pastor B. He was given several personal growth projects to work on. He would report back to me from time to time on those projects. He also usually touched base once per month by phone just to talk and let me know what was happening. In our monthly chats Pastor B would occasionally give remarks that indicated he was restless and would like to move on. He was interested in missions. He was also interested in training. But he knew that in his denomination he needed a church plant for real credibility with pastors and with emerging leaders. So he stayed with it.

⁴At the conclusion of each case study I shall give a brief description of the boundary. I shall briefly mention boundary terms that will be explained later on. At this point in the paper, simply read through them, get a feeling for them even though they have not yet formally been defined. Later after they are defined you may want to reread the case studies and see the definitions more fully.

One day he called me and told me he wanted me to meet with a fellow, Denominational Exec A, who was high up in the denomination. This fellow wanted some help from me. Pastor B was his link to me. Pastor B had met Denominational Exec A at a seminar and had shared his vision, his pilgrimage, and what he had learned about leadership both formally in his training with me and informally on the job. They connected. Both were interested in improving leadership training in the denomination--particularly for leaders already in ministry. I was impressed with Denominational Exec A. After the meeting Pastor B told me privately that Denominational Exec A had offered him a very responsible job back at headquarters. The job would allow influencing of pastors throughout the whole denomination in terms of non-formal and informal training means. I counselled him about the opportunity. We had agreed when he went in to the church plant, that it was a jump-off ministry for him as we both knew that his gifts and potential were destined for high level leadership some day. But we had both thought that he needed to take the church to about 1000 and build a permanent church facility in order to have the credibility he would need to influence pastors and emerging leaders. All of this had not been completed fully. The job seemed right but I was concerned about timing both in completing the task and in transitioning someone else in who would do it. Could the church be turned over to a leader who could carry out the original vision and even add to it? It was clear to me that Denominational Exec A was a divine contact for Pastor B. It was God opening up the opportunity. And so it proved to be. God clearly led to the selection of a new leader to take the church plant onward. Within a period of less than two months Pastor B was out of there and on-the-job back at headquarters.

This boundary is a major boundary since it represents a transition from one kind of ministry to an entirely different one. Later we shall call this a *phase boundary* since it represents a shift from a major development phase to a new major development phase. In addition it involves a major geographical shift across country. Even though it is major it is a very short boundary--time-wise. The type of boundary activity involved *future expansion* (ministry challenge, and influence-mix challenge) and *guidance* (divine contact).

Case C

Missionary C was coming home, for good. She had a varied background. Her first six years in ministry had been pastoral. She knew the problems and the opportunities of small church work. Her next eight years were involved in an institutional training setting for her denomination. She was helping to prepare pastors and church planters for the kind of ministry she herself had been in. Then she received a call overseas to Africa. For eleven years she ministered in a relatively poor African country. Her ministry had been extensive. She was loved by the people. She loved the people. Her furlough times had shown her how difficult it was for a missionary, caught up in the problems of a poor country and a growing young national church, to fit back into a home setting and be understood by the home folks. Relatively speaking the home folks were rich and wasted money on such luxuries that it was difficult to be around and to help them sense responsibility for their resources and the needs around the world.

Missionary C recognized this as a major turning point in her ministry. She opted for a time of study at the School of World Mission. It would serve both as a transition time to adjust back to the home front and a time of renewal via input and perspectives. She chose to do a masters program and thesis which actually focused on the re-entry problems that missionaries face as they return home. Her two years of study were a boundary time, a phase boundary. Her studies and particularly her thesis helped her clarify the issues of re-entry and gave solid input for other missionaries who would face the same problem.

This boundary is a major boundary since it represents a transition from one kind of ministry to an entirely different one and a major geographical and cultural orientation. Later we shall call this a *phase boundary* since it represents a shift from a major development phase to a new major development phase. This is a medium long boundary lasting about 2 and 1/2 years. The type of boundary activity involved *general growth* (isolation and training progress).

Case D

Missionary D had served over 12 years in a prosperous Asian country. He was innovative and a driver. After his initial language learning experience and initial ministry assignments he had been made field leader. He was a leader and had innovative ideas as well as a far reaching vision. He had supervised a large regional church planting project. It had been a mixed venture--some good things happened and some not so good. In essence though, he had shown that this methodology had possibilities. Toward the end of the project there was turmoil and some strained relationships between colleagues who were under him. It was hard for him to understand this resentment and the judgments that some of these colleagues made about him and his leadership. When he came home on furlough he was down. Normally he was an up-beat person. Once he was off the field his fellow missionaries, one of which had been assigned his former leadership position formed even more critical judgments of Missionary D.

Missionary D was even considering the possibility of leaving full time ministry altogether. He came to the School of World Mission for training and for a time to reflect on what had happened. During his time here, about 2 years, he did some serious reflecting on his experience. God met him and turned his whole attitude around. He received affirmation. He saw, that yes, there had been mistakes. He could have done some things better. But all in all he was a visionary leader whom God had used. He began to explore options for the future. Numerous openings came. Almost all of them were responsible positions carrying more potential and higher level influence than he had held on the field. God began to give him a broader vision than just the country in which he had served.

Eventually, his mission went through a major crisis. He was asked to help out for an interim time in the home office. The basic problem was finances. He began to hit the road and make contacts. He brought in large sums of money. It was clear he was gifted

in meeting and talking with high level Christian businessmen. It was clear he had vision and could project a future for the mission which challenged givers. When the head of the mission moved on to another challenge the board recognized that Missionary D had the kind of potential to head up the whole mission. And so he was offered the job. Off and on, I counseled him throughout the whole time of this boundary. I was able to give him an overview of what happens in a boundary. I saw him progress through all three of the boundary stages. I could see the processing going on and explain it to him. Over the entire process he was renewed, moved from a down attitude considering leaving full time Christian work, to the head of a going missionary outfit.

This boundary is a major boundary since it represents a major expansion within an organization and a transition from one kind of ministry (direct and indirect influence on the field) to an entirely different one (indirect to the whole mission). It also involved a major geographical shift. Later we shall call this a *phase boundary* since it represents a shift from a major development phase to a new major development phase. This is a medium long boundary lasting about 3 years. The type of boundary activity involved almost the whole range of processing including *turmoil* (conflict, negative preparation), *general growth* (isolation and training progress), *future expansion* (faith challenge, ministry challenge, and influence-mix challenge), and *guidance* (sovereign guidance).

Case E

He was a very capable professor and one who had good interpersonal skills as well as political savvy. Professor E was an expert in his field. He had served abroad in several countries. For about seven years he had served on faculty. When the Dean of his school vacated his position there was a worldwide search. Professor E was the unanimous choice of his faculty to step up to the challenge of the Deanship. He was head and shoulders above all other candidates. But accepting this position meant he would be less involved in his field of expertise. There was a tension. But in the end he chose to serve the interests of the faculty as a whole. He put his field of expertise on the back burner. He would still be able to do it part time. But the major responsibility would be channeling the vision of the school as it moved forward.

The search process lasted about three months though I am sure Professor E had considered the possibility of this challenging position a good six months prior to the search. He was familiar with his faculty colleagues whom he would be directing in the future. He knew the problems of the school. He also knew its strong points. He had ideas about its future. He knew the larger context of the university of which it was a part. He already had important relationships across the several schools of the university. He knew something of the job description of the previous dean. He knew how he wanted to change that description to fit his own unique giftedness. He would also continue doing what he had been doing.

This kind of boundary is called a *sub-phase boundary*. It represents a transition time which moves a leader within a development phase from one kind of ministry to a somewhat related but different one. Professor E is taking on a new ministry challenge

within the same kind of ministry that he was involved with previously. This is a relatively short boundary time. The activity can be described as *future expansion* (ministry challenge, influence-mix challenge).

All of these five cases represent boundaries, transition times in the lives of developing leaders. In these boundary times, several of the leaders--Pastor A and Missionary D, could easily have left the ministry. They were critical times for them. Two of the five were unsure of what was up ahead—Missionary C and Missionary D. One of the five, Pastor A, knew that the minor boundary was temporary and that something else must be ahead. Only two of the five, Pastor B and Professor E had positive choices available to them at the beginning of the boundary. All are still presently in ministry so that we can look back and see that they were transition times to new things God had for them. But they are seen as boundary times only in terms of a bigger picture. Lets now look at the bigger picture.

II. The Big Picture, A Framework for Boundary Thinking

Boundaries imply transition from something to something. We need a bigger picture than just the present, if we are to talk about boundaries. One important tool for getting this larger perspective is the ministry time-line which was developed in leadership emergence theory.

The Ministry Time-Line

A leader's life when viewed as a whole can usually be broken up into major time periods.⁵ These time periods are called **development phases**. Smaller time periods within development phases are called **sub-phases**. Comparative studies of leader's lives have resulted in a generalized overall time-line that can serve as a backdrop for evaluating a leader's unique time-line. It also helps us define the notion of boundary. Note the major time periods in Figure 1 which are called phases and designated with Roman numerals. Then note the sub-phases designated by capital letters. These are the time periods that help us pinpoint what boundaries are.

⁵The concept of a time-line evolved from several years of the study of individual leader's lives. This time-line is explained in detail in the **Leadership Emergence Theory** Manual. See especially Chapter 9, *Overviewing the Time Variable*, and Chapter 10, *Generic Time-Lines*. Each leader has a unique time-line with labels describing development phases. The time-line described in this section is a generalization that while helpful does not exactly fit any one person.

THE MINISTRY TIME-LINE

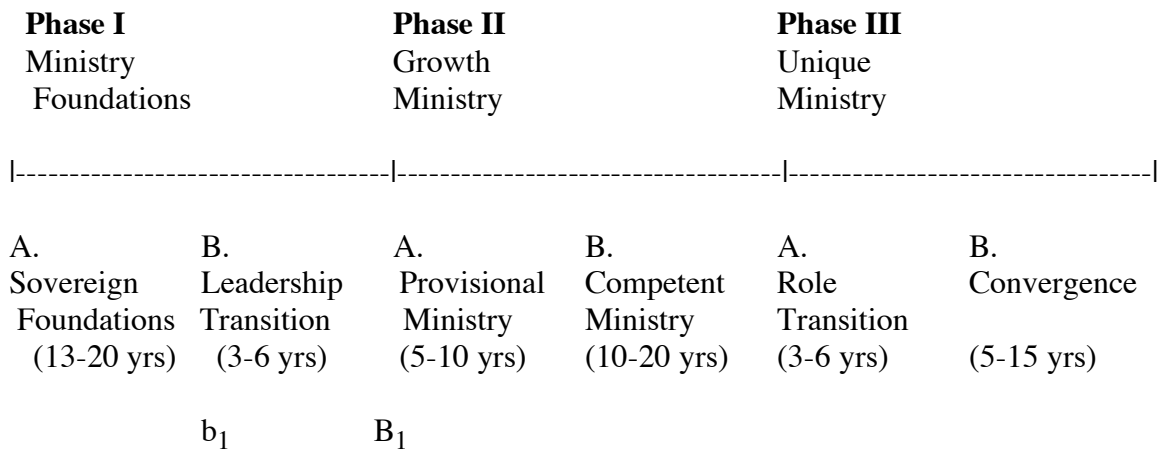


Figure 1. The Ministry Time-Line

The times shown for each sub-phase are general and represent a range of times observed in people's lives. For example, a typical leader coming from a Christian heritage might have a foundational sub-phase lasting about 18 years. The transition into leadership may take about 6 years. Provisional ministry involving three or four major ministry assignments may last about 10 years until competency is reached. Competent ministry may last 12 years before there is movement into a unique ministry with a role that fits the leader's gifts and experiences. So our average leader would be about 45 years old before moving into convergence.

In general, boundary times represent those times of movement from one phase to another as indicated by B_1 in Figure 1 or from one sub-phase to another as indicated by b_1 . There can also be a lesser boundary time within a sub-phase which is not shown above. That more minor transition would be a *significant change* of ministry assignment within a given sub-phase. Of course more boundary times could be designated for the above time-line. There are boundaries between each of the phases and sub-phases and several in the sub-phases.

III. Boundary Processing--What Is It?

Having seen some cases of critical transitions in leader's lives and having seen an overall framework for defining boundaries we are ready for some detailed definitions.

Defining The Notion of Boundary

With this general idea of a life time of development in mind, we can define several boundary concepts which are helpful: boundary point, boundary time, boundary processing, and boundary task.

Boundary Points

A boundary point defines the point on a time-line where two phases meet, or two sub-phases meet or at which there is a significant change in ministry within a boundary phase. The formal definition follows.

definition Technically a boundary point represents the end of one sub-phase or phase and the beginning of a new sub-phase or phase or the point of significant change from one ministry assignment to another.

Those boundary points between phases are called major boundary points, those between sub-phases or in a sub-phase are called minor boundary points. It sounds easy but is not quite so in real life since there is usually overlap times in which there are hangovers from the previous time period reaching into the new phase and beforemath⁶ implications from the next phase accompanying decisions made in the previous phase. Glance at Figure 2 which shows a typical unique time-line, in this case that of Dawson Trottman. Note the major boundary points indicated by brackets and capital letters B₁ and B₂.

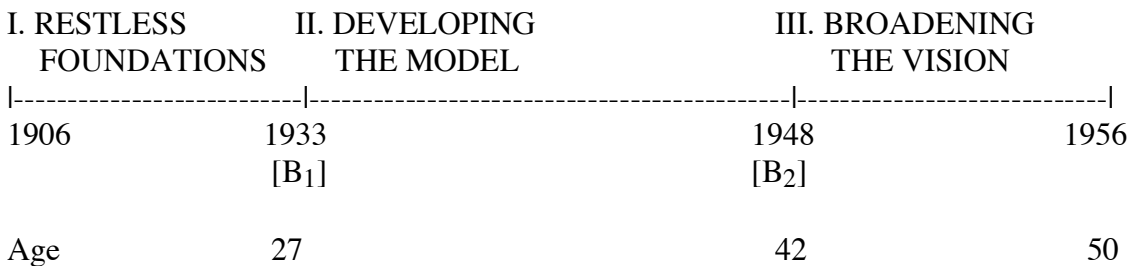


Figure 2. Boundary Points For Dawson Trottman Time-line.

Look at Figure 3 which again depicts Dawson Trottman's time-line. On it is shown the concept of a boundary time, indicated by the brackets, the B₁ symbol and the line bounded by arrows. The longer the line with the arrows, the longer the total time of the boundary. The second boundary, B₂, is relatively short and hence shows no time indication by arrows.

⁶*Beforemath* is a term introduced by Stanley Davis in his book, **Future Perfect**. Just as *aftermath* describes the ramifications from a past event reaching to the present so too there are implications from the future which reach back to the present. *Beforemath* is a term which implies that events and processes yet to happen, in the future, have implications reaching back into the present. Decisions made in stage 3 of a boundary time have implications for the new phase which in turn set up beforemath tentacles reaching back.

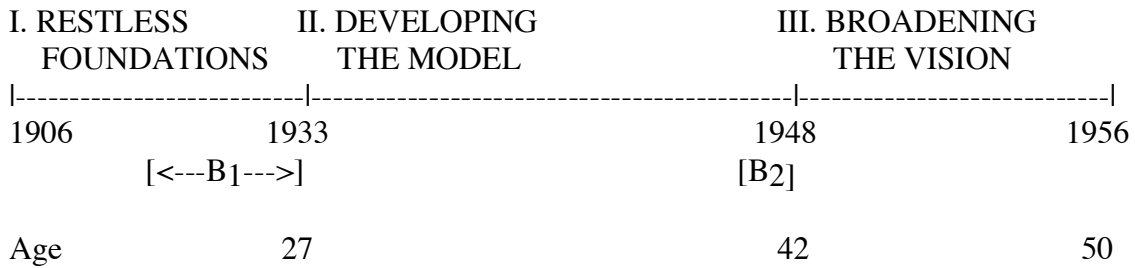


Figure 3. Boundary Time on Dawson Trottman Time-line.

Boundary Time

This extended time around a boundary point illustrates the complexity involved in defining a boundary and leads us to a helpful definition.

definition A boundary time represents that period of time around a boundary point characterized by

- activity that signals to the leader that some major change is coming,
- activity that releases the leader from the previous time period or focus,
- activity that draws the leader to recognize divine intervention, and
- activity that involves response on the leader's part to the intervention and toward the new time or focus.

Boundary times can last as short as a few months or as long as 5 or 6 years.

Figure 4 shows the time-line of A.W. Tozer. His boundary B_1 was a *short one*. Previous to this boundary point, he had been a member of a nominal church. His conversion experience was a radical, born-again, event. After it, he found himself uncomfortable in his old nominal church. Within a short period of time, a matter of a few months, he changed churches and joined one in which his conversion experience was appreciated. Radical paradigm shifts⁷ such as Tozer's conversion often precipitate rapid changes and thus a short boundary time. After a series of small town pastorates, each successively larger and more successful in terms of his sphere of influence and effective ministry, Tozer moved to Chicago. This boundary took a little longer to process. And

⁷A paradigm shift is a special kind of process (often associated with boundary times) in which a person gets an entirely new perspective with which to view happenings and can see things that were not previously seen before even though those happenings may have been there. Examples: a change of perspective from not believing in the supernatural (demonic activity) to recognizing the presence and power of spirit beings (See J.O. Fraser, pioneer missionary to tribal peoples in China); a new perspective on the purpose and power of prayer which then impacts all your ministry; a renewal experience with God, such as a surrender experience in which Christ becomes the Lord of the life.

finally there was the move at age 62 to a *retirement* ministry which allowed him to reflect and write while having minimum responsibility in the pastorate. That boundary took longer to process than either of the other two. Knowing when to turn loose of a going ministry is not an easy task.

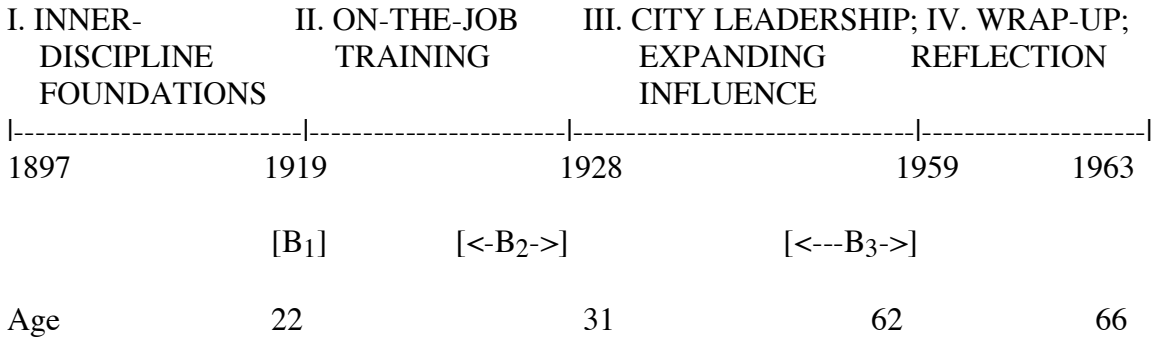


Figure 4. A. W. Tozer Time-Line

Figure 5 shows the time-line of George Pierce (1986). This is from a contemporary case study of a present leader. It illustrates the concept of a long boundary time. This is rare and does not normally occur for most people.⁸

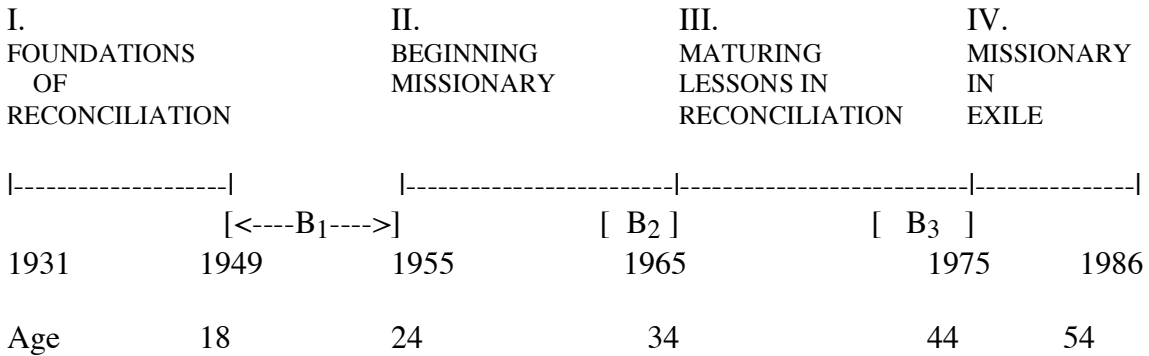


Figure 5. Time-Line of George Pierce

Pierce's first boundary is really not a point. It is a process over time which took six years. Pierce was being transitioned into leadership. Sometimes it is difficult to pinpoint an exact boundary point. In that case, it is probably better to indicate a boundary time as a parenthetical transition as Pierce did.

⁸ Normally a major boundary begins in the latter part of the final sub-phase and terminates at the beginning of the next phase. Normally it does not cover a whole sub-phase.

Phase Boundary

Having now looked at several time-lines with various kinds of boundaries we do well to give some definitions.

definition A phase boundary represents a transition time which moves a leader from one major phase to another.

Pastor B who is moving from a church plant situation to a denominational executive position represents this kind of boundary. Missionary C who transitioned off the mission field back into a denominational position of wide regional influence after an extended study leave also demonstrates this kind of boundary. Missionary D who transitioned off the field into the directorship of his mission also represents this kind of boundary.

The large capital lettered boundary indications on Figures 2 through 5 also represent phase boundaries. Leaders are moving from one major development phase in their lives to another. It is easier to see in a historical character since you can look at the entire life after it is past. It is not so easy to see it in a present situation like Pastor B's situation.

Sub-Phase Boundary

Professor E who stepped up to take the deanship and continue teaching but with a lesser load represents another kind of boundary. On Figure 1, the generic ministry time-line, I indicate a sub-phase boundary by the little letter b₁. The example time-lines shown in Figures 2-5 do not list sub-phases. They do exist and a more detailed presentation of each of those time-lines would indicate them.

definition A sub-phase boundary represents a transition time which moves a leader from one sub-phase to another.

Frequently, it is difficult as it is happening to know whether a boundary is a sub-phase to sub-phase transition or a phase to phase transition. Time will tell. In the meantime, resolution of what kind is not so important since both kinds of boundaries will have the same kind of activity and patterns and hence will generally require the same kind of response from the leader.

Minor Boundary--Transition within the Same Sub-Phase

Pastor A who stayed on the pastoral staff and simply took up a role with which he was familiar illustrates another kind of boundary.

definition A minor boundary represents a transition time within a sub-phase.

Generally, when a person stays in a situation with which he/she is familiar and simply adds a new responsibility or new ministry challenge or task it is probably a minor boundary. Minor boundaries have some of the ear marks of sub-phase and phase boundaries but may not have all the activity associated with a boundary time. Usually they are shorter in duration.

Boundary Processing

A boundary time is important because it gives the time frame within which we can identify important shaping activities. Boundary times and the accompanying processing are especially important in moving us along toward God's destiny for us. Later I will talk about ministry philosophy and how God builds that into our lives. Boundary times and boundary processing play a significant role in the focus variable associated with ministry philosophy development. What do I mean by processing?

definition Boundary processing represents the activity taking place during a boundary time which functions,

- to initiate the boundary,
- to shape the leader's thinking about the previous time period--including learning lessons about self, ministry, and relationships to others,
- to give guidance to the leader,
- to deepen the relationship of the leader to God, and
- to bring a psychological and spiritual release from the past time period so as to move toward the new with anticipation.

Lets talk more specifically about that activity. Certain incidents in our lives are used by God to shape us in various ways to give us leadership values, to teach us leadership lessons, to form character and instill deep convictions. In leadership emergence theory we label these incidents as process incidents. Process incidents are the actual occurrences from a given life of those providential events, people, circumstances, special divine intervention, inner-life lessons, and/or other like items which God uses to develop a person by shaping leadership character, leadership skills and leadership values. A comparative study of like process incidents across many lives has led to the defining of special categories of incidents which we label as process items. A process item is a label inductively drawn from a comparative analysis of process incidents which categorizes incidents into groups with like properties and functions.⁹ Process items, when studied across lives help us recognize and even suggest the kinds of values that will arise from these life experiences.

Any process item, if it is sensed as a special intervention from God, causes serious reflection. Usually lessons are learned from this. The accumulation of these lessons over

⁹At this point in the research in leadership emergence theory we have coded about 51 different process items varying in level of abstraction from very specific to somewhat more general descriptions. See Appendix A which lists these items and suggests basic times over a leader's lives when they most likely occur.

a lifetime build up the set of values that comprise a ministry philosophy. The lessons can deal with relationship with God, character and personal ethics, practical ministry guidelines, ministry ethics, guidance, destiny and other factors suited uniquely to the individual. While all process items teach lessons that develop us as leaders the process items that occur in boundary times are especially important since they are, taken collectively, moving us forward in guidance toward our place in God's destiny for us.

Finzel (1988)¹⁰ made a comparative study of major boundary processes of historical characters as well as contemporary characters. He identified major process items which were common to most of the lives of these leaders. His study plus more recent analysis has resulted in the following list of important boundary processes. Table 1 lists the 15 top kinds of processing items associated with boundary activity.¹¹ You will notice that I have already been using these terms when I described the kind of activity of the Case Studies A-E.

Table 1. Boundary Processes

<u>Kind</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Essence of the Processing</u>
I. Turmoil	1. Conflict	a. personal inner turmoil (spiritual, emotional, restlessness, etc.)
		b. relational turmoil (other people related inter-personal problems)
		c. ministry oriented turmoil (factions, differences in philosophy, etc.)
	2. Crisis	a. macro contextual (war, other external disasters)
		b. threat of termination of ministry
	3. Life Crisis	a. life threatening pressure
	b. pressures which cause deep reflection on the meaning of life and ultimate purposes	

¹⁰Dr. Hans Finzel, at the time (1988) studying for his doctorate, did a research project in advanced leadership emergence theory which compared 40 leaders for information on boundary processing. Table 1 includes not only his findings but that which has been added to it in the last several years.

¹¹See the **Leadership Emergence Theory** manual for formal definitions of these 15 process items and other details.

Table 1. Boundary Processes continued

<u>Kind</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Essence of the Processing</u>
II. Radical Change	1. Leadership Committal	a renewal experience in which there is a fresh committal to God in terms of a new ministry venture God is directing toward
	2. Paradigm Shift	the breakthrough by God which instills a new perspective affecting the leader's thought and activity
	3. Ministry Structure Insights	a special kind of paradigm shift which involves learning something about how to deliver one's ministry more effectively
III. General Growth	1. Isolation	a setting aside from ministry by God for deepening of relationship; a shift forward to ministering out of being rather than doing; a focus on beingness rather than doingness
	2. Training Progress	the completion of a significant training experience (whether formal, non-formal, or informal) which affects leadership skills and values so as to alter future ministry
IV. Future Expansion	1. Faith Challenge	a discerning that God is calling toward a new or particular step of faith that must be taken; a frightening challenge about trusting God which is beyond one's comfort zone
	2. Ministry Challenge	a discerning that God is calling toward a new or expanded ministry assignment
	3. Influence-mix Challenge	a discerning that God is expanding the sphere of influence; either the direct face-to-face influence (extensiveness, comprehensiveness, intensiveness), the indirect (media, relational), or organizational (networking, power groups)
V. Guidance	1. Divine Contact	the perceived intervention of God via some person at a critical time with information that is timely, encouraging, opportunistic, clarifying or the like
	2. Destiny Revelation	the breaking in of God in an unusual way to reveal or clarify next steps or future ministry so as to instill a sense of destiny and renewed hope in serving God

Table 1. Boundary Processes continued

<u>Kind</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Essence of the Processing</u>
	3. Negative Preparation	the accumulative perception that a series of negative happenings involving events, people, etc. are being used by God for more than character processing; they are actually being used by God to release from the present situation and give a very positive desire for the next situation
	4. other Sovereign Guidance	the unusual breaking in of God to give direction via confirming circumstances, direct revelation, etc.

The Overall Effect of a Boundary—The Boundary Task

The final boundary term I shall define is a strategic one and one not so easily grasped. It requires a broader view of a life which can put a boundary in context of the bigger picture.

In retrospect, one can look back at a boundary time that has been completed in the past. Usually when considered as a whole one or two major things will usually be identified as having been accomplished by God during the boundary period as a whole. In order to see this, one has to know where they were in development before the boundary and where they are in development after the boundary.¹² And usually this understanding of development needs almost a whole development phase of time after the boundary in order to be appreciated. Identification of boundary tasks instills confidence that God is working in the life.

definition A boundary task represents an overall thrust, a summary statement, of what God was basically accomplishing during a boundary time which is usually only evaluated some time after the fact by retrospective reflection.

Consider again A.W. Tozer's time-line given in Figure 4. B₁ represented his conversion experience, an abrupt boundary event which resulted in immediate transition choices for him. The major *development task* was to transition Tozer into a situation where his leadership potential could be challenged and eventually lead to full time ministry. Conversion brought a paradigm shift. Activity in one church, more liberal in

¹²In leadership emergence theory we have identified helpful measures of development. These include: major lessons learned, development tasks, giftedness development, sphere of influence, influence means, progress along standard patterns, major contributions, ultimate contributions. These measures are explained in Chapter 13 of **Leadership Emergence Theory**.

views than Tozer's conservative views, were accentuated by his conversion experience. This led him to transfer his membership to a church more compatible with his new found experience. This new church had on-the-job ministry tasks which helped him to grow, become part time in ministry and eventually led to a rural pastorate.

B₂ represented Tozer's decision to accept a call to a Chicago ministry. This was a major change in ministry focus, a large city church, and a geographical shift from a small town environment to a large metropolitan area. The major *development task* was that of influence challenge processing. Tozer had capacities beyond that of a small town church. God needed to move him into a geographic center where he could be exposed nationally. The larger church provided a backdrop and potential resources from which sphere of influence could be expanded.

B₃ culminated a growing conviction to retire from the rigors of a large city pastorate to a ministry involving more contemplation, study, and writing. The need for another building expansion was the termination event which hastened commitment to the crucial choice. The major *development task* was guidance via negative preparation. Tozer needed to step down for the sake of the church's own need to expand and for Tozer's own need to reflect and consolidate a life-time of learning.

Overall Pattern—Three Stages

Finzel's research not only identified processes related to the boundary time but a 3 stage pattern covering a boundary time. Figure 6 depicts the three stage pattern and gives a comprehensive overview of what can happen during an extended boundary.

Looking at the boundary as a whole there are three stages: (1) the Entry Stage, (2) the Evaluation Stage, and (3) the Termination Stage. Of course, in shorter boundaries like a true boundary point these activities might collapse and merge and all of them might not be there. But on the whole they describe, tentatively predict, and help one assess where and what is happening in a boundary.

Note the crucial points involved in the stages: initiating activity, turning point, and resolution. The processes (15 process items—e.g. conflict, crises, etc.) are arranged time-wise where they most likely occur. Arrows indicate the range over which these process items might occur.

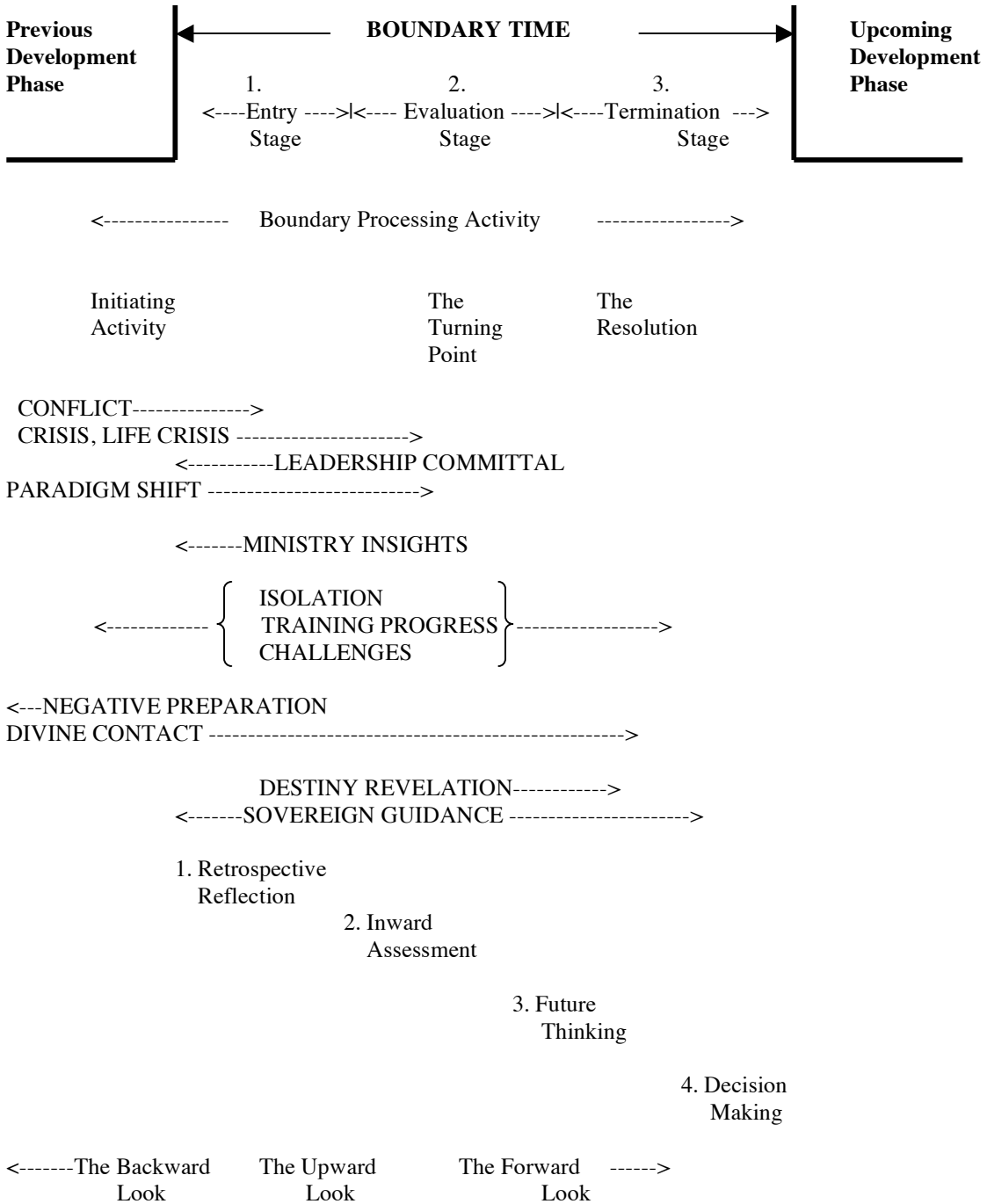


Figure 6. An Overview of a Boundary

Often prior to and sometimes concurrent with (1) *the Entry Stage* is some sort of *initiating activity* that begins to move a leader into the boundary. Common activities are

the negative items of *Turmoil* and *Guidance* including conflict, crisis, life crisis, and negative preparation. Occasionally other guidance activities such as divine contact or sovereign guidance will propel a leader into a boundary. Change of perspective such as a paradigm shift and a new ministry structure insight will cause a leader to enter a boundary especially as the outworking of the perspective brings dissonance in the present ministry situation.

After entrance into a boundary there is the major focus which **looks backward** and reflects on what has happened. Frequently if the boundary involves negative items there is the attempt to vindicate and defend one's own thinking, behavior and leadership. The entry stage is dominated by retrospective reflection and a questioning spirit.

Once solidly entrenched in the boundary there is a shift toward an inward assessment, that is, seeking to learn the lessons from what has happened. This signals movement into *Stage 2, the evaluation stage*. The burden is now less on blaming or vindicating and more on what can be learned and how it will affect the leadership character, skills, and values of the leader experiencing the boundary processing. Frequently, the leader is in some isolation experience, either externally imposed and not by choice or by choice. A training interlude, is often a self-choice isolation experience that characterizes the evaluation stage.

During this early part of Stage 2, the leader is frequently drawn closer to God. There is the desire for God to meet the leader in the situation. This movement from a backward look or focus to an **upward focus** is a major change in the leader in terms of learning response and is usually preparation for the major activity of boundary processing, **the turning point**. The turning point is the pivotal activity of all lengthy boundary processing. It is the point at which there is change from a retrospective and inward focus on self and the previous experience to an external and forward look at the next ministry that is coming. To use the tunnel analogy, it is when the light in the tunnel is now ahead and not behind.

A leadership committal is often the culminating experience that signals the turning point. The upward focus on God and deepening relationship often is part of God's activity to bring about a new level of surrender for ministry. That surrender might be accompanied by a destiny revelation experience or some sovereign guidance experience or new ministry structure insight. All of these give added clarity about what might happen in the future. After the turning point the major focus is **looking forward** to the upcoming development phase and not upward or backward.

Isolation processing or training progress processing which frequently accompanies *Stage 2, the Evaluation Stage*, will usually continue into *Stage 3, the Termination Stage*, and will help in the decision making process which is looking toward the future. Guidance items also frequently help shape the future decisions. *Stage 3, the Termination Stage*, is concerned with the decisions which will terminate the boundary and resolve the situation. Once these decisions are made the boundary is terminated

technically though the outworking of the decisions and the early part of the upcoming development may still fill like part of the boundary.

This description, gives a framework for understanding boundary processing, whether phase, sub-phase or minor that an individual leader goes through in his/her unique development. The next section looks at the ministry time-line, that generic comparative time-line, and seeks to point out some of the specific boundaries and characteristics of them.

IV. Specific Boundaries Along the Ministry Time-Line

Consider again the ministry time-line, given in Figure 7, which indicates specific important boundary times.

THE MINISTRY TIME-LINE

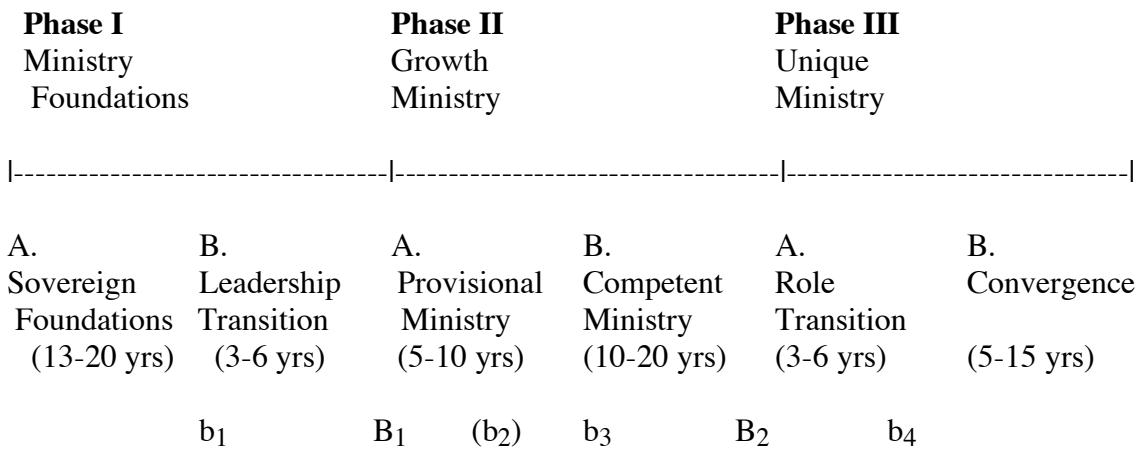


Figure 7. The Ministry Time-Line With Boundaries

Several boundaries are important enough to comment on. The transition into leadership, b₁, represents first efforts at ministry, usually that of lay ministry. It is primarily a boundary point which leads to a time in which the leader experiments with early giftedness identification. The initiating activity is usually a ministry challenge from some leader to get involved in leadership. This person who challenges could well be a divine contact whom God uses to get the emerging leader started on his/her leadership pilgrimage. The turning point and resolution occur simultaneously when the emerging leader accepts the challenge. The following sub-phase, leadership transition, can be a

rocky one for many would be leaders. Some never make it to B₁ the phase boundary into full time ministry.¹³

The B₁ boundary involves transition into a full time Christian leadership position. In leadership emergence theory this is known as moving across the logistics barrier. Crossing this threshold involves a major status change for an emerging leaders. Laity perceive full time Christian workers differently than they do lay leaders. They usually have higher expectations for full time Christian workers even though in some situations (on-the-job training) the actual ministry may be the same as was previously done before becoming a paid worker. And there is the basic problem of how to finance the full time Christian work. The B₁ boundary which usually involves extended time follows the standard boundary pattern with initiating activity, turning point, and resolution. The turning point is usually a leadership committal. Any of the 15 process items previously described can occur in this important boundary.

Once in the provisional sub-phase any number of minor boundaries, boundary points or full blown sub-phase boundaries may occur as new ministry assignments come along. I have indicated only one which I shall comment on. About 4 or 5 years into provisional ministry there is a fairly large drop out from ministry. I indicate that point by the (b₂) boundary indicator.

Several things can bring about this pressure to exit. One, has to do with disappointment with ministry. The actual roles experienced differ from the expectations the emerging leader had going in. Two, frequently there are inter-personal conflicts with other full time leaders and lay leaders. Three, leaders more senior prove to be disappointments to the emerging leaders as they get to really know them. Four, the emerging leader neglects his/her inner life because of pressure to perform well and achieve a successful ministry. They often thus burn out spiritually. Fifth, the training which prepared for full time ministry, whether informal on-the-job or formal via Bible College or Seminary rarely trains for what a leader actually does in ministry. Most of these emerging leaders who drop out don't drop out because they don't know how to exegete a passage or prepare a sermon. They fail to handle the leadership roles involving conflict resolution, problem solving, motivating followers, getting vision, strategizing and a myriad of other leadership functions that successful leaders have to do.

Studies¹⁴ have not only confirmed this drop out boundary but have also suggested that those who make it past the b₁ boundary usually have a mentor who coaches, teaches, counsels, or sponsors the young leader through this difficult time.

¹³I am not implying that leadership less than full time is unsatisfactory. The ministry time-line is a tool that is used with full time Christian leaders and B₁ is the movement across the boundary from lay leadership into full time leadership. The equivalent boundary for a lay leader is movement into a responsible leadership role with the lay leader now taking initiative to remain in a functioning leadership role.

¹⁴Harbaugh et al (1986) describe this boundary. Dr. Arch Hart of Fuller Theological Seminary also confirms this drop out tendency in his syllabus for his D.Min. course for pastors. See **The Mentor Handbook** (Clinton 1992) for descriptions of these mentor types.

An important phase boundary is the sub-phase boundary moving between the provisional sub-phase and the competent sub-phase, indicated by b_3 . The major difference between provisional ministry and competent ministry include confidence in giftedness, in use of power in ministry, and in discernment of appropriate roles. Much experience has been gained in how to relate to others and how to influence and motivate followers. All of the description of boundary activity suggested in Figure 6 applies to this boundary time. Usually the transition from provisional to competent takes place over an extended time during normal ministry activity.

I have indicated that a boundary, B_2 , may occur during competent ministry. Some competent leaders with a very high level potential of sphere of influence will cross this threshold, called in leadership emergence theory, the strategic barrier. It indicates a major influence-mix challenge. The leader moves from primarily doing direct ministry with followers to mainly indirect ministry with leaders.

Most leaders are usually unprepared for this shift for two reasons. Responsibilities of this position require mainly indirect ministry with other leaders--supervising them, giving on-going training to them, mentoring them, solving problems, doing wide range strategic thinking. Most leaders have not been trained for this kind of work and are not prepared to handle the ministry activities at that level of leadership. The boundary activities will usually involve processing that deals with the mental attitude needed and training needed for this (usually through informal training or mentoring).

A second problem of crossing the strategic barrier is that most leaders think tactically and not strategically. That is, they have been rewarded psychologically (affirmation, feeling of competency) for doing direct ministry which involves their gifts. Now they must do indirect ministry such as problem solving, crisis resolution, planning, strategizing, and directing of other leaders which does not reward one in the same way as direct ministry. Again the boundary activity will include processing to address this psychological and emotional problem.

Two things can help overcome the psychological loss perceived in moving through this boundary. One, the leaders can from time to time do forays back into direct ministry which bring satisfaction that was experienced previously. Two, they can learn to see that what is being accomplished has broader potential and more far reaching results than their former direct ministry which had to be sacrificed in moving to this new role.

Again, let me emphasize that not all leaders will go through this boundary--just those who become high level leaders of wide regional, national, or international influence.

Note that b_4 represents a crucial boundary. The essential activity is the *turning point* which is usually a combination of processing over time culminating in a major paradigm shift which hinges around the basic concept that **ministry flows out of being**. Heretofore, the leader has seen achievement in ministry and success in ministry as being

the essential motivating force for ministry. But the processing activity associated with this boundary is designed to take a leader deep with God. The *upward look* of the evaluation stage is critical if the leader is to move through this boundary. The leader's relationship with God becomes the most important motivating factor in ministry and paves the way for decisions that will lead to the *unique ministry phase*.

V. Boundaries And Ministry Philosophy

Over a life time God is shaping a leader toward maturity. There is leadership character which is shaped. There are leadership skills which allow the leader to influence and achieve. And there are leadership values which accumulate and become part of a ministry philosophy.¹⁵ It is the purpose of this section to show how boundaries relate to ministry philosophy.

- definition A ministry philosophy is a set of implicit values
- which guides a leader's conduct and thinking in relationship to practice and understanding of his/ her ministry,
 - which increasingly focuses the leader toward a more effective and unique God-directed contribution to the kingdom, and
 - which gradually becomes explicit over a life time so as to be expressed in meaningful coherent categories understood by others.

MINISTRY PHILOSOPHY is a function of three variables: BLEND, FOCUS, ARTICULATION.

- definition The blend variable of a ministry philosophy refers to the *process* and resulting *product* of accumulating values and relating these values to each other in a consistent and coherent fashion.

- definition The focus variable refers to the narrowing process over a lifetime in which God *guides* a leader
- into understanding his/her *sense of destiny*,
 - into an understanding of his/her *giftedness*,
 - into *ministry compatible* with that giftedness, and
 - into achieving lasting *contributions*.

From the definition it is clear that the major components of the focus variable are five:

¹⁵See the paper, available from Barnabas Publishers, *Ministry Philosophy--One Key to Effective Leadership*, which treats in depth this subject. It is beyond the scope of this paper to treat this topic in depth. The attempt here is to show how boundary processing significantly affects ministry philosophy.

1. a general guidance component and its accompanying processing,
2. a destiny component and its accompanying destiny processing,
3. a giftedness component and the processes which aid that discovery and development,
4. a convergence component and the processes which help a leader understand convergent factors fitting together, and
5. an achievement component including an ultimate contribution component.

definition The articulation variable refers to the *process* and resulting *product* of integrating the values of the blend variable, the content, and the direction provided by the focus variable, the narrowing purpose, into an explicit statement of the ministry philosophy.

1. Identification and listing of CORE values (basic Biblical values, owned values from N.T. philosophical models, and values experiential learned which are core).
2. Identification of SPECIFIC values unique to the leader (from processing analysis).
3. Analysis of MEANS, an attempt to evaluate consistency by describing how the Core and Specific values actually are presently impacting your ministry.
4. A SPECIFICATION of past, present, and future ACHIEVEMENT which flows from this ministry philosophy.

It is the second of these variables, **focus**, to which boundaries are so closely related. Boundaries usually provide significant input to the focus variable. That is, each boundary contributes to a greater understanding of the focus variable in a life. Boundaries contribute significantly to general guidance, the destiny component, movement to roles which fit giftedness, and both challenge to achievement and giving affirmation for achievement. Boundaries when evaluated in retrospect will be seen to have provided the significant quantum leaps in the focus variable.

VI. How To Analyze A Boundary (see Appendix B Template which simplifies and/or complements the procedures given below.)

I want to close with some simple guidelines that help a leader to evaluate boundaries. All leaders need perspective in evaluating boundaries--both for themselves and for others they are guiding along the leadership pilgrimage. Two cases of boundary guidelines will be given: (1) When you are in the midst of the boundary, (2) Sometime after the boundary has been experienced.

Analyzing a Boundary While You Are In It

If you are in the midst of a boundary you may find the following guidelines helpful.

Table 2. How To Analyze A Boundary While You Are In It

<u>Step</u>	<u>Procedure</u>	<u>Detailed Suggestions</u>
1	Identify the Stage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construct a boundary time-line. 2. Along the time-line pinpoint any of the following, which have happened: initiating activities, the turning point, resolution. 3. Determine the focus and indicate if these have taken place or are taking place on the boundary time-line: retrospective reflection, inward assessment, future thinking, decision making. 4. Identify the major process items that have already taken place. 5. From these four steps identify the stage and/or stages that have already taken place or are taking place.
2	Analyze the Stage: If Stage 1:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the Issues that Initiated it? List as many as are significant and seek to analyze for essence, cause, etc. 2. Seek to bring closure on each of the issues. Remember there is a two fold closure. One, one kind of closure has to do with spiritual and relational like forgiveness, reconciliation, etc. Where ever you can, bring this kind of closure. Sometimes this is impossible--other parties may not want it. But from your side bring spiritual closure.¹⁶ Two, a second kind of closure has to do with identifying lessons that can be gained from the issues which can make you a better leader in the future. This kind of closure can always be brought.

¹⁶Essential spiritual closure from your side, where issues relate to negative things and interpersonal relationships, simplifies to two kinds of ultimate choices: (1) forgive, be at peace with, and have a spirit of reconciliation or (2) do not and suffer the probability of developing a root of bitterness which can eventually destroy your inner life and your ministry.

Table 2. How To Analyze A Boundary While You Are In It continued

<u>Step</u>	<u>Procedure</u>	<u>Detailed Suggestions</u>
	If Stage 2.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the indications of God's seeking to deepen your relationship to him. How is God calling you to this? 2. In what ways are you deepening your relationship with God? What are you doing? 3. Have you passed the turning point? If so, identify it clearly and its future implications. 4. If not, then anticipate what will be needed to get to the turning point.
	If Stage 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the decisions that need to be made. 2. Determine the options relating to these decisions. 3. Be aware of the processing you need to finalize and terminate the boundary. Specifically trust God for this processing.

You will find that you will be helped greatly if you can get a mentor counselor to help you work through your thinking. Wise objective perspective can help you avoid the pit falls of blaming, vindication, defending, etc., which can detract from inward assessment and growth. Too many leaders stay too long in the entry stage, with its backward look.

Analyzing A Boundary After The Fact

It is also very helpful to analyze boundaries after the fact. Table 3 gives some guidelines.

Table 3. How To Do A Post Mortem on a Boundary

<u>Step</u>	<u>Procedure</u>	<u>Detailed Suggestions</u>
1	Assess Closure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bring closure on each stage of the boundary by analyzing the looking back focus, the looking up focus, and the looking forward focus. That is, seek to write statements which evaluate the summary effects of each of the three stages. 2. Identify the major processes throughout the boundary and the lessons learned and values added. 3. Specifically list the major decisions made in stage 3 and how they worked out.
2	Assess Progress	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use the basic patterns defined for a developing leader to see progress made because of the boundary:¹⁷

¹⁷Twenty three patterns are listed in the **Leadership Emergence Theory** manual. Of these the eight ministry patterns and the five unique ministry patterns are the most important to assess when determining the effects of the boundary. Usually the patterns should be assessed just after the boundary and compared to the development just after the previous boundary.

Table 3. How To Do A Post Mortem on a Boundary continued

<u>Step</u>	<u>Procedure</u>	<u>Detailed Suggestions</u>
		2. You are particularly interested in giftedness development, destiny processing, ministry structure insights and guidance. These all contribute to the focus variable.
3	Identify the Boundary Task(s)	Seek to summarize the one or two major thrusts of the boundary.
4	Celebrate	Identify the ways in which God released you through the boundary. Note the ways He affirmed you. Give praise for the successful negotiation of the boundary.

VII. Closure

Let me close where I began. I said that one of the more important lessons about leaders that has evolved in comparative studies of leader's lives concerns perspective.

EFFECTIVE LEADERS INCREASINGLY PERCEIVE PRESENT MINISTRY IN TERMS OF A LIFETIME PERSPECTIVE.

I also said that one of the more important perspectives that a leader could have concerns transition times in a leader's life, which we have called boundaries. To understand about boundaries first requires that you get the bigger picture of life long development. I introduced you to the notion of the time-line, a tool helpful for giving the big picture. I then suggested that knowledge of boundaries could bring hope and encouragement. I have suggested to give knowledge about boundaries so as to bring this hope and encouragement. I hope you will keep Figure 6 imprinted on your mind as God processes you and other leaders through boundaries.

But don't forget my thesis about boundaries. I don't want you to miss what God has for you in the boundary time.

Thesis: **BOUNDARY PROCESSING PROVIDES UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY**

- to bring closure to recent experiences,
- to deepen ones relationship to God,
- to expand one's perspectives to see new things, AND
- to make decisions which will launch one into a new phase of development.

Make the most of your boundaries as God brings focus to who you are and where you are going and what you will accomplish for Him.

Bibliography

Carlson, Dean W.

1985 **J. O. Fraser.** Altadena: Barnabas Publishers.

Clinton, Dr. J. Robert

1984a A. W. Tozer. Unpublished Research notes. Pasadena: School of World Mission.

1984b Dawson Trottman. Unpublished Research notes. Pasadena: School of World Mission.

1989 **Leadership Emergence Theory.** Altadena: Barnabas Publishers.

1990 *Regime Turnover..* Unpublished notes on corporate leadership transition in conjunction with ML 520 Foundations of Leadership. Pasadena: School of World Mission.

1990 *The Notion of a Paradigm Shift..* Unpublished notes processing leading to major perspective change in conjunction with ML 530 Lifelong Development.

1992 *Ministry Philosophy--One Key To Effective Leadership.* Article, reprint. Altadena: Barnabas Publishers.

Clinton, Dr. J. Robert and Clinton, Richard

1992 **The Mentor Handbook--Detailed Guidelines and Helps for Christian Mentors and Mentorees.** Altadena: Barnabas Publishers.

Davis, Stanley B.

1982 *Transforming Organizations: The Key To Strategy Is Context in Organizational Dynamics,* Winter 1982.

1987 **Future Perfect.** New York: Addison-Wesley.

Finzel, Hans

1987 *Developing An Awareness of Boundary Processing.* Unpublished research paper. Pasadena: School of World Mission.

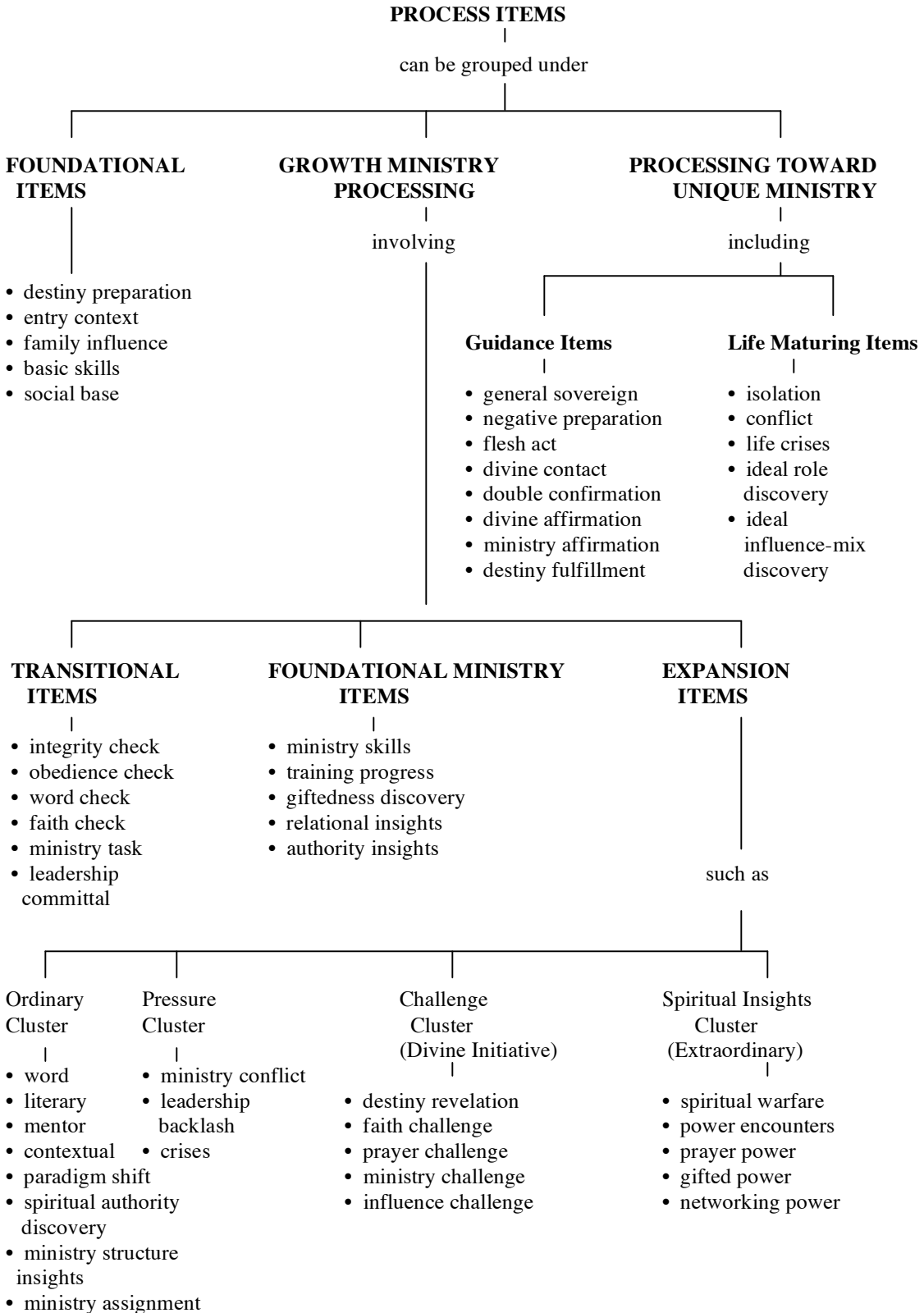
Harbaugh, Gary L., et. al.

1986 **Beyond the Boundary--Meeting the Challenge of the First Years of Ministry.** New York: Alban Institute.

Pierce, George Preble

1986 A Leadership Selection Process Study. Unpublished Data Notes. Pasadena: School of World Mission.

Appendix A. Fifty One Process Items Categorized to Development Phases
 (See the Leadership Emergence Theory Manual for explanation of Details of these items.)



Appendix B. Template for Doing a Simplified Boundary Analysis

(Below is the template information used by present day—2007ff—ML530 Life Long Development students as they do a major boundary analysis.)

Instructions For Using Template 8. Boundary ANALYSIS

1. The assignment associated with Template 8 is important for several reasons. One, you need to recognize the overall stages of a boundary so you can avoid being blind-sided. Two, you will be going through several boundaries. The more you know about them the better off you will be in getting out of them what God has for you. Three, you will be able to help other leaders you develop approach boundaries with understanding and good perspective. Template 8 is turned in during Week 6. NOTE: The Title of this TEMPLATE 8 is MAJOR BOUNDARY ANALYSIS. You need to do a MAJOR BOUNDARY, not a minor one. That is, one going from ONE PHASE to another PHASE. If you do not have a MAJOR BOUNDARY PHASE THAT YOU HAVE COMPLETELY GONE THROUGH (do not attempt to do a boundary not yet completed, even though you may think it is MAJOR), then use a MAJOR BOUNDARY from one of the HISTORICAL CHAPTERS YOU WILL BE READING IN WEEK 11. There are 8 characters there [Simeon (1759-1836)—Strategic Mentor; Gordon (1836-1895)—Missionary Minded Pastor; Brengle (1860-1936)—Public Saint; Morgan (1863-1945)—World Class Bible Teacher; Jaffray (1873-1945)—Missionary Pioneer; McQuilkin—(1886-1952) Bible College Founder; Mears—(1890-1963) Recruiter of Leaders; Maxwell—(1895-1984) Missionary Trainer]. These are available on the CD given out on day one of class. If you do one of these characters—note on your assignment that you are substituting the MAJOR BOUNDARY on the character because you do not have a major boundary yet, yourself.
2. Save this Template as 6(your last name)Bound.doc
3. Put your name at the top of the assignment you just saved.
4. Read through the whole template.
5. Erase this instruction page. On other pages, Keep black lettered stuff. Fill in Red stuff with your own BLACK font stuff. Leave red lettered stuff not done. Erase blue lettered stuff.
6. Send as attachment to the teaching assistant (use proper labeling as given in 2. Above). You will receive comments for improvement if you turn in on time.

Your Name

VIII. MAJOR BOUNDARY ANALYSIS

Introduction: (NOTE: this must be a major boundary not a minor one. Here you give a paragraph telling what you will be doing— which boundary, when it occurred, the type, and where you are now with regards to perceiving what happened in the boundary)

Abbreviated Time-Line: (here you copy your abbreviated time line from Item 1, your Summary sheet. And put on it the boundary you are analyzing, clearly indicating the dates involved. Color the boundary maker **BLUE**)

Boundary Time-Line: (Now take the boundary you just identified and blow it up into a boundary time-line—you will indicate on it the entry stage, evaluation stage, and exit stage)

Type of Boundary: (Creeping, Growth, Expansion, Surprise. Your boundary will be one of four types or some combination of them—or maybe a unique one not fitting the ones we have already identified. If so, give it a special name and describe why you think it is unique and not fitting previous definitions)

Some Basics About The Major Boundary—The Four Kinds (note a given MAJOR BOUNDARY may be a combination of these and not just one.)

Type	Major Emphasis	Description/ How Related to Other Types
Surprise	Something unexpected arises requiring some decision of immediate acceptance	The Surprise Boundary can be short and is instigated by some unexpected ministry challenge, opportunity, or invitation, which requires an immediate acceptance. / The <i>Surprise Boundary</i> can be combined with both <i>Growth</i> and <i>Expansion</i> boundaries depending on what the surprise leads to. It usually does not combine with a <i>Creeping Vine</i> boundary. Note that surprise boundaries usually are shorter by nature. A decision to accept must be made or the opportunity will be missed.
Growth Boundary	Need for growth;	The Growth Boundary refers to a growing restlessness usually involving a need to grow or to escape a sense of plateauing. Frequently, a person recognizes the need to study or gain educational help. The person recognizes that experience alone is not enough. Some new perspectives on things are needed which will come from others. Sometimes there is a sense of being stifled in a role, which is not using much potential. / A <i>Growth Boundary</i> can combine with the <i>Creeping Vine Boundary</i> if the negative preparation is pushing one to want to grow. A <i>Surprise Boundary</i> could be combined with a <i>Growth Boundary</i> if the surprise leads to resources or an open door for study. If formal study is the solution to the growth need, then the decision to go for it and move into it ends the boundary. The actual study time usually forms a new sub-phase. The <i>Growth Boundary</i> is usually relatively short. The ramifications of it are usually longer.
Expansion	Not being challenged in present situation; or Need for a situation that realizes more potential or allows for more	The Expansion Boundary refers to a boundary in which the leader is challenged to a new level of ministry. The challenge may come as a result of a paradigm shift or some destiny experience in which the leader faces expansion in kind of ministry, ministry role, faith, or influence. Frequently it involves a mis-match of giftedness. A role is not allowing for use of gifts that ought to be used. This boundary usually takes place over a 1 to 3 year time period. The new situation allows for more potential to be realized. /

	sphere of influence	The <i>Expansion Boundary</i> is usually not combined with a <i>Growth Boundary</i> . A <i>Creeping Vine Boundary</i> , especially with negative preparation involved can be combined with an <i>Expansion Boundary</i> . The negative preparation frees up the person to accept the challenge and want to expand. A <i>Surprise Boundary</i> is often combined with <i>Expansion</i> . The <i>Surprise</i> gives the new situation or opportunity that demands <i>Expansion</i> . The length of time of an <i>Expansion Boundary</i> varies depending on how long it takes to realize the need and also the willingness to make the decision. If combined with a <i>Surprise</i> it will be shorter.
Creeping Vine	An accumulation of negative preparation process items force reflection on the need for change	A Creeping Vine Boundary refers to a relatively long process in which God gives guidance little-by-little over a period of time, frequently through negative preparation. It slowly dawns after an accumulation of numerous indicators that there should be a change in ministry. / The <i>Creeping Vine</i> can be combined with <i>Expansion</i> or <i>Growth</i> but does not usually combine with <i>Surprise</i> .

Some Guidelines

1. It is easier to do a boundary analysis of a boundary done in the past, which has been completed, than doing one you are presently in. One, you are not necessarily certain that something you are in is a major boundary. Two, you don't really know what the next PHASE is going to look like yet.
2. Choose the easiest MAJOR BOUNDARY to do. Your goal in this exercise is to learn about boundaries. After doing a simple one, you will have gained experience and can do more difficult ones later. For now you want to learn about boundaries.
3. Be sure you have identified a MAJOR BOUNDARY time. Symptoms of a MAJOR BOUNDARY include such things as:
 - a. A major geographic shift.
 - b. A major change in ministry status.
 - c. Moving from one organization to another.
 - d. Moving from one church to another where the ministry role is significantly different.
 - e. Going into full time paid ministry after previously being involved in lay ministry.
4. If you are not good with time-lines, get some help from another person who is very good with analytical skills and the identification of time line PHASES and sub-phases.
5. Remember some boundaries can be very short (especially SURPRISE ones). Others can be longer. But if your boundary seems to be 3 or 4 years, then you are probably identifying a whole sub-phase and not a boundary itself.
6. Frequently boundaries have some hard process items in them and God teaches us much through them. But some boundaries may not have this "hard processing" and instead are a pleasant transition into something that God wants to move us to and we enjoy moving to it.
7. Try to realize the boundary task(s)—that is, in retrospect, what were the most important things God was seeking to do by taking you through this boundary.
8. Re-read the long time line paper—*Getting Perspective By Using Your Time Line*—especially the portions dealing with identification of PHASES and the explanation of boundaries. See LETReader.pdf.

Closure To Guidelines Above

You will go through several major boundaries. The more you can learn about them the better off you will be in going through them. And the more help you can be in developing other leaders—they will need perspective on going through boundaries. Many leaders drop out of ministry because of their response to boundary processing. You can be an encouragement and give Hope by helping others see what happens in a boundary. Some of the most important things you need to get are perspective, and experience about boundaries so God is working these things in you (2 Cor 1:3,4) in order that he may use you in the future to coach many through boundaries. Remember, PERSPECTIVE gives HOPE.

Overview of the Boundary: (here you should show the three stages of a boundary (Entry, Evaluation, Exit), dating them, and then perhaps listing some key events under each stage.)

Entry	Evaluation	Exit
Entry Date: put when started	Evaluation Date: put when started	Exit Date: put when started
Descriptor of Stage: Stage 1. Give a short phrase	Descriptor of Stage: Stage 2. Give a short phrase	Descriptor of Stage: Stage 3. Give a short phrase
Key Events: Give a list 1. Label 1 2. Label 2 3. Label 3 4. Label 4	Key Events: Give a list 1. Label 1 2. Label 2 3. Label 3 4. Label 4	Key Events: Give a list 1. Label 1 2. Label 2 3. Label 3 4. Label 4

Running Commentary:

Example: This follows the basic key events.

The Three Most Important Process Items that Happened In the Boundary: (here choose process items that were important in the boundary. Usually there are many process items that happen in a boundary—just pick three very important ones and explain them and why they were important to the overall boundary action)

Any Post-Ramifications of the Boundary that You Experienced in the New Phase or Sub-Phase:

(Though a boundary, by definition, technically ends at the boundary point—identification of the beginning of the next phase or sub-phase—it is frequently the case that some added things happen in the next Phase which are a result of the decisions made in the exit stage. Usually they relate closely to the boundary just experience. Sometimes you confusedly want to make this part of the boundary. No! The boundary ends at the boundary point. But in this section you can talk about those things that have happened in the immediate part of the next phase which are boundary-like ramifications, flowing out of the exit decision(s). Usually two kinds of things can be described here:

- (a) Possible Repercussion of the transition which occur in the next phase due to the major decision made in stage 3 of the boundary. There is usually some AFTERMATH of a boundary/transition as you stabilize in the new phase.
- (b) Some possible opening out of other dimensions—things you may not have normally expected.

For most major boundaries, which you have already gone through, it is fairly easy to identify repercussion or opening of other dimensions, if there are any. If you are doing a boundary which you are still experiencing then these items are not clear and you probably need to do some “analytical speculation” and suggest what might happen. If this doesn’t apply to your boundary situation then just put NONE.)

Closure:

(What have you gained by doing this boundary analysis? Why was it important to you? What implications for the future? Bring closure to this analysis.)

VIII. MAJOR BOUNDARY ANALYSIS

Introduction:

In this analysis, I will be examining a B1 boundary that occurred as I was completing my undergraduate degree and deciding what to do with my “life.” I became aware that I was facing a boundary when it became clear that decision I was trying to make was not simply one of which graduate school to go attend, but rather of deciding whether ministry (of any professional sort) was a viable option for my future. I consider this boundary to be an expansion boundary in that it represented a transition from part-time, individual commitment to ministry to a full-time commitment. I also believe that this was somewhat of a surprise boundary in that I never expected studying abroad to alter my world view to the extent that I would choose to pursue ministry, rather than the therapy that I had spent more than four years preparing to enter.

Abbreviated Time-Line

I. DRIVING FORCES TRAINING	II. THOROUGH
1980 2005	1995 1998 2002 2004
-B1- [Aug 01-Sept 02]	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. (1980-1994) Early childhood in the church B. (1995-1998) Early leadership and empowerment A. (1998-2002) Choosing Christ in college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A.(2002-2004) First full-time ministry experience Nicaragua B. (2004-Present) Seminary reflection and expansion

Boundary Time-Line:

Entry	Evaluation	Exit
August, 2001	January, 2002	September 2002
Stage 1: Befuddled Dreamer	Stage 2: Spin the bottle:	Stage 3: Divine Commissioning

Type of Boundary:

Expansion with an element of Surprise!

Overview of the Boundary:

Entry	Evaluation	Exit
Entry Date: August 2001	Evaluation Date: January 2002	Exit Date: September 2002
Descriptor of Stage: Stage 1. Befuddled Dreamer	Descriptor of Stage: Stage 2. Spin the Bottle- In Search of Direction	Descriptor of Stage: Stage 3. Divine Commissioning
Key Events: 1. Reverse Culture Shock 2. Pursuing the “typical” path 3. Second Thoughts	Key Events: 1. Seeking Counsel 2. Ecuador Trip 3. Overwhelming choices	Key Events: 1. God’s fund (raising) 2. Lift Off

Running Commentary:

Stage 1. Befuddled Dreamer (August–December 2001)

1. Reverse Culture Shock (August–October 2001)

This boundary was initiated as I returned from a life changing and challenging semester abroad to the small, private university where I was pursuing several degrees and preparing to enter a Master's in Occupational Therapy program. The transition back to school, North American culture, and friends who did not seem to understand or care how much bigger the world was than our school, were all factors in the tension that I felt upon my return.

One of the most overwhelming parts of reverse culture shock was learning how to respond to the suddenly negative views I had towards the United States. I found that this criticism or concern alienated me from all but a few of my fairly conservative Christian friends at the university. While my friends were concerned with their personal prayer life and saving fellow university students, my faith turned down a more incarnational and justice seeking path.

2. Pursuing the “typical” Path (November 2001)

In spite of all of my qualms and concerns, I continued down the “typical” path of private school undergraduate seniors, I began applying for admission to graduate school. I applied to several schools, went to visit several of them, and was accepted by two. In December I accepted an invitation to a three-year, many thousand dollar program at the same school where I had done my undergraduate work. During this time I was also completing the research and writing of my thesis project which was a cross-cultural study of job satisfaction between North American and Ecuadorian Occupational Therapists. Part of my motivation for the study was to explore what outlets there were for OT in Latin America. The end of my study yielded the conclusion that OT's all over the world are fairly dissatisfied (as professionals) and that OT in Latin America is even more obsolete and limited than in the United States. It was at about the time that I began to analyze my data for the thesis, when the questions and hesitations about entering the OT program directly from undergraduate school began to shift from inner qualms to outwardly expressed concerns.

3. Second Thoughts (December 2001–January 2002)

It might have been better to label this section: second and third and fourth thoughts, because the best way to summarize this stage is to say that it felt like questions and hesitations were flying at me from every direction. I began to question whether my dream of working with U.S. Latinos was really a realistic goal in life. It seemed that my dreams were not really very practical. I also felt a growing desire to learn more Spanish, to spend more time learning about the roots of the people I hoped to serve in the States. I felt that I needed reassurance that I really did have a passion to work specifically with Latinos and not some other group. Finally, as a result of some of the connections I made with missionaries in Ecuador, several Christian friends and my pastor had asked if I had ever considered ministry instead of social services.

While I was beginning to feel more and more uncomfortably with the commitment that I had made, I was also asked to help co-lead a short-term mission trip to Ecuador for a small group of leaders from the Christian fellowship I participated all through college. While I helped with a lot of logistics and planning, I did not work with the ministry assignment and outreach parts of the planning. I had many reservations about missions after having volunteered with one mission organization in Ecuador. Something in their approach did not resonate with my own call and gifts. Throughout the preparation of the trip I frequently felt discontent with the direction our team and project was going. These reservations led me to believe that missions or ministry was not the direction that I was supposed to go.

Stage 2: Spin the Bottle: In Search of Direction (January-August 2002)

1. Seeking Counsel: (January-April 2002)

I remember one very specific afternoon in January, my mom dropped by my apartment at college for a couple of hours just to talk and help me do some verbal processing. As a skilled counselor, my mom was the first to comment on her observations which were the same as my own doubts and hesitations. She encouraged me to think through the situation and to not make my decisions based on what I felt was expected of me. She allowed me to think outside of the box for a few minutes that afternoon.

A few weeks later, I was at my parent's house for the weekend, and went to my home church that Sunday. It just so happened that the area director for missions was preaching at our church that day, and what she shared resonated somewhere deep inside of me. The missiology that she shared made sense to me, and I could see myself in that type of setting, using my gifts and serving God. I spoke with the speaker for a few minutes after church and also shared my enthusiasm with my pastor. Both were very supportive, we prayed, and I went back to school. The following Monday, I sent an e-mail to the director of the Masters program where I had registered to inquire if they had a deferment policy. They did not, but informed me that should I choose to defer, they would be supportive and honor my acceptance the following academic year. I felt affirmed in both my doubts, and in my convictions that OT was the right direction to go. After all, why would the director have been so accommodating and interested in having *me* at his school?

Later in the semester I spoke with a professor at school about possible social service organizations where I might be able to work as a volunteer. She had many contacts and suggestions and by the time I graduated that spring, I had at least 5 options. As I told my pastor about my decision sometime that spring, he suggested that I get in contact with a couple of missionaries that he knew personally through our denomination. When they finally responded several months later, I was told I would first have to apply with International Ministries. This recommendation led to the opening of an important door in my commitment to long-term ministry.

2. Ecuador Trip: (May 2002)

The Sunday after graduation a team of 11 of us left for ten days in Ecuador. The trip was good, the fellowship was good, but the end result for me was both life-changing and liberating. I had a negative ministry insight on this trip because I finally realized (after all of the counsel I had received), that I was called to ministry and possibly even missions, it just wasn't in the form or context that I experienced on either of my trips to Ecuador. My gifts were not in evangelization or street ministry, but in relational and empowerment ministries. When I returned from Ecuador I continued my search for volunteer positions anywhere and everywhere in Latin America.

3. Overwhelming Choices: (June-August 2002)

When I returned from Ecuador, I had a number of options waiting for me. For some, all I had to do was to pick up the phone and say, "I'm on my way." Others required fundraising for expenses for the year and putting more faith. I had non-ministry options in Guadalajara, Mexico City, Guatemala, and even one in Chile. I also finally heard back from the missionaries in Costa Rica, but was told I would need to come up with my plane fare plus more than \$400 per month. I prayed, sought counsel, and had more or less decided on Costa Rica, when I got a second e-mail from the missionaries there saying that they were not quite ready to have a volunteer, and that they wouldn't need me for 6 months to a year. It was clear that God had closed a door, as I had only planned on a 10-month stint followed by starting graduate school in the fall. I was unsure how to proceed. I decided that the best option was near Guadalajara, Mexico, but I was reluctant to make a final commitment because God had planted a seed in my heart that I should work in ministry not just social service.

I sent a final plea to the volunteer coordinator for our denomination. I explained that I was still interested, that the plan for Costa Rica had fallen through and that I had until August 19 to make a decision. I then

went on vacation. On August 12 I received an e-mail saying someone named Laura wanted me in Nicaragua. I wrote back saying that I was interested but needed more info, how much money would I need? Etc. On August 19th Laura wrote me back, and that day I committed to ten months as a volunteer in Nicaragua.

Stage 3: Divine Commissioning (August-September 2002)

1. God's Fund (raising) (August-September 2002)

From the time I decided to travel to Nicaragua, until the date of my departure, a lot had to be done and I had just a few weeks to complete everything. I quit my job, shared with the church, friends etc. I sent out sponsor letters and spoke with friends at church. Miraculously, in just 8 days, God had provided more than enough financial support for the full 10 months. He also provided a personal computer to use, and everything else I thought I would need for the year. This miraculous provision was a confirmation of the decision I had made.

2. Lift Off (September 2002)

I felt that I left this boundary completely when the plane lifted off and I found myself in the air, flying to Nicaragua, without any idea of what I would be doing, what my new home would be like, who would meet me at the airport.

The Three Most Important Process Items that Happened In the Boundary:

Divine Affirmation:

As I began to change direction in life, moving from preparing for a secular profession towards preparing for ministry, God provided several divine confirmations that the new direction was indeed his direction. I most clearly experienced divine affirmation in the timing of the arrival of the invitation to Nicaragua, and in the miraculous 8-day fundraising. If I had not received divine affirmation at several points during this boundary, I may not have continued to pursue the call that I felt. Because the decisions that I made and the direction that my life took were drastically different than any I had anticipated previously, affirmation was critical to my ability to persevere in pursuing a new sense of call.

Obedience Check:

This was perhaps the most life changing obedience check I had experienced up to that point in my life. God asked me to obey him by following his call and direction for my life rather than my own. Through this obedience check, God asked me to choose a different direction for my life. At the time that I experienced the obedience check, I believed I was making a relatively short-term commitment to serve. It has become clear that with each obedience check that I respond faithfully to, God then asks for a larger or more difficult commitment.

Ministry Task:

Stepping into the first full-time ministry task is always a major transition and often signifies a boundary of some sort. This ministry task moved me from a period of seeking God's call, to responding to God's call. If I had not have been given this task, I might have still found myself in this boundary today. Being given a task effectively moved me into the exit of this boundary.

Post-Ramifications of the Boundary Experienced in the New Phase or Sub-Phase:

I experienced several post-ramifications, some of which could have ruined my faith if I had not been so secure and affirmed that I was following God's call. What started as a 10-month commitment turned into a

two-year commitment. Life in another country, in the midst of constant crisis, challenged me in more ways than I ever could have imagined. Along with the challenges and crisis, I also experienced tremendous spiritual and professional growth. Throughout the process, God continued to plant seeds and put people in my life who challenged me to pursue even more the call that I had felt. Finally, when placed in a new situation, I learned how to act and be out of giftedness instead of skills or abilities.

Closure:

In doing this boundary analysis I have been able to identify how God uses boundaries as jumping off points in my life for equipping me to persevere in the different ministries that I have been called to. In this boundary, God made it so clear what his plan was to me that when late challenges and crisis came, I could do nothing but run to Him because I understood that in spite of the challenges (often resulting from my own sin and that of the people around me) God was faithful.

In looking back on this boundary, and all that I learned and all of the ways that I grew, I look forward with enthusiasm to future boundaries. I see the result of this boundary as a very positive and energizing time, as well as one of deep spiritual growth. Those are the high moments of my faith. Finally, in having a proven track record of God's faithfulness in the decisions that I make, I believe that I am even more encouraged to step out in each decision that I make seeking God's will, rather than my own.