how much more so for those who feel the gospel call to a ministry of presence with adolescents.

Mitchell Kinsinger

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My job as a strategic consultant involves me reading a multitude of business books. One of the best to come across my desk in the past few years is *Built to Last*. The book is based on a six-year research project undertaken by the authors and their graduate students from the Stanford School of Business. The research looked at 18 successful companies, defined as premier institutions in their industries, widely admired by top business people (they received input from thousands of CEOs in America) and consumers, multiple generations of chief executives, multiple product/service lifecycles, and founded before 1950. Each of the 18 selected companies was also compared to a similar company in the same industry to ensure that the critical success factors identified were *unique* to the visionary companies.

The reason I want to review this book in this journal is that I believe there are some amazing insights about developing organisations. The principles that made these companies great are surprisingly 'human', focusing less on profits and shareholder value, and more on core values, people and vision. Of course, when applying these principles to growing churches and ministries, we will submit primarily to God's Word and biblical principles – but there is a lot to learn from the successes of passionate people in other fields.

Christian bookshelves are filled with books about visionary churches, church growth and congregational development. Christian leaders have a lot to add to the general field of leadership studies. And they have a lot to learn from leaders in other areas of human interaction as well. If you're only going to read one business book this coming year, make sure its *Built to Last* – you'll see the applications to Christian ministry growth immediately.
Initial Findings: 12 Myths Shattered

The authors list 12 myths which they feel are conclusively shattered by their research. They show the following beliefs to be *untrue*:

1. It takes a great idea to start a great company
2. Visionary companies require great and charismatic visionary leaders
3. The most successful companies exist first and foremost to maximise profits
4. Visionary companies share a common subset of "correct" core values
5. The only constant is change
6. Blue-chip companies play it safe
7. Visionary companies are great places to work, for everyone
8. Highly successful companies make their best moves by brilliant and complex strategic planning
9. Companies should hire outside CEOs to stimulate change
10. The most successful companies focus primarily on beating the competition
11. You can't have your cake and eat it too (you have to choose between stability or progress, conservative approach or bold moves into the future, etc)
12. Companies become visionary primarily through "vision statements".

If these are the myths, then what is the key to growing an organisation? The authors suggest that it is a passion for 'preserving the core' while simultaneously 'stimulating progress'. In order to do this, the book outlines some critical areas of focus for visionary companies, including:

**Core Ideology**

One of the most profound insights gained from the research into the 18 visionary companies is that each of them had some underlying passion, some value set, some over-arching purpose that has guided (and continues to guide) the companies. This value set is ingrained in the company DNA, influencing staff choice, architecture, ethos, ethics, choice of clients and projects – in fact, every part of the organisation is aligned to the core ideology of the company. Core ideology is defined as the combination of core values (the organisation's central and