**Part 1 - Canoeing the Mountains**

**Tim:** Welcome to LeadTime, my name is Tim Ahlman here with Jake Boessling. We are both husbands, fathers, sons, pastors and trying our best to follow Jesus with all our heart, mind and soul. **We believe eternities are changed when a leader grows.**

Let’s begin with the story of Lewis and Clark. We have all heard of Lewis and Clark but don’t fully know their story. Lewis and Clark along with their Corps of Discovery were commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson to explore the west. For over three hundred years explorers were looking for a water route that would connect the Pacific Ocean to the Mississippi River. And everyone just knew it was out there somewhere.

**Jake:** Meriweather Lewis believed that he would walk up the hill, look down a gentle slope that would take his men a half day to cross with their *canoes* on their backs, and then they would see the Columbia River. After fifteen months of going upstream they looked forward to letting the current swiftly whisk them to the Pacific Ocean. They would crest the hill, find the stream and coast to the finish line.

The year was 1805 and they could not have been more disappointed.

**Tim:** What Lewis actually discovered was that three hundred years of experts had all been completely and utterly wrong. In front of him was not a gentle slope down to a navigable river running to the Pacific Ocean but the Rocky Mountains. Stretching out for miles and miles as far as the eyes could see was one set of peaks after another.

There was no Northwest Passage. No navigable river. No water route. The driving assumption of the brightest, most adventurous entrepreneurial and creative leaders regarding this new world has been absolutely mistaken.

**Jake:** Plus, Lewis’s Corps of Discovery had discovered that the entire mental model regarding the continent was wrong as well. They believed like everyone before them that the unexplored west was exactly the same geography as the familiar east. But of course it wasn’t. All had assumed that in the same way the land rose gently over thousands of miles to a peak and then it would also descend gently to the Pacific Ocean. They thought they would be able to take their canoes and drift downriver to the Pacific.

But all they saw was miles and miles of the Rocky Mountains. For no American had ever seen mountains like these.

**Tim:** At that moment, everything Lewis assumed about his journey changed. He was planning on exploring the new world by boat. He was a river explorer. They planned on rowing and they thought the hardest part was behind them.

And at this point they had a choice to make - go back to Jefferson or go forward. Go back in defeat...or move forward in adventure despite the obstacles.

**Jake:** Lewis and Clark decided to go off the map into uncharted territory. What did this mean? They would have to change plans, give up expectations, even reframe their entire mission. What lay before them was nothing like what was behind them. There were no experts, no maps, no “best practices” and no sure guides who could lead them safely.

**Tim:** This incredible story is what Tod Bolsinger uses in his inspiring leadership book, *Canoeing the Mountains.* Over the next two podcast episodes we are going to give you an overview of a book that has rocked our world.

We are going to give you the FIVE VITAL LESSONS that every leader of a Christian congregation or organization has to learn in unchartered territory.

**Jake: 1st** VITAL LESSON that every leader of a Christian congregation or organization has to learn in uncharted territory: **Understanding uncharted territory - the world in front of you is nothing like the world behind you.**

Marshall Goldsmith wrote, “What got us here wouldn’t take us there.”

The story of the Corps of Discovery is the main metaphor for our present moment in history. In every field, business, organization, leaders are rapidly coming to the awareness that the world in front of us is radically different from everything behind us.

In less than a century our world has become **VUCA** - volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. You feel it. I feel it.

**Tim:** We join Lewis and Clark by entering uncharted territory simply as human beings. The world in front of us is nothing like the world behind us. For us in the church - the way we have done church, trained pastors, organized ourselves in big buildings, is not working the same way it did a decade ago.

All that we have assumed about leading Christian organizations, all that we have been trained for, is out of date.

But you already probably know this and we’ve even talked about it. We have learned this lesson through tough and true experiences.

**Jake:** So what do we do about it as Christian leaders in this VUCA world?

How do you canoe over mountains? You don’t. You change. You adapt. It’s adventure or die?! We must start a new adventure if we want the church to thrive again in the West.

We need a transformational leadership model.

**Tim:** Let’s get super practical for what it means to be the church in uncharted territory given this first vital lesson - the world in front of us is nothing like the world behind us. Here are two ways in which this is true:

1. The local church used to have a “build it and they will come” mentality. This is no longer true in a post-Christian context where Christianity has been put on the margins.
	1. Yet, we do our best work historically on the margins...and even today in persecuted places in our world where the church is thriving. Yet, that thriving does’t look like building big buildings...it means building kingdom-expanding leaders who are willing to risk their comforts and even lives for the sake of the Gospel.

**Jake:** 2) It used to be that our institutions deeply listened to the needs of the local church. In Michael Newman’s book, “Gospel DNA,” the institutions were adaptive to meet the varying contexts of missionaries and pastors in the missionary frontier of America. Institutions offered varying routes toward ordination and professional church work based on the needs of the local church.

**Tim:** Over time, and especially through decline, the institutions become more disconnected from the needs of varying contexts. Therefore, they “batch” students for seemingly the same work “midwestern” work...rather than “matching” and training students who are serving in remarkably different contexts here in the U.S. Over time, and it is no one person’s fault (this is systemic), the institutions, in the name of self-preservation, begin to ask the church to serve them...rather than adapting and evolving to serve the ever changing and diverse needs of local congregations.

**Jake: 2nd** VITAL LESSON that every leader of a Christian congregation or organization has to learn in uncharted territory: **The on-the-map skill set - No one is going to follow you off the map unless they trust you on the map.**

Lewis and Clark were crazy competent explorers before being tasked by President Jefferson to explore uncharted territory. These dudes were studs on the map. They were now ready and trusted by President Jefferson to go off-map.

As a young pastor there were certain things I needed to know and learn that were expected of a pastor before people would follow me into uncharted leadership territory.

One, they needed to know I could exegete and communicate the Gospel through preaching and teaching. Two, I had to perform baptisms, weddings, funerals, visitation (and other “pastor stuff” before folks would follow me to uncharted territory.

**Tim:** Many times the false assumption of those who listen to those who want to explore “uncharted territory” is that, “Well, competence in the normal ‘on the map’ skills must be compromised.” No - competence is still needed. We must be faithful with a little before we give them much.

Right now we’re in the process of “testing” our future pastors as “worship leaders” by giving them the prayers of the church and leading other transitions to simply see how they are in front of a group. Some of them will start to share their 5 minute testimony so we can get a feel for their voice in communicating the Gospel.

**Jake:** Our competence building pathway at CG is “Serve, Lead, Coach, Direct.” We have training, mentoring and practice at each one of these stages. People are not going to become a director of a ministry at CG if we have not seen them successfully lead a serve team, and then coach a group of leaders.

**Tim:** Jake, your story is a phenomenal story of one who led “on the map” ‘and now is going “off the map” in our first multi-site. I trust you. I trust the Spirit in you. You’re ready for uncharted multi-site territory.

Yet, we’re dreaming big dreams that are off the map for many Lutheran congregations.

We’re dreaming about discovering, developing and deploying disciple multipliers who will reach the lost through…

**Micro-Churches -**

* Brian R.’s story.
* Ryan Leith in Albuquerque.
* Heyn family in North Carolina

**Jake: Kingdom-Expanding Businesses and Nonprofits**

* La Mesa Resource Center
* Cleaning company

**Cross Church Collaboration and Support**

* Unite Leadership Center
* Accelerator

**Tim:** Next episode we’ll go through the next three vital lessons for canoeing the mountains. Thanks for joining us on Lead Time where we believe eternities are changed when a leader grows.

**Part 2 - Canoeing the Mountains**

**Jake:** Welcome to LeadTime, my name is Tim Ahlman here with Jake Boessling. We are both husbands, fathers, sons, pastors and trying our best to follow Jesus with all our heart, mind and soul. **We believe eternities are changed when a leader grows.**

Today is part two of a two part podcast series called Canoeing the Mountains. If you missed last week check it out.

Today we are giving you three more VITAL LESSONS that every leader of a Christian congregation or organization has to learn in uncharted territory. To review, here are the first two VITAL LESSONS.

**1st** VITAL LESSON - **Understanding uncharted territory - the world in front of you is nothing like the world behind you.**

**2nd** VITAL LESSON - **The on-the-map skill set - No one is going to follow you off the map unless they trust you on the map.**

Tim, give us number 3.

**TIM: 3rd** VITAL LESSON: **Leading off the map - In uncharted territory, adaptation is everything.**

Leader, how adaptive is your organization? Take an adaptive audit. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being a super adaptive place, and one being stuck in your ways since your inception, how adaptive is your organization?

Organizations don’t become more simple as they grow ..they become more complex. It becomes harder to adapt if it isn’t a core value in your culture to work at and foster throughout the organization.

According to historical geographer John Logan Allen, the moment for Lewis and Clark atop of Lemhi Pass expecting to be able to coast down the Columbia River to the Pacific Ocean yet seeing the whole Rocky Mountains ahead of them was the “geography of reality.” They wanted the “geography of hope” but got a new unexpected reality. They then chose to adapt. They “canoed the rockies” so to speak. They got hiking. They kept moving. They changed their mindset.

**Why adapt?** We have probably all been there. When a mental model we expected to work dies, a painful paradigm shift takes place within us. It is disorienting and anxiety making. In our new culture a new missional mental model is needed, and a new way of leading and learning is necessary.

**JAKE - (STORY**)-I remember a few years ago our team did a deep dive into our confirmation programs health. We found out that students and families were coming to class but not as engaged as we thought they were. Our time together was too lecture based. There was less teen to teen community time to build long lasting relationships. It was hard to hear that the program wasn’t reaching the hearts and minds of our students like we thought it was doing. So we had a choice. And we chose to adapt.

We decided to go to a hybrid flip the classroom model. We filmed 40 videos for 40 newly crafted lessons. Families watch the fun and instructive video. Then come to class to discuss in their table groups. We have a small group time for students and one for parents to take the topic deeper.

It took work. It took time. It was worth the effort. Our confirmation program is now thriving more than ever and people are retaining more of the content. It’s way more engaging.

**TIM**: What really is adaptive leadership? Adaptive leadership is about “letting go, learning as we go, and keeping going. It’s about loss, learning and gaps. Adaptive leadership consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face.

**JAKE**: Our goal as leaders is to “mind the gap.” I remember being in London’s Tube trail system with the dude coming over the loudspeaker, “mind the gap”. Meaning, be careful. Watchout. There is a gap between the platform and the trail. Don’t fall.

Our goal as leaders is to “mind the gap” between the organizations aspired values and our actions...between our values and the reality we face.

Adaptive leaders pay attention to the causes that are keeping your team/organization in a state of inactivity.

**TIM**: We as leaders want to always be growing our adaptive capacity. This is an ongoing never ending focus for us as leaders.

Here are four quick ways to build adaptive capacity:

1. Recommit to your core ideology. Always be asking “Who are we.” This is values and mission. Ask, ‘If we stop being about \_\_\_\_(this) then we stop being.” Lewis and Clark didn’t stop because they recommitted themselves to their core identity. We are actually going through a process right now with Historic Agency. They are helping us identify and clarify our core ideology. Core statement of mission that won’t change. Our vision on how to live out that ideology or mission will change. But the mission trumps.

 If you don’t have this language and want to create it, simply start by asking these questions on your team: Why do we exist as an organization or church? What would be lost in our community, in our field or world if we ceased to be? What purposes and principles must we protect as central to our identity?
2. **JAKE**: Reframe your strategy. Always be asking “How are we going to get there?” In adaptive leadership, reframing is another way to talk about shifting in attitudes and expectations or habits of behavior to live out your core ideology. Many churches change language for their ideology, mission statements, letterheads get printed, new bulletins...but without a strategy change to live this mission out, nothing will change.
3. **TIM**: Rely on new learning. Learning is at the heart of adaptive leadership. To be frank, if you are not learning anything new, you are not doing adaptive work. If your group is addressing a new challenge with an old solution, relying on a best practice or implementing the plan of a resident expert, then the solution is a technical one, not adaptive. Don’t get me wrong..we are going multisite, building a gym, and paying off debt here. But the real ***adaptive*** work is creating new leadership strategies for our church and synod. We are in an infinite game. Meaning, when we are gone, we want to see the next generation of leaders continuing to be affected by the adaptivity we are making now. Build. Measure. Learn. Run a lot of test. And apply that learning to continue to take new ground for your church or org to help others.

**JAKE: 4th** VITAL LESSON that every leader of a Christian congregation or organization has to learn in uncharted territory: **Relationships and resistance - You can’t go alone, but you haven’t succeeded until you’ve survived the sabotage.**

There is power in getting close to the "opinion leader" and those that may give you a hard time. What is your normal posture toward these leaders? Fight or flight.

**Tim -** I remember being early on as a Pastor here, being under-prepared for our first vision presentation to our Board. One of the board members said, "This sounds like corporate mumbo jumbo. I don't like it at all." I got the red face of embarrassment. My heart started beating fast. Everything within me wanted to defend myself. Yet, the voice of Jesus calmly whispered to my spirit, "It is okay, Tim. Just ask for help." I did - and the Board spent the next few days helping me refine my presentation before going to the congregation. Jake - can you share any stories of surviving “sabotage” from your past?

**Jake:** *Share from your heart…:)*

**Tim:** The only way we can make these kind of decisions to engage those whom we perceive are trying to “sabotage” us is through noticing and offering our anxiety to Jesus.

* On a Scale of 1-10 how anxious are you normally?
* Anxiety is like gum on a shoe.
	+ It sticks to places it shouldn’t.
	+ It is noticeable and noisy.
* Jesus gives peace.
* Goal at CG - be the most peaceful place possible in the midst of inevitably “sticky” anxiety.

**Jake**: How do you manage your anxiety in the midst of the anxiety of others?

* + Breath. Pray.
	+ Listen. Give non-verbal queues you care.
	+ Ask questions. Remain curious. Show empathy.

**Tim:** Anxiety and what the leader sees as “sabotage” will be present in the midst of change It is a given. Expect to…

* + Feel defensive.
	+ Get a red face.
	+ Feel your heart beating fast.
		- Leaders learn to notice their physiological changes in the midst of anxiety.
* STORY - It is no secret that I/we have strong feelings about our current narrow mindset toward professional and lay leadership development in the LCMS. We believe it is too expensive, and not adaptive enough to the varying needs of local congregations. We believe it should be “easier” to become a leader in the church...and it should be “harder” to stay a leader in the local church because of longer apprenticeship opportunities that help deeply form and discover gifts and character. I could spend a lot of time putting this struggle to adapt/change on individual leaders in our LCMS world, “If they only changed their mindset then all would be well…” Well, it’s not that simple. Our struggles in leadership development are systemic. There is no one person to blame. We’ve arrived at a complicated place because of our system. So, I know, that as we push for beta testing of new models there will be “sabotage” and resistance because the system is not used to the ideas we are bringing.

**Jake:** The leader’s goal is to simply be less anxious than everyone else in the room...and it doesn’t have to be by much.

* + If you are merely slightly less anxious than others the “stickiness” of anxiety lessens.
	+ The result?
		- Relationships are strengthened.
		- Better decisions are made.

**Tim: 5th** VITAL LESSON that every leader of a Christian congregation or organization has to learn in uncharted territory: **Transformation - Everybody will be changed (especially the leader)**

Expect unexpected leaders to rise up. Sacagawea- a young Shoshone Native American nursing mother helped Lewis and Clark find routes to the Pacific.

Who are your unexpected leaders looking back? Bob and Brian from La Mesa.

**Jake:** Expect to follow Jesus into cross cultural experiences. Christena Cleveland, *"People can meet God within their cultural context, but in order to follow God, they must cross into other cultures because that's what Jesus did in the incarnation and the cross. Discipleship is cross cultural."*

What are your cross-cultural experiences as a faith community and as an individual?

This is the **power of partnership** to take us where we cannot go on our own.

La Mesa.

Family Promise

Young Lives for young single parents

**Tim:** Entering uncharted territory is like boarding a time machine set for the future. You will pioneer new ideas and start movements that may be decades or generations ahead of its time. Lewis and Clark made decisions and functioned with a leadership style that was way ahead of their time.

1. They had a true partnership without one clear leader “in command.”
2. They had women in leadership.
3. A native American woman and slave were given a vote as to how the mission would go. Amazing!
4. A soldier was gladly released from his duties in order to further his knowledge for the greater sake of society.

**Jake:** What will others say about how we’ve, and our organizations have changed, long after we’re gone? We’re playing an “infinite game” where the goal is to both stay in the game of expanding the kingdom as long as we’re alive...and then to entrust the vision of bringing everyone to Christ in adaptive ways long after we’re gone.

* Will our models for lay leadership dev. Influence the wider church?
* Will our model of flat organizational and pastoral ministry authority influence others?
* Will a micro-church movement be influenced because of the missionaries we discover, develop and deploy into their homes and places of work?

I don’t know. What I do know is that we’ll be changed...and, for some, their eternities will be changed because of the work the Holy Spirit gives us to do.

**Tim:** One final word for all who desire to lead into uncharted territory. You must bring all of yourself to your role (pastor, teacher, CEO, etc.)...but you are not your role.” For you to lead for the long journey you must separate your role from your true self...your true identity. This is called appropriate differentiation.

* Primarily, I am not first a husband, father, pastor leader...I am a child of God.
* The same is true for you. You are a baptized child of the risen King Jesus.

Do you know what this true identity does for me? It gives me freedom to try, press, fail, and innovate in team again? I’m not defined by this story...I’m defined by Jesus’ story on my behalf.

**Jake:** Remember the **5th** VITAL LESSON that every leader of a Christian congregation or organization has to learn in uncharted territory: In **Transformation - Everybody will be changed (especially the leader)...but your identity in Christ never changes.**

Thanks for joining us today. Sharing is caring. Here are Lead Time we believe eternities are changed when you make the daily choice to grow. Peace.

Vision

Excitement

Story