

**ReBranding and ReLaunching Your Church**

**Kenny Mills, Speaker**

**The Columbia Metro Connection Podcast 010**

**May 2018**

**Columbia Metro Baptist Association at** **CMBA@ColumbiaMetro.org**

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Chris Reinolds: Thank you so much, Dr. Smith, for your passion and for what you're doing at Columbia International University. Host for this week's episode are George Bullard, the Director of Missions at Columbia Metro Baptist Association, Strategist Leadership Coach, lead Missiologist, and virtuoso of all things church related.

 And, I'm Chris Reinolds, lead pastor at Killian Baptist Church and founder of [chrisreinolds.com](http://www.chrisreinolds.com).

 Joining us this week is Kenny Mills, founder and CEO of Ruins Rebuilt. Kenny and his team are passionate about seeing churches have a bigger impact in the communities where God has placed them. They long to see the leaders of these organizations encouraged and on track to achieve the dreams and goals that they once had. In his continual pursuit to transform churches that are experiencing a pattern of decline, Kenny has so graciously come out to share specifically how they, at Ruins Rebuilt, are helping churches relaunch and rebrand their organizations.

George Bullard: Kenny, thank you so much for being here with us today.

Kenny Mills: My pleasure, George. Thanks for having us.

George Bullard: Well, I want to tell folks why you're here because it's a very special and important reason. Kenny Mills at Ruins Rebuilt has already worked with three of our congregations in the Columbia Metro Baptist Association. In fact, I heard today he's worked with a fourth one of ours, City of Praise, that’s in the Association. So, that's great.

Chris Reinolds: That's really good.

George Bullard: And, we wanted to have Kenny on the podcast today because we wanted him to talk about the things that he does personally, what his organization does at Ruins Rebuilt to help congregations particularly, though they work with other than congregations to really rebrand and relaunch what they're doing. And, even deeper than that, but that was the focus of what we asked him to talk about today at our Vision Tuesday.

 This is part of an overall strategy that we have at the Columbia Metro Baptist Association where we're trying to have a comprehensive approach to churches who are more than a generation old where the founding dream or vision of the congregation has begun to wane. And, they get to a point where they have got to plot a new course.

 And so, we have written some material on "The 10 ‘R’s For Plotting A New Congregational Course" and that material will be available to you. And then, you'll hear more about that as you see this podcast posted.

 But, when it comes to a rebranding and relaunching of the congregation, Kenny, what are some of the steps that you have to walk them through before the process, the launch, the rebranding can occur?

Kenny Mills: Yeah. Thanks for asking, George. And, again thanks for having me. You know, this idea of rebranding and relaunching, to me, are actually two separate things. A lot of people like to tie them together, but for me, I see them a little differently. To me, a rebrand is simply a ... It's an identity. It's a change of the logo. Right? And, we're just changing up some paint. We're adding a new logo to what we're doing.

 But, relaunching, to me, says that we're going to change our identity. It's a complete identity change of who the church is, how they function, the way that they go about doing church. And so, to get to those two areas, to me, there are a few things that you have to absolutely do first.

 The first thing is, I believe you have to posture yourself. And, this is the leader. The leaders of the church have to posture themselves to hear from the Lord. What is it that he's calling us as a church to do specifically?

 Clearly, all churches are called to go and tell the world, make disciples. Right? We get that. But, specifically, what are the ways in which this church is called to minister to people?

 You know, in Paul's writing in Romans, he talks about how the body is made up of many parts. To me, I also look at that because Paul is a church planter. So, not only is this us individually as a member of a church body playing our part in our gifting to help the church, I also look at this as all of churches are members of the big “C” body of church.

 And so, we all have specific roles to play and functions to operate in as a church. And so, the first thing we have to do is we have to posture ourselves to hear from the Lord, what is it he's calling us to do?

 As a part of that posturing, I feel like the biggest thing that we have to do inside of that as well is we have to posture ourselves for change. Whether this is just simply changing some paint colors and a new logo or if this completely changing the identity of a church, change is going to happen.

 And, I don't know If you guys know this or not, but a lot of people struggle with change. But, the thing is, change is the only thing that's constant. Right? So, you would think that we would get comfortable with it, but we're not—especially, in the church world. So, we have to posture ourselves to get ready for change. And so, those two things absolutely have to happen before any rebranding any relaunching has to happen.

 Then, after that, to me, again, we talked about what is this church specifically called to do? The next step is, we have to define our vision. What is it that we are supposed to be striving for? Trying to accomplish? What are the things that we're called to do? We have to gain clarity and define that for ourselves as a church.

 And then, the next part is that we have to define our values. What makes us up? What's our DNA? What are we made up of as a church? What makes us unique and different?

 If you look at the definition of DNA it's a medical term, it's a scientific term. But, if you look at it and you really look at it, it can help us understand what makes us unique and different as an organization. And so, we have to gain an understanding of those two things, our vision and our values before we can take steps forward.

 The way I like to look at it is that our vision is our direction. This equals the direction we're supposed to be heading in. So, if I'm on a road and I know I'm supposed to be going northbound, that's my vision, that's what's out in front of me, that's the direction I'm going in. If my GPS all of a sudden tells me to go the other way, well, that's a problem. And, anytime we're operating away from where we're supposed to be going, that takes us away from our vision.

 The values, to me, equal protection. And, this is in the same idea of a road. This is the guardrails. This is what keeps us from ... You know, we might come off on the rumble strip a little and bump, bump, bump, it might cause some issues. But, we're not really in danger. But, when we start getting into the guardrails, that's when trouble happens.

 And, when we make decisions as an organization outside of the protection of our values, that's when we find ourselves in trouble. So, our values offer us really clear protection as we move forward.

 And so, now that we've postured ourselves and we're preparing the way, we've defined our vision, and we've defined our values, now it's time to really start to communicate to our people and to create a plan. And so, then there are steps that you would take from there. You'd create a plan, you'd create a timeline, you communicate those things, and you start to execute those things. But, all those things have to happen before you can really rebrand or relaunch.

Chris Reinolds: Are you finding that the churches that you interact with, are they specifically looking for some sort of quick fix or silver bullet? And, if so, how are you leading them out of that mentality?

Kenny Mills: Absolutely. Everyone wants the quick fix. Right? It's why McDonald's has made billions of dollars. Because, we don't have the time to fix our own dinner so we swing by and get our kids a Happy Meal. It's the reason that there's a Jiffy Lube and a quick fix auto shop because we don't want to change our own oil, we want to just take it in and five minutes later or oil is changed.

Chris Reinolds: I'd like to know where you're going to change your oil at because-

Kenny Mills: Yeah, it doesn't happen like that, but we are a culture of quick fixes. And, anytime there are problems, that's our natural tendency. What can we do today? What can we do right now to fix this that tomorrow it would be corrected? But, let's think about it this way. Let's just say I'm 50 years old, and I'm not. But, let's just say I'm 50 years old and I decide it's finally time to start getting healthy. And, all this weight that I've put on over the years I decide I want to try to lose it.

 And, I go to gym for three months and I've only lost five pounds. And, my goal is to lose 100 pounds. And, I'm really frustrated that I haven't lost it all in three months. And, this is what organizations do all the time. They've been doing things the wrong way, with no vision, and no clarity, and no leadership for many years. And yet, they want you to come in and over a weekend or in the span of three months, fix it all. And, that's just not going to happen. It's just unrealistic.

 And so, the first thing that we do is we talk about those realities of... Look, it didn't take three months to get here and it's not just going take three months to get away from here. And so, we talk about the realities of that. And then, we just offer some hope. That's one of the things most people are missing. They just have no hope. Because they've been struggling for so long, they've been dealing with the same issues over and over and over again. They just don't believe that something could actually change that we could really get there.

 So, we offer reality, we offer hope, and then, the last thing that we do to really get them moving in the right direction is we help them see that we're going to help them create a custom-designed plan for them. It's not just solutions in a box and one size fits all. In fact, no size fits all.

Chris Reinolds: Right.

Kenny Mills: Every church is unique. Every dynamic, its assets, its circumstances, its leadership, its giftings, they're all different. We have to take those things into consideration. And so, we do a pretty extensive assessment of those things to offer them the realities of where they sit.

George Bullard: Very good. Well, is there a critical masses issue? What percentage or what number of people have to believe in the transition and changes that they need to make and are willing to rebrand, relaunch, and totally redirect where the congregations is headed? What's that minimal number?

Kenny Mills: Yeah. So, George, actually, I kind of take one of the numbers that you said as a standard, which is really in a lot of ways, 20. It's gonna take 20 households for us to actually make change happen. Now, do we have to have 20 families completely involved in the process? I don't know. I do know there has to be at least 20 people involved.

George Bullard: Right.

Kenny Mills: We need at least 20 people who are going to be a part of a core team, who are going to be leaders, who are going to be invested, who are going to pray, who are going to help implement change. Because, here's the thing. If it's only left up to the pastor and his wife, we're in trouble.

Chris Reinolds: Yes.

George Bullard: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yes.

Kenny Mills: We're in trouble because there's not enough money and there's not enough time for those two people to do it. And so, I ... To me, I want to see at least 20 people that we can bring around us. And, listen. This might be the teenage girl who just starts singing in the choir. I'm okay with that. Like, I just wanted bodies who are committed to walking this process with us.

 But, I love your number of 20 families that if we're really going to get to a place of health and moving forward, that 20 family mark is a really powerful point that I think we have to start there in a way that we're going to start to see momentum shift. But, if we're talking specifically about implementing that change, to me, I'm asking a pastor to let's bring 20 people around.

George Bullard: Okay.

Chris Reinolds: What are your key focus areas for ... And, I know you mentioned that rebranding is essentially a logo change. But, what are your key focus areas for the rebranding and the relaunching? What are the areas in which you really centralize on?

Kenny Mills: Yeah. So, not every church is dying. And, not every church is declining. Although, the numbers tell us that about on average 1000 churches in the ... Southern Baptist churches die on average a year. That's a lot.

Chris Reinolds: Yeah.

Kenny Mills: Also, the statistics tell us that less than 7% ... 6.7% of churches—Southern Baptist churches—are actually growing. So, the numbers tell us that most churches are struggling, dying, or declining. Right? And so, we have to look at some very specific things, but not all churches fall into that. And so, if there is a church that's healthy and maybe they're just standing still. They're not necessarily growing, they're not declining. Maybe just some little changes are a healthy thing for them.

 So, the assessment is going to be super key to helping us know what steps we need to take for them. Some churches might just simply need to change the way that they promote themselves or that they reach their community. Or, they just need to give a look as though something is changing. And, that's what a brand does.

 So, I got a chance to be a part of two really large rebrands. One, was at NewSpring Church. NewSpring Church is South Carolina's largest church and two years ago we got a chance to walk through an entire rebrand. And, what that was, our church didn't change. It's just the way that things look outwardly. The website, and the marketing materials, and the logo. All those things changed. But, it gave us a chance to recast vision to our church about who we are and why we are that way.

Chris Reinolds: Right.

Kenny Mills: I also got a chance to be a part of one of the largest organizations in the country rebranding, which is the YMCA. Now, you want to talk about a huge rebrand.

Chris Reinolds: Yeah.

Kenny Mills: I mean, this is an organization that most people call the Y. And so, what they did was they took this idea, well, everyone calls us the Y so what if we make our logo to just say, the Y? How smart is that?

Chris Reinolds: Right. Simple.

Kenny Mills: They just recognized what people were already calling them. Because, to me, a brand is simply what people say about you when they see this visual identity.

Chris Reinolds: Right.

Kenny Mills: That's the thing that people associate with. And so, you have to walk through some of those steps to see, did we just need to change some paint, change some logos, maybe even change the church name as a part of a rebrand? And, that we can walk in that direction.

 So, those are some of the steps that we would take for an organization that feels like a rebrand is right for them.

Chris Reinolds: Right. Now, on your website, you mentioned something about a common language that's vision, and values, and mission, and that sort of thing. That resonates a little bit with me from my own experience with revitalization work. Can you speak a little bit about that sort of common language and why it is so essential in the life and body of the church?

Kenny Mills: This is huge. To me, this is where we start with every organization. And, it starts with me in Genesis chapter 11. So, this is the story of The Tower of Babel. And, it says, now the whole world had one language and a common speech. Now, to me, that makes no sense because I'm from the Charlotte area and I might say things like, "Right." Like, "Take a right turn." Or, if I go out to dinner, I might drink a Sprite.

Chris Reinolds: Right.

Kenny Mills: Or, I might say, "I'm a fan of the Clemson Tigers."

Chris Reinolds: I'm sorry.

Kenny Mills: That's okay. But, not really. But, if I were. But, if you drive over to Clemson, two hours away, they say things like, "Right, and Sprite, and Tigers." Saying the same thing, it just sounds different.

 Well, a few months ago, I was in Grand Rapids, Michigan, up north and I was teaching to a team and one young lady said, "Man, you're very southern." And, I'm like, "What? What do you mean?" She was like, "Well, your accent is just very different."

 And, this started to hit me. And then, it really hit me two years ago when I went on a trip to Europe. And, it got so bad, languages were so bad I couldn't understand people, they couldn't understand me, that I started looking for restaurants with a menu that had a picture so I could just point to it and order.

 And so, when I read the scripture and all those things hit me, I'm like, this is not right. This is not normal because the whole world having one language and a common speech is not normal for me. Okay? And so, that really stuck out. And, if you go on in the scripture, these people, they start to build this tower. It says, "Come let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens so that we may make a name for ourselves, otherwise, we'll be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

 And then, it says this in verse five, it says, "But, the Lord came down." Now, when the Lord comes down, you know it's either about to get real good or real bad. Right? So, but the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. And, the Lord said, and, this is why it's so key, common language, the Lord said. So, not Kenny. Not a prophet. Not some pastor. But, the Lord said, "If as one people, speaking the same language, they've begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them." So, the Lord says, if we speak a common language there's nothing that we cannot accomplish together.

 Now, here's what happens, I mean, the rest of that story, and you guys know this, I mean, this is where the Lord says, "This is not good. We're going to confuse the languages." But, here's what I love to point out. And, gosh, this is why it's so key. Because, if you go over to Acts chapter two, and this is the day of Pentecost, and, all of a sudden, everyone's kind of hanging out and Peter's preaching. And, it says this in chapter two, it says, “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them. Now, they were staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven, when they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment because each on heard their own language being spoken."

 So, God realizes how powerful language is that he disrupts it. He destroys it in a lot of ways in Genesis. But, the day of Pentecost, the first day, the first moments of the church, God re-utilizes the power of language to be his vehicle to go and to teach the world about who Jesus is and spread the gospel.

 So, when I say that common language is a big deal, I really mean it. And, I believe that God's word shows us that as well. And so, as a church, as an organization, when we're not speaking a common language it really makes it difficult. But, when we do speak a common language, and language is powerful, I believe scripture says that, then frankly, I think there's nothing that we can't accomplish. Clearly, with the power of the Holy Spirit working within us. But, for me, a common language is key.

 And so, what we do is we spend a lot of time helping churches really define their language. Their vision has to be very clear. And, it can't just be a couple of words put together and we get it close. No, no, no. We have to say it the right way, the same way, every time.

Chris Reinolds: Right.

Kenny Mills: Our values have to speak to directly who we are and why we do what we do. And, if we don't have those things, well, I don't know how we're going to accomplish it. Because, what happens is that everyone in the organization begins to speak the same language. Then, it starts to permeate and it becomes part of the culture and then our people start to speak it.

 And then, here's where you know you've got good culture. When you go out to Chick-fil-A and you start to hear it there. This is what I call culture in the wild. When people who aren't even necessarily a part of your church start to speak pieces of it, that's when we've created culture. And, common language is where we begin with that.

Chris Reinolds: That's good stuff.

George Bullard: Well, I want to think about early on in a process like this. Often, it is the pastor who's the first one to realize we've got to do something different. We've got to head in a different direction. And, his people are kind of lagging behind.

 So, what can pastors do to prepare their people to come up with those 20 households that you've referred to earlier?

Kenny Mills: Yeah. So, I think that ... To me, there's a cycle inside of this idea of following Jesus. So, it starts with we meet Jesus. And, then we have this great commission to go and to make other disciples. And so, what then inherently happens is ... And, to me, I look at it as like my favorite restaurant. I don't mean to simplify the gospel to a restaurant, but hear me out.

 I have a favorite restaurant in Charlotte that I take people to all the time. The first time I went, I had an incredible experience. And, I couldn't help but tell other people about it. So, I'd bring them from all over. I'd drive people from Columbia to Charlotte to taste this place. And, it was awesome. And then, they would tell their friends about it. And, this was the cycle that happened because someone's life was changed and an invitation happened to come from someone else to come and experience it.

 This is the key part that starts missing when churches struggle. Is that, when we meet Jesus we have this salvation, like, we should have this thing in us that we can't help but tell other people about it. But, the later in life we get, the further away from salvation we get. What happens is a lot of people become, well, very used to not inviting people. They forget what it felt like when they were first saved and this adrenaline, this change that's happening in them, they stop telling people.

 And so, I think for pastors, the encouragement I would give is first and foremost, let's keep sharing the gospel because the gospel changes lives. And, when our lives are changed it inherently draws us to invite others to come and experience what we've experienced.

 So, to continue to share the gospel and then to help create a culture of invitation. And, this is hard because especially in our political climate, the hardest thing to do right now is sometimes to talk about God in public. Or, to invite your coworker to come to church with you or to talk about Jesus. Right?

God's a little bit easier to talk about even than Jesus. When we start talking about the Holy Spirit, then it's all going to [inaudible 00:21:12]. Right? But, to create this culture of invite, which means, we have to equip our people for what it looks like to go and to reach people. To go and engage people in conversation and to invite them to church. And, to invite them into a conversation over who God is. And, who this Jesus is. And, to share their story, their testimony.

 And, the third thing that I would say is simply this, there has to be equipping. We can't just tell, we have to train. We have to equip our people. And so, if there's a pastor out there listening, he needs to know, if we're going to walk through this, we need to start doing these things to prepare our people. Let's share the gospel. Let's evangelize. Let's teach our people what it looks like to be an inviter and let's equip them with how to invite and the tools to go and do those things. That's how we're going to see people coming into our doors.

 I'll tell you this. I got a chance to be a part of probably one of the greatest moves of God in the state at NewSpring Church. I got a chance to while on staff see it go from 10,000 people to 30,000 people. And, I can just tell you this, and a lot of people will talk about NewSpring and say what you will, but NewSpring spent very little money on marketing. We would ask people in an ownership class, "Hey, how'd you hear about NewSpring?" We would say, did you hear about it from a newspaper? No hands. Did you hear about it from TV? No hands. Did you hear about it from this place or that place? No hands. Did you hear about this from someone that you knew who invited you to come to church? Every hand.

Chris Reinolds: Wow.

Kenny Mills: The power of word of mouth is still prevalent. It's still alive. And, I'm just here to tell you. If we teach our people how to do this it can be a game changer.

Chris Reinolds: Well, in wrapping up, what would be one word of encouragement or a word of warning for those that are really looking to go down this road of relaunching?

Kenny Mills: Yeah. The word of encouragement is simply this, is that Christ is going to build his church. I mean, we can be confident in that. We can steadfast and be confident in the fact that he's going to build his church. And so, there's hope for us. There's hope in that for us. That he's going to do something incredible.

 The next part of encouragement is simply this, and, I get this ... Our company's name comes from the book of Nehemiah. There's so much wisdom in there. But, inside of Nehemiah, there's a piece of scripture where he says the God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will begin doing the work.

 And then, the encouragement is simply this. We have got to trust the Lord for the results, but we have got to work like it depends on us. And, that's really good news, guys. Like, that's really good news that it's not on us. It's on the Lord. But, we sure enough have got to get out of our seat and go do the work. And, that's inspired me. That encourages me and that challenges me. And, I hope that does for others as well.

 And, the last bit of encouragement or advice I would simply say is this; there are plenty of resources around to help you. George is an incredible resource that you've got right here at your disposal. Use him. There are books that are written. There are podcasts. There are people all over who have a heart to see church be healthy.

Chris Reinolds: Right.

Kenny Mills: Take advantage. Ask for help. My gosh. Let your pride down. It's okay to not have all the answers and be willing to simply ask for help. There are plenty of people and resources available to you. And, that's what our company does. That's one of the things that we do is come alongside pastors. And, whether it's leadership coaching, or consulting, or strategic ... Whatever it is. There are plenty of resources out there. And so, man, just ask for help.

Chris Reinolds: That's good.

George Bullard: That's it.

Chris Reinolds: Kenny. How can people connect with you if they need to? If they want to reach out and touch base?

Kenny Mills: Yeah. Absolutely. We would love to engage with anyone who has questions. Everything from, you know, they just want to sit and talk with someone or they're thinking about rebranding, relaunching, or they just want some fresh eyes on what they do, they can reach out to us in several ways. The first is our website, super easy to navigate, and it tells a little of our story, and ways to connect with us. And, it's [ruinsrebuilt.org](http://www.ruinsrebuilt.org).

Chris Reinolds: Alright.

Kenny Mills: [Ruinsrebuilt.org.](http://www.ruinsrebuilt.org) And then, we're on social media—Facebook and Insta, and all that kind of good stuff. And then, people can email us. It's ask@ruinsrebuilt.org.

 And so, man, there are churches in the city all over that are doing incredible work. And so, the last thing I'd just love to say is, pastor, thank you. Thank you for the work you're doing. Thank you for the ministry. Thank you for your faithfulness in teaching God's word. And, for pastoring your people. If there's anything we can do to encourage you or to come alongside of you, we'd love to do that.

Chris Reinolds: That's great. Well, thank you so much for being with us today, Kenny.

Kenny Mills: My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

George Bullard: Thank you, Kenny. We appreciate it a lot.

Chris Reinolds: Kenny, thank you once again. And, to our listeners, thank you for joining us. And, please be sure to check out the show notes for more detailed information about today's show. Also, if you've found this podcast helpful to you or your ministry, share it with others so that we can get the word out about what God is doing.

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