



# UNLIMITED PARTNERSHIPS

STRENGTHENING CHURCHES  
DEVELOPING LEADERS

# MINISTRY INSTRUCTION MANUAL

*UNLIMITED PARTNERSHIPS*  
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*BY PARTNERING WITH THEOLOGICAL ORGANIZATIONS, UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES, AND CHURCHES, UNLIMITED PARTNERSHIPS EQUIPS STUDENTS TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN MINISTRY BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE AS STAFF MINISTERS IN LOCAL CHURCHES THAT NEED HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT, WHILE BEING MENTORED IN CLASSES DESIGNED FOR PRACTICAL APPLICATION AND NETWORKING WITH PROVEN CHRISTIAN LEADERS.*

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## CREATING AN EVANGELISTIC ENVIRONMENT

- JAY JOHNSTON

**E**veryone who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their life as I understand the Great Commandment Matthew 22:37-40 and the Great Commission Matthew 28:17-20 has a responsibility to be involved in as you go plan of evangelism. The message is clear and that is Jesus came for all and we must go and tell this Good News.

The church that identifies them with Jesus Christ has a unique calling to follow the example of Christ through the power of His Holy Spirit. The church is responsible for equipping the saints based on Ephesians Chapter 4:11-16. The equipping is to share the good news of the Jesus Christ and provide an atmosphere that encourages those in Christ to be nurtured and instructed for the work of ministry. Evangelism is sharing the message of the gospel with persons who have not accepted the invitation of God for eternal life.

Evangelism is realizing that God's Holy Spirit uses persons who have been saved to demonstrate the life changing impact of the gospel. A Christian is not responsible for the results (that is the work of the Holy Spirit); the believer is responsible for being equipped and available to share what the Lord is doing in his or her own life and sharing how to have eternal life.

The heartbeat of the ministry of the New Testament church is evangelism. The Great Commission provides our orders for how a church is to be built on the foundation of equipping Christians to grow in their faith and share the journey of faith with others. To focus on evangelism requires a church to develop an intentional strategy for incorporating evangelism into everything done through their ministry. Evangelism is not a program but a way of life.

Each church must determine the most appropriate way(s) of equipping the people to be about telling the story of Jesus. The most important matter is that a church does something that is recognized and provides opportunity for

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those in Christ to be equipped. Some churches give one night, or one weekend to equip and encourage people while others encourage an as you go strategy.

In order to implement an effective strategy you must be willing as a leader to live this out so an atmosphere can develop among other leaders that the church has an evangelistic mind-set among church leaders. You see it is hard if not impossible for the members to follow if the leader is not living it out. Before you move on fill in the blanks in the following sentence. The last time I shared Jesus with someone was \_\_\_\_\_. If it has been more than two days I would encourage you to stop right now and ask the Lord to increase opportunities for you to personally share Christ with those you come in contact on a daily basis.

The following ideas are designed to help a church equip Christian Disciples and implement evangelism as a strategy for sharing the Gospel with the unsaved. I believe these ideas help to create an environment for sharing the story of Jesus.

### IDEAS FOR CREATING AN EVANGELISTIC ENVIRONMENT

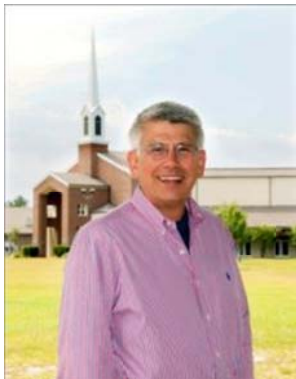
- Conduct worship services with strong evangelistic preaching and invitation.
- Pray for the lost in prayer meetings and Sunday School classes.
- Use testimonies of persons who have been recently saved.
- For each thing our church does, ask: What impact does this have on the unsaved?
- Depend on the Holy Spirit's power, not on our own methods.
- Conduct an Outdoor Baptism Service and send invitations to family members of Candidates.
- Organize Your Largest Volunteer Army (Sunday School, Bible Fellowships, Small Groups).
- Equip the leaders and members to share their personal story of Jesus.

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- Create an Intentional Evangelistic Ministry (Visitation, Phone Calls, Letter Writing, etc...).
- Consider Evangelistic Events such as Vacation Bible School, Christmas and Easter
- Musicals/dramas, community involvement, sports outreach, youth and children's
- Retreats/camps, etc...).
- Meeting Needs/Sharing Christ focused on Ministry Evangelism.
- New Believer follow-up and assimilation.
- Provide Disciplemakers for new believers.
- Prayer ministry.
- Recovery Ministry.
- First Impressions that creates a winning atmosphere targeted with an evangelistic flare.
- Prayer Ministry, Marketing, Community Involvement, church signage, greeters, ushers, worship, create new Bible Study Units, etc...).

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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## BUILDING A GREAT COMMISSION ARMY

- JAY JOHNSTON

“When they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city officials, shouting, ‘These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too.’” – Acts 17:6 (Holman CSB)

### RECOGNIZE THE CHALLENGE

**D**edicated! Devoted! Disciplined! Diligent! Daring! Dynamic! What difference would this kind of disciple make in your church and community? A group of them described in Acts 17:6 turned their part of the world upside down.

Today, the world we face could use a little upheaval. If you listen carefully, you can hear the challenge of those who have walked before us, “Turn it upside down.” The challenge comes not with harsh criticism but with a hint of anticipation. They know something many of us have yet to discover. As a parent encourages a child who hesitates to do something that brings certain joy, these voices of the past encourage us to plunge into the deep water. Be disciples who make a difference in observable ways. Excitement awaits those who choose to be different.

A vast army of world changers fills the churches of America Sunday after Sunday. When they hear the truth of God’s Word, their hearts burn with anticipation. They hunger to make a stand but aren’t quite sure how to become disciples equipped with the necessary qualities. The fire fades as they walk away feeling unable to meet the challenge.

### BEGIN WITH THE PURPOSE

How can the disciple’s heart retain the fire of inspiration? Maybe the incredible response to *The Purpose Driven Life* reveals the answer, or at least some pretty good hints. People want to know why they exist and God’s intentions for them personally. Sure, they may have some interest in the big picture, but the prevailing question continues to be “What does God want for me?” To the

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Corinthian, Ephesian, Philippian, and Colossian disciples, the Holy Spirit spoke through Paul giving them an answer.

“We all, with unveiled faces, are reflecting the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.” 2 Cor. 3:18 (Holman CSB)

“... so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world.” Phil. 2:15 (Holman CSB)

“...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.” Eph. 4:13 (Holman CSB)

“...and have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator.” Col. 3:10 (Holman CSB)

What a remarkable purpose! We are to be reflections of the Lord shining like stars on a crystal clear night. God uses disciples who reflect and shine like Christ to change the world—to turn it upside down.

How does such a heavenly transformation occur? Every disciple already possesses the necessary qualities and equipment to become like Christ. The moment we trust Christ for forgiveness, the divine transformation begins. The blood of Christ covers our sin and the power of the resurrected Lord surges through our dead spirit, raising it to eternal life. That initial stage of transformation stands completed at conversion. However, additional work remains before disciples clearly reflect His glory and shine like stars. Though that additional transformation remains an activity of God and not man, He clearly gives each disciple personal responsibility for growth. God changes us as we learn more about His ways and follow Him in obedience.

“If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” John 13:17 (Holman CSB)

“So then, we must pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another.” Rom. 14:19 (Holman CSB)

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“Do what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.” Phil. 4:9 (Holman CSB)

“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Pet. 1:5-8 (Holman CSB)

“But have nothing to do with irreverent and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness.” I Tim. 4:7 (Holman CSB)

“But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who acts—this person will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:25 (Holman CSB)

Look at the verbs in those verses: do, pursue, make effort, train, persevere, and act. They clearly describe the disciple’s responsibility in this transformation process. Without question, God does the renewing, the empowering, and the re-creating. But disciples must do the yielding, the submitting, and the obeying. Such is the nature of this man-God relationship.

### BEAR FRUIT

Some define discipleship as the lifelong journey of obedience to Christ that transforms a person’s values and behavior, and results in ministry in one’s home, church, and the world. You can define it any way you like and approach it any way you want, but measure it by its fruit. Christ intends for anyone who follows Him to “...deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mark 8:34 Holman CSB). He expects *followers* to be demonstrated by obedience. He commissions all disciples to reproduce themselves in others. “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...” (Matt. 28:19 Holman CSB).

What kind of discipleship strategy produces world changers? Approaches vary from church to church, but all of them pursue these common goals:

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- 1.) ***Be intentional and ongoing.*** A hit-and-miss, part-time, seasonal effort produces little fruit.
- 2.) ***Be comprehensive in church practice.*** Every action of the church should be connected with the strategy to disciple believers. For example, Sunday School and other ongoing open-group Bible studies provide foundational discipleship and a lab environment to practice leadership and ministry skills learned in other discipleship experiences. Closed groups provide short-term experiences that demonstrate a deep degree of accountability: for attendance, preparation, participation, transparency, and confidentiality.

Every stage of discipleship should be given intentional focus. New Disciple: How does the church help the new disciple begin the journey of discipleship? Growing Disciple: How does the church help all disciples grow spiritually, develop skills for ministry, and learn to disciple others? Every age disciple is included in the strategy: adult, student, child.

- 3.) ***Be transformational.*** Disciples should be more like Christ in attitudes and actions as a result of discipleship. This transformation process follows a biblical pattern described with three simple words: Be, Know, Do.

**Be** – Who the disciple becomes at conversion as a child of God and who he is becoming through the ongoing renewal work of the indwelling Spirit. Disciples need help to evaluate the progress of personal transformation. In attitudes of the heart and actions of daily living, does the disciple look more like Christ?

**Know** – What the disciple learns about God. This learning comes through studying His Word, seeing His Work, and hearing His Voice. Knowing God more completely provides fuel for the ongoing transformation.

**Do** – What the disciple does in response to what he knows about God and who he is. As stated before, Christ expects obedient action.

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These three transformational elements exist as interdependent actions. In isolation, neither has the ability to produce a Christlike reflection in a disciple. But together, they serve as catalysts for a God-work that changes the disciple from the inside. A world-changing mission results from the interaction of these transformational elements.

- 4.) ***Be accountable and relational.*** Disciples cannot grow in isolation from the fellowship of others. Lone-ranger disciples often become ineffective and unproductive. Iron *does* sharpen iron.
- 5.) ***Be focused.*** Make discipleship more concrete by providing disciples with specific spiritual disciplines to target for their growth and evaluation. Growth in Christlikeness becomes more of a “can do now” that an “ought to someday.”
- 6.) ***Use relevant methods to implement the strategy.*** Form a resource pool for effective discipleship methods. Many approaches are viable: home-based small groups, church-based short term and ongoing groups, self-directed studies, online opportunities, enrichment events, leader training events, and many others. Church leaders need to discover what works best in their specific situation.

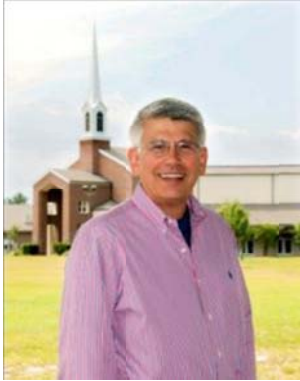
### CHANGE THE WORLD

Discipleship is the process God uses to accomplish His transforming work in us. But how can we be sure we’re doing our part? To assess the potential of your discipleship program, remember these words: intentional, comprehensive, transformational, accountable, focused, and relevant. These criteria can help you evaluate whatever discipleship strategy your church implements. Start using them now to create a new, more powerful discipleship process. The world is waiting.

## EVANGELISM CORE COMPETENCY

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jay Johnston serves as the Associate Pastor of FBC Covington, LA. He is a native of New Orleans and is a graduate of LA College with a B.S., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with a M.Div. and Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary with a D.Min. He has served churches in Louisiana, Florida and Tennessee. He also served for twenty years with LifeWay Christian Resources (formerly called the Baptist Sunday School Board.) He is the compiler of *Forward Together a New Vision for Senior Adult Ministry* and co-Author of *Teaching the Jesus Way* along with having over one hundred articles published. You can keep up with his heart to disciple at [www.jayjohnston.org](http://www.jayjohnston.org) He is married to Jerilyn Gaspard Johnston and they have two sons Grady and Jody. If you cannot make it to Louisiana to visit Jay you can find him on Facebook or Twitter.

## KEEPING THE SUNDAY SCHOOL EVANGELISTIC

- DOUG WILLIAMS

**T**here was a time when the Sunday School was referred to as “the evangelistic arm of the church”. For the vast majority of churches that saying no longer applies. Today’s Sunday School is mostly thought of as Bible study and fellowship. For the most part the evangelism element is missing. Why is that?

The first answer would be that no priority is placed on evangelism. Until this problem is solved very little evangelistic effort will be extended. As a general rule we do what we plan to do. For the most part planning for evangelism in Sunday School is missing.

Three areas need to be addressed that could lead to a return of evangelism to the Sunday School. They are:

1. Establish a priority for evangelism
2. Training in evangelism and
3. Organizing for evangelism.

### ESTABLISH A PRIORITY

The chances for successful evangelism in Sunday School without an established priority are virtually non-existent. The question is how do you establish such a priority? It begins with the planning process. The Pastor and staff (in larger churches) must set the pace. Promotion and publicity for a heightened awareness of evangelism begins in the pulpit. Any evangelistic effort without the pastor’s full support is doomed to failure.

Next comes the planning stage. A core leadership group needs to be established. This group is comprised of the Pastor, Minister of Education (in larger churches), Sunday School Director, and Outreach Director. This planning group will map out the plans to establish a priority for evangelism in the Sunday School. One of the first things to consider is the calendar. In most churches, if it’s not on the calendar it will never happen.

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The next thing to consider is *how will we train our Sunday School in evangelism*. Some method of training will need to be selected for reasons that will appear in the next section on what type of training is available.

### TRAINING IN EVANGELISM

Why do people need to be trained? Why can't they just witness on their own? The answer is fear. They don't know what to say. They are afraid that someone will ask them a question that they can't answer. They are afraid of being ridiculed, made fun of, or being rejected, to name a few.

In considering a method of evangelism, LifeWay has several to select from, or Evangelism Explosion is another method of training. The only method that links evangelism to the Sunday School is the FAITH training that is available from LifeWay and is available for purchase from LifeWay book stores.

Once a method has been selected a leader or director will also need to be enlisted to be in charge of the training. In addition to the director, a volunteer secretary will also need to be selected to assist the director in the details of the training procedures. This will usually take a part of two days depending on the number of people involved.

One of the mistakes many churches make is to try to start with too many people. The size of the first training session will depend on how many trained leaders or trainers are available and willing to lead. Multiply the number by three and this will be total number of people involved in the first round of training. The training method selected will provide the details and procedures involved in implementing the training.

### ORGANIZING FOR EVANGELISM

The strength of evangelism in the Sunday School will depend on how strong the Sunday School is. You can't have a strong evangelism effort with a weak Sunday School. The first step is to evaluate the present Sunday School to determine if there is sufficient organization to support a strong evangelistic effort. One thing to look for is age-grading, especially in the adult classes and departments.

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Evangelism training works best in an age graded Sunday School. This way Young Adults visit young adult prospects, Senior adults visit senior adult prospects etc. Enrollment is the name of the game in any Sunday School growth. Attendance follows enrollment.

The second step is to determine the worker/pupil ratio. The worker/pupil ratio is also very important. There needs to be one worker for every five people enrolled in Sunday School. These two principles of good Sunday School work will be of vital importance in preparing for the additional evangelism component.

The above does not mean that everything has to be perfect in your Sunday School organization. That will never happen, however the better organized you are the better evangelism will work in your church. In churches where no one has been trained in evangelism a slower start will need to be considered. More time in class room training will be necessary as those who are willing to be the team leaders gain confidence in presenting the gospel. When that has been achieved the actual visitation can begin.

The organization will need to look something like this:

The training director.

The training secretary.

A teacher (could be the pastor or director)

The team leaders (one for every two learners)

The team learners.

If possible all team members need to be from the same Sunday School class or department. Children and preschool leaders could be placed on a team with their peers. The length of the training will also need to be determined. The methods that were suggested earlier call for a twelve week (three month) period. To develop effective team leaders and soul winners takes time. The more the better. The length of the weekly class sessions will need to be at least two hours. This includes teaching time, visitation time, and sharing time following visitation.

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The need for prospects will be a never ending concern. The work on upgrading your prospect file will need to begin as soon as possible. If you do not have a prospect file, one needs to be started as soon as possible.

If all is done well your Sunday School will experience growth. New classes will need to be started as you enlarge the organization in preparation for the new members being enrolled. All this creates excitement and anticipation as the LORD blesses the work that He has called you to do.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Doug Williams has served as the national FAITH consultant for LifeWay Christian Resources since 1997 to the present and as the associate pastor/minister of education and evangelism at First Baptist Church in Daytona Beach, Florida, from 1982 to 1997. With Pastor Welch, Williams led First Baptist to combine Sunday School with evangelism training, an approach that became the forerunner of the first-generation FAITH strategy. Williams teaches FAITH clinics throughout the United States and in other countries. His wife, Rachel, accompanies him to most clinics and is also active in FAITH. Together they have been involved in more than 65 consecutive 16-week semesters of evangelistic training. The couple resides in Oneonta, Alabama, where they are active in First Baptist Church and its FAITH ministry. They have three grown children.

## CREATING NEW UNITS

- TOPPER REID

**O**ur discussion will focus on creating new adult units in a Sunday morning setting in the local church. In my opinion, this one task is the most difficult task a minister faces in the realm of Christian education. If it were easy, then 85% of all evangelical churches would not be plateaued or declining today in America. Currently, I only know of a few churches across America, which has a plan in place to systematically create new adult units in a timely manner.

It is much easier to facilitate the creation of Preschool, Children and Youth units. Typically, we do not get the pushback from these age groups as we do with adults. Therefore, our discussion will focus entirely on creating Adult units.

Adults will tell anyone desiring to lead them to do the Great Commission by creating a new unit from an existing class is a “no go”. Here are some typical responses from adults regarding creating new units: “What, you want to split our class? We have been together a long time and we need each other. All my close friends are in this class and you are asking me to leave them? As your teacher, I can’t ask you or make you do anything, but our Education minister has told me he wants to split our class and would like us to help him. If you think you would be interested in leaving our class, then sign this paper. If we don’t get enough volunteers, we will tell him this is not a good time.” From the typical adult class member, there is never a good time!

So this is the challenge! Leading adults to go where they do not desire to go. This is why it is so important to have a well thought out plan you can execute to lead your adults to achieve this goal of creating a new adult unit. Many educators have been successful in leading the adult class to see the need to create a new unit only to fall flat on their faces due to a poor plan to execute the new unit. It’s like the old saying, “You can lead a horse to the water, but

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you can't make him drink." In this case, we lead him to the water and he was ready to drink, but we did not have water for him to drink! We can lead adults to see the need to create a new unit, but our plan is so poor to produce the new unit that everything falls apart. The experience the adults go through is so undesirable that they do not ever want to experience it again. Therefore, the typical adult class in today's world will usually put up a pretty good effort to resist creating a new unit.

There are two basic components involved in creating a new adult unit. First, we must **create an expectation** and then we must have **a plan** to facilitate the new unit. Both of these are equally important to the successful outcome we desire. It goes back to the quote about leading the horse to drinking water. There are two parts of the challenge: 1) leading the horse to the water and 2) successfully getting him to actually drink the water.

Let's look at the first part of the challenge, which is leading the horse to the water. From our standpoint, as educators, this involves the challenge of changing how an individual thinks. We may call it changing one's mindset. We have to figure out how we can help the horse see the water. We are in essence, leading our people to go in a direction they would not normally go on their own. We have to help them see the water and understand "why" it is important for them to drink.

The best way to achieve this is to base everything we do on scripture. Even then, we will still be challenged to accomplish our goal of creating a new unit, but we will be able to do it. The foundational scripture we hang our hats on is the Great Commission. We must help adults see the ultimate purpose of their class. Reaching their friends and inviting them to visit their class is the ultimate purpose of life-changing Bible study. There are other components of the purpose of an adult class as well, such as, teaching the Bible, caring for the needs of members, prayer and community. Bible study is the next most important component of an adult class. However, the class is the church organized to fulfill the Great Commission. It is not a club we join and never

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leave. An adult class is the vehicle where we systematically reach the entire adult population of our community.

Today we hear much being said regarding a person's personal mission for Christ. This is the idea that each of us have been called to be on mission every day where we live and work. We are to reach our neighbors for Christ. It is through the adult unit that we invite our friends to join us for all the components that are so essential to a joyful life. As we are successful in reaching new adult class members, our class grows larger in attendance. As our class reaches larger proportions, our adult class can no longer operate at maximum efficiency and we must create a new unit in order to keep the quality of our ministry at a certain level. The answer to growth is not always a bigger classroom for the class to meet. In most cases, it is the wonderful opportunity to enhance growth by creating a new adult class.

How does the class know the time is right to create the new unit? Is there a trigger point we can set so everyone can know when the time comes to start the process? The answer is yes. We must set a goal, trigger point or expectation in the minds of our leaders, teachers and members as to when we will be in the window where we are ready to start a new unit. There is a correct time to begin a new unit. Everyone needs to know what the expectation is so they can anticipate when that time arrives and consequently, be ready to start the process. We don't just say to our classes, "We need you to start a new unit at some point." We need to clearly define when that time comes. That way everyone in the class understands, and when the time comes to create the new unit, no one is taken by surprise.

Adult teachers should be trained and encouraged to teach in such a way that their class will grow and reach new people for Christ. Teachers should evaluate their long-term teaching by how many new units they have created during their teaching career. Teachers should be able to create at least one new unit every three to five years. As an example, a teacher teaching for 15 years has had the opportunity to create at least three new units during that period of

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time. Most teachers will not measure up to this standard because they have never been challenged to teach with this result in mind. Typically, when teachers catch a vision of what is possible through their teaching ministry, their whole perspective on teaching changes. This is a part of the “why” we must help our teachers understand regarding why we want them to create new units. A teacher can teach in such a way that the class can do The Great Commission and we can reach many new people for Christ through the adult class.

Winning over the adult teacher is a major piece of the “changing the mindset” puzzle. Much time should be spent on a regular basis with your adult leaders. When it comes time to begin the process of creating a new adult unit, the teacher of that unit must be on board and support the idea of creating the new unit. At this point, it is time to meet with the teacher individually and share the why’s of what you are asking them to help you accomplish. It is a great honor for a teacher to reach the level in attendance where we need to create new unit. We must help the teacher understand that they have reached a level in their teaching career that is exemplary. They are actually leading their class to do The Great Commission!

The teacher should understand that in most cases the class will respond to their leadership and do whatever the teacher asks the class to do. The teacher can be the “cold-water” committee and kill any hope you have in creating a new unit. This is why it is so important to spend personal time with your teachers explaining everything to them so they will help you sell the idea to their class. My experience has been, in regard to teachers leading their classes, that the class will do whatever the teacher suggests. So be sure you spend time with your teachers sharing the vision and explaining the whys of what you are trying to accomplish.

Ok, we have successfully led the horse to the water and he is ready to drink. Now what? As educators, we must now have a plan in which we can implement to facilitate the creation of the new unit. At this point, many

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educators shoot themselves in the foot. They were able to bring the class to the point of seeing the need to create a new unit but their plan or process of accomplishing this is weak or even poorly put together. Many educators do not have a good plan that is proven, tried and true and consequently, lose everything at this point. From this point forward, the experience the entire class endures is so unpleasant, that they want to stop the process altogether and revert back to their old mode of thinking which is “we shall not be moved”. The bad experience is where the famous quotes of the past come from, like, “We tried that before and it didn’t work.”

### PUTTING IT ALTOGETHER

In creating the expectation, I think it is important to establish a number goal in average attendance that denotes when your plan to create the new unit begins. This keeps anyone from being surprised or caught off guard as to when the plan to begin the new class officially begins. When a class reaches the attendance goal and maintains that goal for several weeks, it is time for the class to begin the process of creating the new unit. I believe a class can successfully complete the facilitation of a new unit in three months or less. Therefore, we will project a “start date” for the new unit somewhere in this three-month range and place that date on the calendar and begin to work toward that date. If we can begin the new unit sooner, we will.

### FORMULA FOR NEW UNIT

I have found, through 30 years of creating over 270 new units that this model works the best. You will need one classroom to serve as your incubator where you can begin your new unit. A 24’x16’ (384 square feet) room works best. Each adult requires 12 square feet, so at 384’, a 24’x16’ room can seat 32 people at 100% occupancy and 25 people at 80% occupancy. 80% is our indicator that full capacity is approaching, so when the attendance in the class averages 25 for several weeks it is time to begin the process of beginning the new unit. Therefore an average attendance of 25 becomes our trigger point or

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our goal. Everyone in the class is aware of the attendance goal, so it comes as no surprise to anyone when the process begins.

Every church should be able to create one new adult class on an annual basis. In order to have success, here are some principles we should keep in mind as we begin this process:

- The teacher is responsible for creating a positive class mindset and leading the class to create the new unit. The teacher will announce to the class when the process begins and will encourage each class member to embrace the new unit.
- An associate teacher is required in every adult class and should teach 30-50% of the time. The associate teacher will become the teacher of the new unit when the time comes to create the new unit. The role of the associate teacher in this plan is critical. The members of the new unit will accept the associate teacher as their new teacher if and only if the associate has been teaching on a regular basis prior to the start.
- Once it has been determined that the plan is under way to begin the new unit, the teacher will announce to the class that it is time to create a new class. The teacher should communicate to the class how proud he/she is that this time has come. It is truly The Great Commission in action. The class members are to be thanked and encouraged for their help in achieving this level of ministry.
- A start date for the new class is calendared three months out and placed on the church calendar.
- The teacher informs the class that he/she will determine who the core group is and to join him/her in prayer regarding the assimilation of the core group. The teacher will talk individually with class members and choose the ones that will be needed to start the new class. It is the teacher's responsibility to determine whom the individuals are and then communicate this to the class. Once the teacher has commitments from the core group, the group will be announced to the class.

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- A classroom is located and curriculum material and all resources are ordered.
- Once the core group has been determined, the names of the group will be shared with the class. On the last Sunday before the new unit begins, the class members will hold a special time of prayer where they will lay hands on the core group and pray for their new start. The class also prays for the mother class as they seek to find new members to fill the empty seats of the core group members.
- The associate teacher will teach the new class. In a coed class, the associate teacher and wife, along with 4 couples will make up the core group. This totals 10 people in the core group. Each of these people must have an attendance pattern of 50% plus. Do not create a new class with seldom or never attendees. In a ladies or men's class follow the same formula using 10 people.
- For the first few months, give the best prospects to the new unit. This will give the new class the opportunity to reach additional new members quickly.
- Prayer is a vital part of this whole process. Pray continually for God's wisdom and leadership.
- On start Sunday, the new unit should begin with at least 10 or more people present while the mother class has an attendance of 15 or more. These are two strong classes, even if no new members join any time soon. In my experience, we have seen double growth take place as both units have reached new people for Christ!

It is also important to mention, what I call the class "energy" factor. It is very important for a class to have energy. People are drawn to classes with positive energy. Starting a new unit with 10 solid attendees and leaving the mother class with 15 solid attendees usually guarantees that both classes will

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be strong and energetic. Using this formula helps to facilitate classes with positive energy, which will be successful in reaching new people.

Creating new adult units is a difficult endeavor to accomplish. It is important to educate your adults when this should occur and then have a plan to successfully guide them in creating the new unit. Following this model should help you to experience success. May God bless you as you seek to build His Kingdom.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Topper Reid is the Director of Church Development for MG&A in Birmingham, Alabama. Prior to his work at MG&A, Topper served as the Minister of Maturity at Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover, Alabama for 13 years and as a Minister of Education for 24 years. A graduate of Samford University and Southern Seminary, Topper has served three other churches in Alabama prior to Hunter Street.

Since graduating from Seminary in 1981, Topper has been involved in Sunday School training events and seminars for the Alabama Baptist State Sunday School Department, as well as leading conferences and seminars for LifeWay Christian Resources. Topper is a frequent writer for Sunday School and Church Growth magazines published by LifeWay Christian Resources. He is involved as a speaker and consultant in both state and national Sunday School and Church Growth seminars each year.

At MG&A Topper works with each church during the development and design stages to provide ministry insight and possible ideas that will impact the outcome of the project. Topper helps with any transitions in Sunday morning scheduling and any other changes in order to promote growth during the construction phase. Most importantly, Topper assists churches to expand their organization and prepare to capture the new growth that will occur when new buildings are completed.

He and his wife, Diane, have been married 34 years and have three adult children, two granddaughters and one grandson. They live in Hoover, Alabama.

**GROWING WITH CLOSED GROUPS**  
**- CARTER SHOTWELL**

**A**t Lake Pointe Church we are extremely intentional in our small-group strategy. All adult members are enrolled and expected to participate in a Life Group. Life Groups meet on campus during prime time on the weekend. They are open groups ranging from 20 to 70 in attendance. Currently, 70 percent of our adult members are active in a Life Group.

The purposes of Life Groups are: (1) Living for others (care and doing missions together), (2) Interactive teaching, (3) Fellowship- building community together, (4) Encouragement for accountability. Each Life Group is viewed as a dynamic "church within the church." Teachers go through extensive training and practice before they are set free to shepherd a small group. All Life groups are "open" - anyone can come into the group at any time - and use the same curriculum. Prospective members choose a group based on age, affinity, or both.

Out of each Life Group we have also established our closed group practice. We call them "growth groups." Growth groups are comprised of members who elect to get to know one another more deeply. Once these groups are formed, they become "closed" and are no longer open to receive new members.

Couples growth groups are made of a maximum of one growth group coordinator couple and four additional couples. Singles growth groups consist of a maximum of one growth group coordinator and five (same gender) individuals. Every active Life Group member is encouraged to participate in a growth group, but no one is automatically placed in a group. We desire that each group be successful, so we want them to be established with individuals who are willing to invest the time and effort in these smaller closed groups.

These closed groups are vital in the ongoing process of developing disciples. Each of the four elements of growth groups enhances the purposes of

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the Life Groups and helps members move to a new level of commitment and involvement. In essence we have combined the on-campus Bible study with the off-campus home group.

### ELEMENTS OF GROWTH GROUPS

**Fellowship.** We believe that community happens best in small groups. Five couples meeting in a home or eating out together builds community more effectively than 20 couples gathering for a party. Therefore, we encourage Life Groups to have fewer large gatherings (four per year) and more growth group fellowships. We suggest that growth groups meet twice a month: once to eat out together and once in a home. Groups can meet more often if they desire and if childcare is not an issue. The fellowship aspect is the easiest way to sell growth group involvement, since people like to have fun together.

**Care.** Life Groups are the primary care ministry of the church. All teachers and coordinators are responsible to minister to their members. In the small group setting, care increases dramatically. Growth group coordinators are the first people to know when a need arises in the lives of group members, and they are able to act quickly because they are responsible for a small number of people. They are also able to act more decisively because they know their members.

**Discipleship.** Discipleship is more caught than taught. In a growth group members observe the lives of other members. They know how "real" members are. They study the Bible together. Growth group coordinators are not teachers; they are discussion facilitators. Recommended materials are user-friendly and inexpensive, and groups decide on their topics of discussion. Individuals share more openly because of the smaller closed group atmosphere.

**Encouragement.** Although a growth group is a small group, the sharing that takes place in a co-ed group is often still surface-level. Women may hesitate to share their real struggles in front of men and vice versa. Therefore, we

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encourage growth groups to incorporate separate accountability times for men and women. This can happen in a home after a group discussion. It can also happen at separate meetings when men or women meet for breakfast or lunch. Accountability time does not have to be another meeting; it can happen through email or phone calls. Each growth group decides what works best for them. The point is that members are available for one another. Members are aware of one another's struggles and temptations; they commit to pray, listen, and support as needed. They also ask difficult questions of one another. This level of interaction is only possible in a closed group.

### BENEFITS OF GROWTH GROUPS AS A CLOSED GROUPS STRATEGY

***Relationships.*** Best friends are formed at church. These are life-long friends who walk with you through any trial. These are friends you also enjoy hanging out with socially.

***Transformation.*** If the goal of the church is to make disciples, then a catalytic system must be in place. Disciples are more than believers meeting for Bible study. Disciples are believers living out their faith in the world. Growth groups motivate members to stand up for what's right instead of falling away.

***Leadership Development.*** Growth group coordinators may develop into full-time teachers. Many times they discover a passion for teaching after they facilitate discussion in their group. Through transformation and maturity, teachers are born as they are challenged to take their commitment to the next level.

***Enhanced Ministry.*** In the smaller, well-connected group, the needs of members are met. In a growing congregation the pastor and staff cannot fully care for the needs of every member. But when members are equipped and set free to minister, people feel loved and important.

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**Group Multiplication.** Birthing new Life Groups is a proven approach to growing a church. Life groups can reproduce rapidly. The least painful birthings take place when a growth group is sent out to form a new Life Group. In this way best friends and encouragement partners are not separated, but they move intact to a new Life Group. This method is tremendously effective in providing new life in a Bible study ministry, and experience has shown that new groups grow much faster than existing groups. At Lake Pointe every Life Group has the goal of helping birth another. Growth groups make this less painful.

**Streamlined Organization.** Less programming is required because ministry is taking place through growth groups. Discipleship, men's and women's ministries, and mission involvement take place in a smaller, more meaningful setting.

### CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, in the past some churches have discouraged closed groups because they feared cliques or stagnant groups. However, we have discovered that closed groups are not something to fear; rather, they are something to actively plan for and use to build the church body. If you combine Life Groups with growth groups, you can benefit from closed groups. These closed groups are where disciples are developed, where spiritual transformation takes place, and where leadership is nurtured. Closed groups are essential in the process of fully developing followers of Christ. Make them intentional in carrying out the purpose of your church.

## DISCIPLESHIP CORE COMPETENCY

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Carter is the Executive Pastor of Ministries at Lake Pointe Church in Rockwall, Texas. Carter has an extensive background in writing and developing adult Bible study curriculum for Lake Pointe's Adult Bible Fellowship ministry. This ministry has been the driving force behind the church's tripling in size over the past twelve years. Carter has 28 years of experience in local church adult education ministry. He received a bachelor's degree from Baylor University and an M.A.R.E from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Carter brings a great wealth of knowledge and experience to the Life Bible Study Advisory Board.

## UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

- DARYL ELDRIDGE

**T**he turning point in my life as a Minister of Education was the realization that I played an indispensable role in the life of our congregation. Who was going to help people grow in their faith? Who was going to help couples know what it means to have a Christian home? Who was going to provide additional classrooms and trained teachers so that the church might grow spiritually and numerically? Who was going to insure that new members are nurtured and assimilated into the Body of Christ? Who was going to help members discover their spiritual gifts and be mobilized for ministry? Who was going to train people how to share the Good News to those who don't know Jesus?

I came to the conclusion this kind of transformation doesn't take place in "big church." As wonderful as my pastor's sermons were and as spiritually uplifting was the music led by our minister of worship, a large worship gathering does little to help believers grow in their faith. If we wanted people to experience spiritual transformation, it required leadership that understood the process of discipleship. If the Church is to be the Church it must teach. I couldn't blame the lack of growth of believers on the pastor or the minister of worship. No one may know who I was or what I did. I may not receive adulation from the platform. But if I failed, the Church would fail. Humbled and motivated, I wanted to learn everything I could about how people grow in their faith.

The term "Christian Education" is used for everything from home schooling to Christian colleges. For the purposes of this article, I'm limiting this writing to the local church. Christian Education is not a program, though it involves programming and scheduling. It is more than providing curriculum, classrooms, and other resources. My definition of Christian education is "a process that partners with the Holy Spirit to assist others to grow in their relationship with God and develop spiritually in the image of Christ." We can't

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(nor does God) make anyone grow in his or her faith. In the final analysis, it is not us who transforms others—it is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Great “Commission” of Jesus (Matt 28:19-20) invites us to partner with him in his mission of making disciples or followers of “The Way.” Christian educators have the wonderful privilege of walking alongside others in their spiritual journey and guide them in their pursuit of God. The result is changed lives.

So, how do people learn? What is the process for faith development? The following are ten principles for effective Christian education in the church.

### HELP FAMILIES

The first institution of worship and education was not the Tabernacle, the Temple, or the Synagogue. It was the home. We can learn much from the educational process that God instructed the Hebrews to follow. The Old Testament cites parents with the primary responsibility of religious instruction (Deut 6:4-9). Hebrew parents taught children through daily practices, weekly observances, feasts and festivals, and life passages. The daily practices included wearing a prayer shawl and phylacteries. (Also called “Tefillin,” these small leather boxes contain parchments inscribed with Exodus 13 and Deut 6 and tied to the body with leather chords. They are worn on the arm and on the head. They symbolized that a person’s head, heart, and hands were committed to doing the will of God.)

The primary observance of Sabbath was in the home. Beginning at sundown on Friday evening through sundown on Saturday evening, religious traditions were vehicles for teaching children faith in God. Many Protestants and evangelicals criticize others for their religious traditions. However, traditions and daily spiritual practices are powerful means to teach our faith. Today, few parents are taught what it means to have a Christian home. Our job as Christian educators is to provide training and resources to help parents raise their children in the Christian faith.

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### UNDERSTAND THE STAGES OF LIFE

Luke 2:52 reads, “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” In today’s language we might say, “Jesus grew mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially.” We don’t arrive fully mature. We develop in stages. Before children can walk, they must first crawl. Before children can crawl, they must first learn to roll over. What we learn from one stage of life helps us in the next stage of life. Most ineffective teaching (including parenting) is the failure of teachers to understand the developmental processes of those they are teaching. If you teach children like they were teenagers, learning is impeded. If you teach senior adults like young adults, you won’t be as effective. Teaching should be age appropriate. Become a student of the stages of life development such as Jean Piaget’s theories of cognitive development, James Fowler’s stages of faith development, Lawrence Kohlberg’s stages of moral development, and Erik Erikson’s stages psychosocial development. Be informed about current studies in brain research and what researchers are discovering about how we learn.

### CAPITALIZE ON LIFE EVENTS

Ceremonies such as birth, coming of age, marriage, and death are observed in some form or fashion in nearly every culture. These rituals, or rites of passage, provide rich opportunities for learning about what our faith says about the meaning and purpose of life. Many churches provide opportunities for baby dedications. However, fewer evangelical churches provide religious training for the transition of children into adulthood, like the Bar Mitzah (for Jewish young men) or the Bat Mitzah (for Jewish young women). Children and youth ministers would do well to develop instructional programs that assist these young believers to own their Christian faith and prepare them to become responsible members of their faith community.

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While marriage is often viewed as a pastoral function, there are many educational aspects to this rite of passage. Few couples are prepared to embark upon marriage or understand how to have a successful Christian marriage. Churches effective in Christian education provide premarital counseling, new and newly married classes, marriage enrichment, and divorce recovery.

Birth and death are the natural passages that mankind has attempted to understand and explain the mystery and awe of creation. Individuals and families need help in grieving and to make sense of death and life the hereafter. Funeral ceremonies are opportunities to teach others about the Christian faith and why Christians have hope beyond the grave, but also how to rejoice in the midst of sorrow. Classes for those who have lost their spouses and grief seminars are part of a good Christian education program. Each of these rites of passage requires an intentional strategy by the church to assist individuals and families through these life events.

### TEACH SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Discipleship is more than telling people what the Bible says or what our church believes about doctrinal issues. Teaching is not telling and learning is not listening. Christian education is not a cognitive dump of Scripture. LeRoy Ford defines learning as a change in knowledge, understanding, attitude, and skill brought about by experience. Unless there is change, learning hasn't occurred. Said another way, "If my students didn't change, I didn't teach."

Christianity is more than a system of thought—it's a way of life. A way of life involves certain practices. I couldn't expect to be a great basketball player without working on dribbling, shooting, passing, rebounding, etc. The same is true about the Christian walk. We can't expect to be spiritual giants while being steeped in sin and not practicing our faith.

In my small group there are several who are relatively new to the Christian faith and some who have been believers for many years. Several of the members of the group discussed how they didn't know how to pray. They

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had grown up in the church, attended Sunday school and discipleship classes regularly for years, and yet felt their prayer life was anemic. The members could recite the Lord's Prayer, but they didn't know the first thing about living a life of prayer. Prayer was a concept, not a practice.

That discovery changed how I facilitated our small group. The first week I introduced a form of prayer, called sentence prayers, in which people would complete a sentence I started such as, "Father, we thank you for \_\_\_\_\_." Their homework assignment was to practice that specific type of prayer the coming week and discussed the next week how God had spoken to them through their prayer life. Each week I added another prayer form, such as conversational prayer, praying scripture, or fixed hours of prayer. There was instruction, modeling, practice, and debriefing about what we're learning. Over the course of weeks, we watched each other grow spiritually as we developed a life of prayer. Teaching is not simply telling someone what to do; it is modeling it for them, practicing it with them, guiding their next steps, and giving them opportunities to teach others what they have learned.

There are numerous spiritual practices (some refer to them as spiritual disciplines) that help people grow in their faith. Witness, serving, teaching, praying, fasting, worship are just a few of the many exercises that can enrich our faith. If I could go back and begin my calling as a Minister of Education again, I would incorporate these ancient spiritual practices in my life and teach others these disciplines.

### USE MANY FORMS AND VENUES

Jesus taught large crowds (Matt. 14:21), mid-size groups (Luke 10:1), small groups (Luke 6:13), and one-on-one (John 4). He taught those inside the religious community (Matt 15:1) and those outside the religious community (Matt 9:10). He taught men, women, and children (Matt. 14:21). He taught in the synagogue (Matt 4:23) and as they walked along the road (Matt 11:20).

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There is no one way to disciple people. Use seminars, conferences, workshops, retreats, small groups, and mentors.

People don't all learn the same way. Some are visual learners, others are auditory learners, or social learners, or kinesthetic learners (learn through movement). An effective learning environment will use a variety of learning activities so that everyone is engaged in the process.

### GIVE PRIMARY ATTENTION TO SMALL GROUPS

While Jesus taught groups of various sizes, he spent the bulk of his time with his small group, a band of 12 disciples. Christianity is not a solo venture. We are "born again" into a family. Western civilization was built on individualism, but spiritual growth is stymied when we do life alone. Small groups (8-10 persons) are the ideal size for involving everyone in the learning process. Transformation takes place when you can openly share your needs and help others in their journey.

Not only should a Minister of Education or Pastor be a proponent of small groups, they should BE in a small group. If it is not important to you, then it won't be a priority for members of your church. Because of your Sunday duties, you may need to meet with a group during the week or have start a Bible study and support group of fellow ministers in your city.

### EQUIP SMALL GROUPS ON THE FIVE PURPOSES

Small groups provide the best opportunity for persons to be engaged in all five purposes of the church: fellowship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism/missions, and worship. Encourage your small groups to have champions for each of these purposes. Small groups provide a wonderful climate for people to share their faith with the lost and to do "group evangelism." If a lost person joins a small group, they are 9 times more likely to become a believer as opposed to a lost person only attending a worship service.

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Healthy small groups view themselves as being on mission. Small groups are healthiest when they are engaged in ministry and mission opportunities outside of the group. Small groups encourage missions by praying, giving, and going. Teach your people to pray each week for missions and to pray specifically for persons in their circle of concern who do not know Jesus. Small groups also provide financial support to mission efforts including sending their own members on local, national, and international mission trips.

### MULTIPLY LEADERS

Arthur Flake became the director of the Sunday School Department for LifeWay in 1920. Flake developed what later became known as Flake's Formula for building a Sunday school. The five points to his formula are: know the possibilities, enlarge the organization, enlist and train the workers, provide the space, and go after the people. You can really boil that formula down to one element: enlist and train workers. Everything else can be accomplished if you have plenty of leaders. If you don't have a teacher/leader, it does little to have space and prospects. The way you grow a church is by multiplying small groups. The way you multiply small groups is by multiplying the leadership. Small groups should be leader-manufacturing units. Each small group should birth a new group every 2 years. The formula still works, if you work the formula. Invest in the enlistment and training of leaders.

### HELP MEMBERS DISCOVER AND USE THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Every believer is given a spiritual gift for the building up of the body of Christ. While it is helpful to provide classes on helping people discover their spiritual gifts, the best way for others to discover their spiritual gifts is through service. We learn best through doing. That's why it is important for members to become involved in ministry and mission opportunities. It is the responsibility of the church and its leaders to affirm the gifts they see in others. This requires a staff that personally invites people to be engaged in the ministry and missions of the church, trains volunteers how to be servant leaders, and

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deploys them for service. There is no greater reward than seeing others engaged in ministry.

### VIEW CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AS A LIFELONG JOURNEY

After finishing an excellent study called, “Experiencing God,” one of the members asked me, “What book are we going to study next?” I wanted to say, “We just experienced God and you are asking ‘Now what?’” While this person’s intentions were noble, it reflects our culture’s value of collecting experiences. “Been there and done that!” is our slogan. Discipleship can wrongly be reduced to a collection of books, a set of curriculum, or series of studies. However, it is a journey. Christian education is a continual learning process from birth to the grave. Be a continual learner. Foster lifelong learning in your staff and your members. Understand there are highs and lows to any journey, but stay in it for the duration and enjoy the opportunity to see the lives of people changed forever.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Daryl Eldridge is the President of Rockbridge Seminary Online. He has served as a Minister of Spiritual Development in several churches, and served as the Dean of the School of Educational Ministries at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and on the faculty from 1984 through 2003. He is the editor of the textbook, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* and is the author of numerous articles and curriculum materials. Dr. Eldridge has a passion for helping persons have an intimate relationship with God through the study of His word. He believes the critical need for today’s church is spiritual leaders who can equip and mobilize people for ministry. His heart for the lost has led him to teach in Africa, England, Portugal, and Uzbekistan. He and his wife Carole have two grown children. They reside in Houston.

**MENTORING SEMINARY STUDENTS**  
**- JEFF HUMPHREY**

**I**n the days of the early church, God used the Apostle Paul to expand the good news about Jesus Christ into the northern regions of the Mediterranean Sea. His willingness to preach Christ and start churches allowed him to greatly influence the people of his generation. But God worked through Paul to impact the next generation as he learned to pour his life into young leaders in the church. We get a glimpse of this in the books of 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy as Paul mentors this young man names Timothy with the same emotions as if Timothy was Paul's own son. Titus is another younger leader he calls his son and who can forget Mark, whom at one time Paul rejected as a missionary partner but in later days reached out and restored this important link to someone who would impact the next generation as well.

All who serve the Lord have been mentored in the ways of ministry. Not everyone has the experience of sitting down with and shadowing the activities of a great pastor or minister but God has mentored each of us through folks like our parents, Sunday School teachers, deacons, and other church leaders. These servants of Christ modeled to us how to teach, how to serve, and how to be Great Commission and Great Commandment believers, and what we directly or indirectly noticed in these people was used by God to call us into His ministry. A wonderful exercise to take on sometime is to prayerfully list these folks and take time to communicate to those who are still alive the ways they impacted you to follow and to serve Christ.

We would all do well to seek after relationships with those who are younger and those who are older than us in ministry, and this short article will attempt to assist both the young minister and the veteran minister in making the most of this process.

One of my most memorable experiences from my younger days of ministry was being a part of Youth Camp planning for the South Central Area of Churches in Texas. Each summer, close to 500 teenagers would come from

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Gonzales, Yoakum, Lockhart, Luling, Blanco and other “metropolises.” These churches were small and in many the Pastor served as the youth minister. Those of us who were young youth ministers from slightly larger churches were privileged to serve with Pastors twice our age or more. Our youthful zeal and knowledge of current youth culture and issues was combined with the tempered wisdom of the Word and of the ways of dealing with temperamental church folks and encampment managers. Our goal was to create a life changing moment that God could use to impact students, but something else happened for me in those meetings. I was being mentored. I heard things that others had experienced in years gone by, and I learned things that others had been educated in but were willing to share freely. As the years went by, we talked about more than camp as our conversations began to include the subjects of marriage, finances, and other important life skills that we are called to honor God in.

I am thankful for men such as Gary Rodgers, Ken King, Hollas Hoffman, and Joe Orr who were willing to pour themselves into me when I had lots of zeal but little practical experience. And now, it is my turn. I am the “old man” in ministry, and the question is twofold... am I willing to pour myself into the life of a young minister and is there a young minister that is willing to let me.

I am assuming you are reading this because you are willing (or are at least open to giving it a shot) and want some practical helps in making the most of your mentoring experience. Because I hope this article will be read by both mentors and mentees, I am *not* going to give you 21 sequential steps for success, but want to give you several words that will be essential if your mentoring relationship is going to be a success.

### SEEK

The first step in mentoring is to begin looking for someone to mentor or to be mentored by. This should not be done apart from praying and asking God to bring you into the mentoring relationship He wants for you. Seek God first,

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then seek out the mentorship. You are not seeking out perfection... it doesn't exist. The greatest mentoring relationships are shared by people who understand they are not perfect and are willing to share from their imperfect thinking and missteps.

As a mentor I have been paired with young leaders through Unlimited Partnerships. By sharing with Bill Taylor and Bethany Sharp the type of student and church we were seeking to work with, they have connected us with churches and students that “fit” both me as a mentor and the students that were to be mentored. Other mentoring relationships I have entered into came about through either God putting young leaders on my heart that I have offered to mentor, or God putting me on the heart of a young leader who was looking for a mentor.

Not every relationship will be a “fit” and you should always seek to find a relationship that “fits” the time you can give and the expectations that you have for the relationship. If you are seeking more from the relationship than the mentor/mentee seems willing to give, talk to them about it. God may use you to expand the expectation of your mentor/mentee. But God may also have something more or better in mind, so don't let a poor relationship drag on too long.

A final thought here is to be careful about entering into relationships with people of the opposite sex. A great mentorship is one that is heart to heart. Getting heart to heart with a mentor/mentee of the opposite sex can have dangerous consequences. If you are called on to be in such a relationship seek to do it in a group setting with others who could benefit. Never meet one on one and make sure that phone calls are during regular office hours as much as possible.

## SCHEDULE

Working out a schedule that is beneficial for both mentor and mentee will usually take some effort. It is most beneficial when meetings are on a regular

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weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis. It is generally best to determine a usual time to meet and adjust when conflicts come, rather than “hope to get together soon.” If you will make the scheduled time a priority, it will evidence to your mentor/mentee that you really care about the relationship and your hearts will bond much faster. When times need to be adjusted, be honest about why and set a make-up time as soon as possible.

### DESIGN

Design your mentoring relationship to accomplish specific objectives. Your times together should include trivialities, but if that is the bulk of your relationship you won't grow much. I have had success including the following elements...

- Pray together. Be real as you share prayer requests with each other. What are you excited about, fearful of, distracted by, and desperate for the Lord to show Himself in?
- What is going good related to life and ministry? What is not going so good? Things are usually never as good or bad as we think they are, and including these questions in the discussion can help you get the perspective of someone else who can help you or make you aware of next steps to take.
- Read and discuss a book. Pick a book that relates to your objectives for meeting, and read portions of the book between meetings that you discuss during your time together. Mix up your readings to include leadership, culture, how-to books, and inspirational selections. Don't just talk about the content of the book, but let the readings spur on questions, testimony and other dialogue.
- Work on a project together. Finding a ministry opportunity that you both can work on and serve together on is a great way to learn and grow. When the time is right, let the mentee teach or lead in some effort that the mentor has responsibility for. Also the mentor could teach or lead in

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an effort of the mentee. Another idea might be to attend a conference together and discuss topics addressed.

### TRUTH

Honesty is an essential element in a great mentoring relationship. If you are not willing to be honest about fears and failures you will only have a pretentious relationship with the person you are meeting with.

Truth takes trust and trust takes time, so don't expect to hear or share "deep dark secrets" early in your relationship. Your willingness to share vulnerabilities and questions should be matched by the person you are meeting with. If you sense your mentor/mentee is holding back, seek to discover why. By questioning it you may help them to break out of their shell or you will sooner realize that this mentor/mentee may not be right for you.

If you are meeting on a regular basis, and you are not ready with something that was supposed to be prepared for the meeting, please be honest about it. Both mentors and mentees will have these moments so give grace and truth to those who need it.

### SHADOW

One of the greatest things you can do mentor/be mentored is to shadow the mentor in their area of expertise. It is one thing to talk shop, but quite another to get in the shop and see someone work their tools! Shadowing is when a mentor invites the mentee to watch how the mentor actually does the work of the ministry. A mentee could be invited to attend a meeting or a conference that the mentor is leading, or sometimes the mentee just follows alongside the mentor for an agreed upon part of the day. The goal is that through observation and follow up questions, the mentee gets past the theories of leadership and sees how they actually get played out.

For the most part, when a mentee is shadowing a meeting or selected portion of the mentor's day, they need to be a silent observer. Their task is not to participate in meetings or the work, but to observe it. Mentees should write

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down questions and observations that they have for future discussion and clarifications.

### EXPERIENCE

At some point in the mentoring relationship, things need to move past talking about opportunities and into creating opportunities that the mentee can experience. Talking about how to lead a meeting is good, but giving a mentee the opportunity to actually lead a meeting will teach them in ways that words can never accomplish.

Some mentees have lots of experiences and opportunities while others do not. As your relationship evolves, discuss an opportunity that the mentee has not had the privilege of experiencing, and begin to make plans for it to happen. Plan the opportunity together. This gives the mentor many opportunities to throw out ideas and discuss why one approach might be better than another.

### HEARTFELT

Both mentors and mentees can tell when someone really has a heart for them and the mentoring opportunity. It is also easy to tell when someone is going through the motions.

If you feel yourself going through the motions, ask yourself “why?” Not every time of life is a good time to be mentored, but knowing the reason why is important. If you are facing a critical life issue, this may not be the best time for you to be in a mentoring situation and it would be a good thing for you to express that. If you are dealing with sin or rebellion toward God in some way, this too may not be the best time for you to be in a mentoring situation, because that will find a way to pour itself into the relationship.

### BIBLICAL

There is a difference between being able to quote lots of Bible verses and taking a Biblical approach to life and ministry. As mentors share their approach to life and ministry, they should take time to share how God’s Word has

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influenced their approach. As mentees formalize their approaches, they should always be able to connect them to Biblical examples. Remember, a Christian mentor is not seeking to replicate themselves through the mentee but is seeking to point the mentee toward Christ and what the Lord wants. Christ will be with the mentee long after the mentor is gone, so work to establish a relationship in Christ through the mentoring.

About the subject of art, Ruth Whitman said, “In every art beginners must start with models of those who have practiced the same art before them. And it is not only a matter of looking at the drawings, paintings, musical compositions, and poems that have been and are being created; it is a matter of being drawn into the individual work of art, of realizing that it has been made by a real human being, and trying to discover the secret of its creation.”

Before a young minister comes to Christ, they are impacted by the ministry of older ministers who are practicing their art. The young minister wants to impact others just as he/she has been impacted, knowing that Christ through them can make an eternal difference. Mentors, who are willing to open up and share from their humanity and spiritual wisdom with the next generation of leaders, can accelerate the maturity process for young leaders and by passing their craft along will impact the generations to come.

The Lord has someone special that He wants to connect you to in a mentoring relationship. Seek His wisdom in who to enter into this relationship with, and what format He wants you to take in accomplishing this mentoring.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jeff Humphrey is currently the Minister of Education at First Baptist Church of Allen, Texas. Recently completing his 30<sup>th</sup> year of ministry, Jeff has served churches as a youth, music, and education specialist in the Austin, Houston, Amarillo and Dallas areas of Texas. He and his wife Lisa have been married 26 years, and have two children (Drew and

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**ONGOING DISCIPLESHIP FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP:  
HOW TO KEEP THEM COMING!**  
- STEVE CRETIN

**T**hat won't work here! We just don't do that anymore! We are too busy for this! Have you ever heard these statements when you tried to implement change? If your answer is no, don't worry, you will this time.

How can we have on-going leadership training that will motivate our leaders to attend? If you have not heard the excuses above, surely you have heard, "Don't waste my time!" That is the key to successfully leadership training in the local church, "don't waste time!" Most volunteer leaders are wise enough to know that they need ongoing training, encouragement and accountability as they equip others. But knowing and doing is another story.

Don't view this as ongoing leadership training. See this as ongoing discipleship. We, as church leaders, need to be about making disciples by "entrusting others who will teach others also". Your leadership team is one of your primary discipleship groups. This is not a course but a never ending lifestyle choice. If I am going to disciple, I also need to be discipled. In our case, the leadership team consisted of everyone in a leadership role in the class such as teachers, directors, prayer leaders, group leaders, etc. You need to define who your leadership team is and how often you should meet.

Ideally, as was my case, you will come to a situation that needs a fresh start or a brand new start for your leadership. This is a much easier way to begin the leaders' meetings in your local setting. However, when you inherit an existing leadership base, it is also important for you to do all you can "to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry." For us, when we came to Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas, TX, there was a need for an entire new slate of Bible study leaders throughout the Single Adult Ministry. The first criterion to be a leader in the Single Adult ministry was mandatory attendance of our Weekly Workers Meetings on Wednesday nights.

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I remember well the discussion I had with a man who had a Doctorate in Theology who said he would be happy to teach for us, but he could not commit to an ongoing leadership meeting. He did not think these meetings would teach him anything. Sad to say, I had to turn this man down because we believed that ongoing training and encouragement is vital to our success. Our philosophy was if we were going to teach each week, we should have leadership meetings each week to help prepare us.

The key to the leadership meeting in my opinion is not to waste time. Our leadership is willing to sacrifice time for what is important, but they will not come to a time waster. I was blessed to serve in the US Air Force before going into ministry as my full-time vocation. Many great lessons learned in the military transitioned over with great effectiveness to the local church. Here are a few of those lessons:

1. Start your meeting on time! We always started our meetings on time...always! Never punish the prompt for the tardy and start late which makes the prompt stay longer to complete the meeting. Late comers adjust to what is expected.
2. Work off of an agenda. If you have a plan, stick to the plan and the meetings will move faster and in the right direction.
3. Keep rabbit chasing minimal. Get to the point and keep it moving. The Holy Spirit has the right to move your trainings in any direction He desires...but you don't.
4. Let the leadership tell you what is important to them. The leadership should have a voice deciding the agenda and should have input and participation opportunities in the meetings.
5. Finish on time! Contract for a designated amount of time and as best you can keep to that contract.

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The heart of leadership training begins with the need. Every leader needs ongoing training or discipleship in order to be the most effective in what God has called them to do. “Iron sharpens iron,” and that is true for your leadership team. We learn from each other. If your team only came together to pray for each other and the ones they lead, that would be enough. Ask your leadership what would best prepare them for their task each week. We had one of our best teachers overview the upcoming lesson. This can be powerful and helpful to the entire team if you pick the right person; if you pick the wrong person, you are wasting their time.

For us, a normal meeting included the following information. You will need to determine, with your leaderships help what is most important for your agenda:

1. Opening Prayer & Greeting – here we would include something funny that happen to one of the team or something light to brighten everyone’s mood. Let your class extravert do this for you each week.
2. News – what is happening in the church that is relevant to our groups and what is happening in the groups that is relevant to the entire team. This can be both positive and negative, but keep the negative brief and add problem solving to the negative.
3. Lesson Overview – not reading out of a book, but brief strong commentary on the scripture passages for the week. Give them something that they might decide to use in their groups.
4. Leadership Training – Ongoing help with the “how to” of their job description.
5. Inreach/Outreach – member care and visitor follow-up.

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6. Prayer – Most important and given a substantial amount of time in the meeting. Again, use one of your leadership to organize this for you.

Our meetings took an hour and a half each week and yes, we had great attendance. This took hard work and good planning, but the results were amazing. I looked forward to going to the meetings each week to be with my small group!

Now of course there will be some exceptions. What about the leader that would like to be there, but travels during the week either full time or occasionally? There are many helps with this including Skype, video tapings, audio tapes, summaries, or another leader in the group committing to contact the absent leader and keep him informed. With today's electronics, connection opportunities are unlimited.

Great attendance for leadership meetings comes from great content, accountability, focus, and usefulness. Remember, don't waste their time. If done correctly, the leadership team becomes their own small group. Will everyone (Mr. Doctorate of Theology) get something life changing out of the meeting every time? Obviously, not, but as in any small group, we are there to get and to give. Remember, iron sharpens iron!

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Steve has a rich experience of 20 years in ministerial staff positions serving churches from 400 to over 5,000 in weekly attendance. Prestonwood Baptist Church called Steve to be their first full time Singles Pastor in 1984 and he left there in 1991 to serve as Associate Pastor with Dennis Swanberg at First Baptist Church of West Monroe.

He left West Monroe to work for LifeWay Christ Resources in 1995.

In January of 1999, Steve and his wife, Ann, moved to Singapore and represented LifeWay Christian Resources as an International Consultant. He found himself working with churches as far north as Myanmar and as far south as New Zealand. Returning to the U.S. in early 2002, Steve

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currently puts a rich, universal, church growth experience into action through e3 Partners, the developers of the EvangeCube & I Am Second. After developing materials and a strategy for the US EvangeCube Ministry, Steve has focused on Asia in an effort to promote evangelism and church planting.

Steve specializes in growing a church through small group evangelism. Before locating to Singapore, he led the team that in the development of the church outreach program known as FAITH, which is currently published by LifeWay.

After graduating from college, Steve spent 5 1/2 years as a pilot for the United States Air Force. Upon leaving the military he earned a MA degree in Christian Education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. degree in Pastoral Counseling from Biblical Life College and Seminary.

## **BEING A GREAT STAFF MEMBER**

**- DERYL LACKEY**

“It sure looked easier from the pew!” “It seemed so easy on paper.” “The conference didn’t cover all that I encountered.” “I didn’t realize all that went into a decision!”

It was not long into my journey as a senior/lead pastor that those phrases became regular "attenders" in my mind. I had served under other pastors, and many things they did made me wonder why. I wondered why they didn’t make the reasons obvious to me. I wondered if decisions for the church could be made quicker. I wondered why they didn’t remove people from leadership that, in my mind, had no Biblical right to be there. Why did they let things that were clearly wrong go unaddressed? One of the things that really bothered me was, “why are they so defensive when I ask about these things?” But now I was sitting behind the senior pastor’s desk.

I remember sitting in my office during my very first pastorate thinking, “I am responsible to lead people in their spiritual lives. People who Christ died for, people he has saved, people he has purchased with his own blood.” The weight of that moment was heavy, to say the least. All of a sudden I felt the need to slow down, and to move carefully. All that I wanted to do, and said I would as associate pastor, seemed to take on a new look and seriousness to it. There were elements I had never even considered before; a sense of stewardship in regards to a church that I had never known existed. When I was twenty, pastoring sure looked easier from the pew. I never had a clue to the awesome weight one feels as they are called to shepherd a church that belongs to God. In that moment, while I knew I had no clue all that goes into pastoring, I knew a lot more went into it than I had ever begun to realize.

This paper is written to those who, like most of us, start off our “church ministry life” by serving on the staff of an existing church. The pastor/staff relationship is one that if neglected has caused many damaged lives,

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devastated many churches, and caused hurts that have caused walls of protection to be erected, that take a very long time to, and in some cases never, come down. As you read this paper, it will appear one sided ... it is! This is not written to senior/lead pastors sharing how to have a healthy relationship with their staff. It is written to staff, hopefully providing some practical and meaningful ways they can be a blessing to the pastor and have a healthy relationship with him. It is far from everything you need to know. There are two reasons for this:

1. I was only asked to write six pages, I always write the introduction last, and at this point I am at 5,336 words and on my ninth page!
2. I don't know everything there is to know!

I pray that in this you will see not only some healthy measures a staff member can take, but, of greater importance, you will understand the heart and spirit a staff member needs to possess in order to be a blessing to their pastor and church, bring glory to God, and in the process allow God to develop the character, experiences and understanding that he will use to accomplish a great work in your life. So let's start!

### MAKE IT YOUR GOAL TO BE A BLESSING TO THE PASTOR

... FROM HIS PERSPECTIVE!

“You shall be a blessing.” What an amazing promise God made to Abraham. All of us have met people who were a blessing to be around. They added to our life, gave us strength, encouragement, and prompted us to do that which was right and healthy. We have all had the other ones too - “drainers,” I call them. They take energy, they always want, they are never without issues, they are usually upset, and nothing is ever all that it should be. They are not safe. They are so immersed in their own “stuff” that, regardless of how significant our “stuff” is, it must always submit to their agenda, needs, schedule and desires.

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One of the ways I believe you can truly enhance your ministry, and also prove to God that you can be trusted with more influence in the future, is to make it your goal and priority to be a blessing to the pastor God has called you to serve under in the life of the church. Sadly, the church is littered with broken relationships, damaged saints, and reputations that take years to restore, as a result of a staff member that has gone into a church and chosen not to be a blessing to the pastor, but instead opted for such things as “inspector,” “expert,” “corrector,” or “go between.” Whenever a staff member opts for these, he/she has ceased to be a blessing and, in my opinion, has moved into areas of spiritual responsibility of which God has not called, gifted, nor given the authority for them to move into. It is a real temptation and, as we will see, one of the greatest “inviters” of this temptation is those in the body of Christ.

I believe one of the greatest things you can do is remind yourself daily of your goal to be a blessing to the pastor, regardless of how you feel or what you would do. He is the one God has placed in that position of spiritual leadership, regardless of what you think of him and his leadership style. We need to always keep in mind that it is a position of honor and Biblical endorsement. There are ways to approach when struggles, hurts, or problems arise, but even they must be undergirded by our heart-felt desire to be a blessing to him, the ministry God has placed him over, and the precious believers in that church that Christ himself purchased with his own blood.

Make this your commitment, let your pastor know, and even go to him on a regular basis asking this question: “Pastor what can I do, right now, this week, or in the life of this church that would be a blessing to you?” After he picks himself up off the floor and answers you, here is a three word bit of advice taken from the world of NIKE.....JUST DO IT! Now I know some of you just said, “Well what if what he asks is Biblically wrong?” Let me assure you that will rarely be the case. That is a rare exception, and there is a reason it is called an exception, it is not the rule! In fact, if you are one who looks for the

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“loophole” or “exception” to everything, then you might want to put your resume away until God is allowed to address that in your life. Bottom line: Choose to be a blessing to the spiritual leader, flesh that out in the life of the church, make sure the one who you serve under knows and sees that! In doing so there is no doubt in my mind that God will bless you, give you that precious sense of inner fulfillment, and in the process mold and develop character in you that he will use powerfully for his glory and Kingdom work.

### DO YOUR BEST WITH EVERY ASSIGNMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY GIVEN.

In Luke 16:10-12, in the midst of discourse Jesus taught a very simple yet significant truth: If a person cannot be faithful with that which is of lesser importance, they **will not** be faithful in that which is of greater importance. He goes on to teach that if a person will be faithful in that which is lesser, there is no question that they can be trusted with that which is of greater worth and value. This is a critical verse in the life of anyone who wants to be used by God. This teaches that in God’s eyes there is no such thing as a small or insignificant assignment.

One of the most effective means of blessing the pastor you serve under, and one of the most effective means of ensuring that God will give you greater opportunity, is to always do the best you can with any assignment given. There is great value in someone who chooses to do this. It is easy to find someone, even a staff member, who will “give it their all” when the assignment is “big” or involves being in a position of noted leadership, yet Jesus clearly taught that if that person is not willing to give their all in assignments that are not as visible or “weighty,” then in truth they will not do their best, even with that which seems to matter more. As a spiritual leader in a church, this made sense to me. I have had staff members who really did not do their best with assignments they felt were beneath them or someone else’s responsibility. I must confess the words of Jesus proved to be true. As I look at the areas of greater responsibility under their care, there was the same evidence of not doing their best. They did

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just enough to get by or to get the check. But the one who gave it their all, regardless of how minimal the task, could always be trusted with more. Their work ethic, commitment to excellence motivated by their walk with God, and willingness to let the credit go to others permeated every aspect of their ministry.

Let me share an example here. It was important to me as a pastor that our staff be at church early on Sundays, have everything done 15 minutes before the service, then for those 15 minutes be greeting people, engaging them in conversation, and listening for needs and prayer requests. The assignment - be at church early, have your responsibilities taken care of, minister to people - doesn't sound like much, but I had two young ministers who always found a reason to not be there on time and were never quite prepared for responsibilities. They always had an excuse for not doing this simple task. On the other hand they always wanted to preach, always wanted to be in charge of something, and at times got rather frustrated that I would not give them more responsibility. What they failed to accept is what Jesus taught in Luke. My thinking was this: If you can't be organized enough to teach a class, how can you be trusted to oversee and entire ministry? And if you won't respect something small that I ask of you as your pastor, how can I trust you to respect that which may matter more? One of the finest ways to bless your pastor, and of greater importance please God, is to do your best in every assignment given, regardless of how important or beneath us we may feel that it may be.

**INVEST IN WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THE PASTOR AND OTHER CHURCH LEADERS**  
Many times we get frustrated in the ministry - we have these great ideas and driving burdens, yet when we share them or act upon them the response from others ranges from non-caring to token. We wonder, "Why aren't they participating in this? It's a great idea. It will help many come to Christ or know Christ better." We can even be guilty of judging the pastor and others in

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leadership as not caring or not being as concerned about people as we are. Sometimes, instead of judging, we need to ask the question, “do I support and invest in what is important to them?”

We walk a very fine line here, in which we can easily become selfish. If all I do is ask others to invest and support what is important to me, yet I in truth only give lip service to what is important to them, it is safe to conclude that I am missing the “mind of Christ” as evidenced in Philippians 2. Being a “team player” does not mean the team is there for me only, but I am there for the team. In regards to a pastor, one of the more effective means of being a blessing to him is showing up, supporting, and investing in that which is dear to his heart! I have seen staff who demanded and complained when we did not show up for their events, yet always found a reason, usually guised in spiritual overtones, to not show up and support the heartfelt desires and ministries of others. Needless to say, they carried with them a great deal of frustration and, sadly, were often times judgmental. Don’t let this happen to you! Invest and support what matters to others. I am sure you will be pleased at the fruit this bears in your life in a variety of ways.

### PRAY FOR THE PASTOR DAILY!

It is easy in any relationship in which there is structure and a measure of authority for stress and tension to exist. Some of it is due to our nature and some of it is due to the fact that we like to do what is important to us (with genuine motives of pleasing God). We tend to not appreciate those we feel are holding us back, and often times we get so focused on our piece of the pie we forget about the rest of the pie! I am not sure there is any way to avoid this altogether, but I do know that it can be minimized and managed in such a way that it does not flourish into resentment. Two keys: Communication, which we will cover in a bit, and even more importance, genuine prayer for the one in authority. When you are genuinely praying for God’s power and blessings to permeate your leader/pastor’s life, it is hard to be hardened toward them.

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Prayer is a deep level of investment, and what we invest in, we care for deeply. It means a great deal to a spiritual leader's heart when he knows those he leads are genuinely praying for him on a regular basis. Often, a pastor can feel like the staff mentality is, "what can you as a pastor do for me?" But when a staff member prays for him, what a great message that sends to all. Let me encourage you to genuinely do this. Ask your spiritual leaders how you can specifically pray for them, and then do so. Follow up your prayers with notes of encouragement, eventually even asking questions about that which you have been praying for. When someone knows we are committed to God's best in their life, the guard tends to come down and the trust level goes up! Let me encourage you to not see the pastor as someone who is there to serve you and make your ministry successful, see him as a member of the body of Christ on whom great responsibility lies.

As you seek ways to meaningfully invest in his life, with no strings attached, God will bless you in a very real and meaningful way.

### SO WHAT ABOUT PROBLEMS?

Obviously as we serve on a ministry team, problems may ... no, problems will arise! Let me suggest some ideas on how to deal with them. First of all let the following three passages sink deep into your heart:

*But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. – Matthew 6:33*

*Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. – 2 Corinthians 5:18-19*

*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out*

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*not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. –  
Philippians 2:3-4*

Let's look at the following situations:

### SITUATION 1: YOU SEE A NEED IN THE CHURCH OR COMMUNITY THAT THE CHURCH IS NOT ADDRESSING.

Let me encourage you in these situations to approach the pastor on the basis of a genuine burden. Many times we come to people with wonderful ideas and get a cold response! Our assumption is that they don't care, yet many times it is not our idea that they rejected but our approach. If I see a need in the church or community and I approach the pastor in this fashion, "Pastor why aren't we \_\_\_\_\_?" or "Why isn't the church \_\_\_\_\_?" it will probably come across as critical. Most of us, when we feel we are being criticized, respond in a negative and defensive manner. On the other hand if the approach is, "Pastor I have noticed that a lot of 'single moms' live around our church. I am concerned for them and the specific needs that they might have." You have now approached based on a burden. You will usually find that a pastor is much more receptive and will many times even ask what you think might need to be done. At least a seed is planted that the Holy Spirit, if action is needed, will cause to grow in your spiritual leader's heart. Pastors are under a barrage of suggestions as to "what the church should be doing." If we can come to them based on burden, the approach is appreciated and the response tends to be much more favorable.

### SITUATION 2: THERE IS A WAY IN WHICH THE PASTOR IS LEADING THE CHURCH YOU FEEL SHOULD BE CHANGED.

This is a very common challenge we face. It makes sense that as we become involved in the life of a church, particularly as a staff member, we will question why certain things are done and why some things are not. Once again, as with the previous issue, how we approach those in spiritual leadership will have a

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significant impact on how our words are received. Here is the only recommendation I have: Come with the spirit of a learner, not an expert! Often times we get so locked in on what we think should obviously be done we forget that when making decisions that impact a church and the spiritual lives of those who attend there are many factors that come into play.

The two favorite descriptions I find of a pastor are “shepherd” and “overseer.” Let’s focus on the overseer aspect. All of us tend to be passionate about those things that matter most to us. As a staff member we are responsible for and focused on our ministry assignments, but someone has to “oversee” the entire church family and make sure that the church is moving as one, and that each and every ministry is not doing its own thing at the expense of others. It is helpful to remember this as you approach a pastor with an idea or suggestion. Sometimes when we forget this, we can get frustrated, and our frustration comes out in our tone. That will, as a rule, guarantee a less than desirable response.

One more observation here: Any staff member who has an idea about how every ministry in the church can be done better needs to forget about going to the pastor and go to the altar. All of us are resistant to someone who “knows more than anyone else.” This is because there is no one like that. No one is an expert in every area of ministry. If you are the type of person who is always critical of how others are doing their ministry, who always has a suggestion as to what they could be doing better, or who feels in your heart that you could do that better than they could, I truly think you need to ask God if a critical spirit has developed within you. Regardless of your motives, this will come across as arrogant to others. Just as God is resistant to those who have a prideful spirit, so are his people.

This entire area of approaching the pastor with ideas and suggestions is a very important one. I hope you sense that while it is important to do, and there is value when done effectively, it is also an area that needs to be done wisely and tactfully. Bottom line: It is easy to see what is wrong or what needs

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to be done/done better, but it takes a great deal more character and wisdom to know how to work on a ministry team and actually makes things better. The first will be a temptation we all face; the second will take discipline and prayerfulness but, in the long run, will truly enhance your ministry and the ministry of the church. The goal here is that your suggestions and how you present them will bring glory to God and bless those touched by his Kingdom work!

SITUATION 3: THERE IS A PERSONAL CONFLICT BETWEEN YOU AND THE PASTOR. This happens. The Bible does not hide the fact that when we, as people, interact with one another, conflicts and offenses happen! So what do you do when a pastor offends you or there is a conflict? The answer is simple: You choose from your Biblical options and you take Biblical steps. The options I see are 1) overlook or 2) go in a spirit of reconciliation. Here is the key: whatever option you choose, do it quickly! The Bible is clear - offenses and conflicts that are not dealt with quickly grow and fester and, as a rule, tend to involve more and more people.

We are all aware of the process in Matthew 18, but many of us violate it so quickly when it comes to offenses against us it is pathetic. We all know step one is to go to the person who we feel did us wrong. That means the following: If the pastor has done you wrong, approach him. You *may* need to go to one person and seek counsel on how to approach him. I use the word *may* cautiously because I am not even sure that it is needed 95% of the time. I submit to you this: The moment I go to more than one person, I have violated Matthew 18.

Proverbs 6 says that when we “sow seeds of discord,” that is anything that would make another believer think less or suspiciously of the one who has offended us, it is an abomination to God! Pretty strong words inspired by the Holy Spirit. What I often hear is, “he won’t respond right.” What troubles me with that excuse is I can’t find where in Matthew 18 it gives us that “out.” We

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are to always do our part with the right spirit in submission to God's word. God gets to deal with others and how they choose to respond. Understand that in a healthy church, as in a healthy relationship, there is conflict. It is not the absence of conflict that makes a relationship healthy, it's the fact that conflict is dealt with quickly and Biblically that makes it healthy! In the midst of "spiritual warfare" there are going to be some rough moments. Sometimes we are going to say things wrong, do things wrongs, even sin! If the pastor offends you, or in the process of ministry conflict occurs, go to him with a spirit of love and reconciliation. There is no question this will increase the potential for a healthy solution and, even if it does not, your Father in heaven will be pleased with you!

I sat with a youth pastor who, along with three other staff members, had approached the pastor one Wednesday. They expressed their frustrations about how he led the church. They were very frustrated in how he had dealt with them. Their solution: If he did not resign by the following Sunday, they would! I asked the young man what in the world led him to take such severe actions. The youth pastor shared with me how upset he was with how the pastor led the church. He made charges that were very serious, and expressed hurt because the pastor had not communicated clearly with him regarding his responsibilities. He stated over and over again how, in his opinion, the pastor "preached loosely" from the text, showing a low regard for the Scriptures. As he had talked to other staff members, who had talked to others, it was clear he was not alone in his feelings.

I simply asked him one question. "Since you have such a high regard for Scripture yourself, tell me how your meeting went with the pastor when you went in a spirit of love and reconciliation as Matthew 18 and Galatians 6 teaches?" He told me he had not done that, but it should have been clear to the pastor that he was upset and hurt. I then found out from him that not one staff member had gone to the pastor. My question was this: "How could you completely ignore the first step of Matthew 18, violate the second step, and

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actually move to the third step and in essence speak on behalf of the church as a staff demanding the pastor resigns?” His response was that it would not have done any good and someone needed to confront him.

I asked him to show me in the Bible where he was exempt from Biblical truth. Furthermore I asked, “What are you going to say to future churches who want to employ you? Why would any pastor feel safe employing you when you will not come to him when there is an issue in your heart, a concern, or rumblings in the church you catch wind of?” He told me his character would speak for itself ... He is right.

When another brother offends us, the Bible is clear as to how we are to respond. Who they are, the position they hold, or the way we think they might respond does not excuse us from the Biblical mandate to go in a spirit of love with the goal of reconciliation. (In the above example the youth pastor and entire staff were terminated, not due to their concerns, but due to the manner in which they handled it. The elders felt that they had stirred up strife and division in the church.)

There is one more area to address when it comes to conflict. This area is called Timing! We tend to have better results when addressing problems if we approach someone in the proper manner and at the proper time. No one likes to be ambushed! Let me share with you when is Not the proper time: Sunday! Sometimes the way we handle conflict is not about resolution, it's about winning! We plan our approach, build a case in our mind, sometimes solicit others who feel the same way for validation, then we approach the “offender,” having no idea what all is going on in their life. If they don't want to talk or respond right away, we think less of them. We just ambushed them and they got snared!

Here is how you do it: “Pastor, when you are available I would like to have some time with you. There are some things on my heart that I need your help dealing with.” Let me share with you how not to deal with problems: Texting, E-mail, or Facebook! All of these eliminate body language and tone.

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When it comes to dealing with problems successfully, tone and body language are as critical as content.

### THE DEEP DARK PIT TO AVOID!

If there is one area I could implore you to be aware of it is the one that has probably caused the greatest amount of distress, hurt, devastation and division between pastor and staff. It is when a staff member becomes the mediator or advocate for any person or group in the church that has any measure of dissatisfaction. My experience tells me that in 99 out of 100 situations the staff member will pay the highest price. To be honest, if they have assumed this role it is with good reason. This is an area you have to be proactive in guarding against. You can get drawn into it so quickly it is almost unfair.

It is mandatory that right now you determine how you are going to respond when those who have “concerns” approach you asking you to go to the pastor, implying it, or simply “venting,” hoping that will be enough to get you to go on their behalf. I have said to more than one staff member who had become the “spokesmen for the upset,” that those who whisper to you in the hallway will not stand with you in the sanctuary. There is a reason they are secretive. While they will give you every excuse known, the same Scriptures that apply to you, about going to a brother in a spirit of love and reconciliation, applies to them. The moment you allow yourself to be in this situation, the moment word gets out (and in most churches word travels so fast it makes the internet look slow!) and once people realize that if they have a “concern” they can come to you and you will go for them, you become a “hero” in their eyes and a magnet for everyone else who needs to send word to the pastor! The problem is you will always lose. It is wrong. It is not healthy for you, the congregation as a whole, or that individual who is trying to skirt around Scripture.

Here is the biggest problem: It is a real temptation! It feeds our pride, it makes us feel important, and it is easy to justify, “Someone needs to go. I mean, if he won’t listen to them, maybe he will to me. Someone needs to

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protect the church.” The bottom line is if we in any way foster disunity, we place ourselves in an unhealthy position in regards to Scripture and certainly foster distrust in the pastor’s heart. My suggestion is, when someone comes to you with a concern, share with them their Biblical options and how they should approach the pastor in a way that enhances the potential for successful interaction. This is also what is best for the believer that is coming to you. We equip the saints. We train them. Our goal is to teach them how to approach conflict in a Biblical and healthy way, not let them off the hook by doing it for them.

“The Second Man,” by Wally Beebe, is one of the books that really spoke to my heart as I served as an associate pastor. It spoke of the absolute value of men and women who are not the primary leader, but are called to serve in secondary positions. However, they are not secondary levels in the eyes of God. There are many in the Scriptures whose ministries were blessed, enriched, and in some cases salvaged by the addition of individuals who served under their leadership. Individuals who were highly skilled, amazingly qualified, and in many cases became awesome leaders in their own right. However, you see in them an acceptance of their position in God’s Kingdom work, a commitment to do their best, and at all times a striving to enhance the success of the one God had sovereignly chosen to lead them and God’s people. There is something very admirable about someone who can do their best while not being in charge, who will serve faithfully while not getting the recognition, and who is truly supportive even though they do not always get their way when it comes to how things are done. I truly believe if you will allow God to develop that level of character in your life, you will be both amazed and pleased when all is said and done and the work of God is accomplished in and through you.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Deryl Lackey has served as Director of Missions for the Inland Empire Baptist Association since January 1, 2006. The Association is comprised of over 200 churches striving to reach 4.5 million people. The Association has averaged one new church start a month for the last decade. A native Californian, Deryl and his wife Brenda have five daughters, one son, and five grandsons! Deryl received his Doctorate of Theology along with a Masters of Religious Education from Bethany Bible College and Seminary. Before coming to the Association, he served as Senior Pastor of churches in Bakersfield, Lake Isabella and Upland. He serves as a professor at California Baptist University, teaching in the Christian Ministries Department. Additionally, Deryl also serves as Chaplain for the Upland Police Department. He has been active in denominational work and is currently on the Board of Directors for the California Baptist Foundation. His hobbies include golf, fishing, and camping!

## I HAVE A TEACHER WHO NEEDS TO STEP DOWN

- DR. STEVE R. PARR

**W**hat would you do? What would you do if you had a teacher that needed to step down? That may be putting it politely. Perhaps action needs to be taken to remove the Sunday school teacher because of a serious issue. How do you remove a volunteer? What would you do in the following circumstances?

Michael has been teaching an adult Sunday school class for about two years. He is well-liked and is gifted in his ability to communicate a lesson. He participates and cooperates in training activities and promotions when called upon by church leaders. You were surprised to discover that he has been teaching a doctrine that is in direct contradiction to the belief of your church and denomination. A conversation with him only served to confirm his stand and that you had not heard incorrectly. He politely and yet boldly stands by what he is teaching. What would you do?

Lisa has been serving as a preschool teacher for many years. She has been a member of the church since she was a child. The children love her and she does a great job inside the class room. That is once she shows up. She is never on time and usually arrives anywhere from five to fifteen minutes after Sunday school is scheduled to begin. In addition, she will miss seven or eight Sundays each year and does not bother to make arrangements or call anyone to communicate that she will not be present. What would you do?

Rico has been teaching the middle school boys class for a few months. He has never taught prior to this but seemed like a great candidate. He is a committed believer with a good attitude and a willing spirit. He is doctrinally sound and is usually one of the first teachers to arrive on Sunday morning. The problem occurs once the teaching begins. He literally reads the lesson from the teachers curriculum guide to the students. He is boring the students with an ineffective style and you have noticed that the average attendance has been reduced by fifty percent since he began teaching. What would you do?

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Paula and her husband have been teaching the college young adults for a couple of years. They do a great job of ministry, outreach, and teaching each week. You were surprised to learn recently that she and her husband were having some marital problems, though it sounds as if they were working through them. The shock was that the root of the problem may have been an inappropriate relationship with one of the college students. What would you do?

Tyler is a long time member and teacher of Sunday school in the church. He is a leader and many members look to him for guidance on church and spiritual issues. His teaching skills are fair and yet his class attendance stays strong due to the ministry done by the class and the strong relationships. Tyler has a background in education and does not feel that teacher training is relevant for him. Many teachers appear to be taking his queue though several desperately need the training and all would benefit, including Tyler. What would you do?

### DIAGNOSE THE SEVERITY OF THE ISSUE

The urgency of any action and the consequences of inappropriate behaviors are not the same in every circumstance. The way in which you should address failure of a teacher to show up one Sunday and a severe moral failure on the part of another teacher will not be the same. Begin by diagnosing the severity of the issue. Consider the following questions to assist in your evaluation:

1. Is the issue related to the skills of the teacher? Proceed *slowly* if this is the case. The objective in this situation is to provide instruction, training, and resources to help the teacher develop the needed skills. Keep the leader in place as long as there is willingness and progress in developing the needed skills. Assign a mentor or coach if needed to aid in assisting them in their growth.

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2. Is the issue related to the commitment level of the teacher? Proceed *deliberately* with deference to your church's written guidelines and standards in this circumstance. If your church does not have any written guidelines then their actions are not the root of the problem. You have left guidelines to their own interpretation and they may not understand that there is an issue. Meet with the leader to discuss the concerns if the guidelines are being violated and give them opportunity to explain the circumstances, to recommit, or to come to agreement if the issue is negotiable.
  
3. Is the issue related to a doctrinal error? Proceed *deliberately* with deference to your church or denominational doctrinal statements in this circumstance. The Bible itself certainly takes precedent when considering doctrinal concerns. The challenge may be one of interpretation or opinion. A summary of doctrinal beliefs can serve to clarify the understanding and conviction of your church. You should respond *immediately* if the error contradicts a doctrinal essential such as the deity of Christ or the exclusivity of Christ for salvation. You should respond *cautiously* if the error is not essential to Christian faith such as timing of events like the rapture or the meaning of symbolism found in the apocalyptic scriptures. You may need to agree to disagree while coming to an understanding that the leader will not deliberately or overtly contradict the local church's conviction on the issue. You should respond with grace if the issue is related to preference. Believers sometimes take their own experiences or traditions and elevate them to a level of conviction that is not supported by scripture. Be cautious not to alienate a great leader over issues such as music style or preferred furniture for the worship center.
  
4. Is the issue related to a severe violation of scripture or moral failure? Take action *immediately* when a leader is involved in a moral failure or

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commits a severe violation of scripture. The aim should always be to bring believers to repentance and restoration. However, leaving someone in a role of leadership when they have deliberately chosen to engage in actions in direct violation of scripture can have an adverse affect on the ability of your congregation to minister in your community. Pray for discernment with the understanding that while the error cannot be overlooked an appropriate degree of privacy and confidentiality should be maintained when and if possible.

### WORK WITH KEY LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE PROCESS

Addressing the problems of volunteers is somewhat different than those who are compensated for their service. Accountability cannot be totally ignored but the leverage for dealing with difficulties is lesser with volunteers. A person who receives compensation may have a designated supervisor or team with the authority to take swift action when difficulties arise. Taking unilateral action to remove a volunteer is not ordinarily acceptable in most volunteer organizations such as a church.

Bringing key leaders into the process has several benefits. First, accountability for evaluating the circumstances with accuracy is enhanced by bringing others into the process. Perhaps other leaders have awareness of information that an individual does not. Secondly, objectivity is maximized by including other leaders. Addressing problems unilaterally may be interpreted to be personal when the actual issue at hand is sincerely the problem. Thirdly, involving others adds gravity to the concern. The fact that a group of leaders has a concern rather than an individual helps the offender understand the seriousness of the concern. Fourthly, bringing in other leaders provides protection for you as the leader of the Sunday school ministry. Moving from inquiry to potential action may require the endorsement of the pastor or other key leaders to accomplish the task at hand.

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### CONSIDER IMPLICATIONS WITHOUT COMPROMISING CONVICTIONS

Suppose you have been serving in your role for only a few months. What if the teacher that needs to be dealt with has been serving for fifteen years? You would do well to proceed with much caution in this circumstance. The swiftness of action will be dramatically different if you have been on the staff for fifteen years and the teacher for only a few months. What are the implications for your leadership if you confront a long-tenured teacher if you are new in your position? Do not hesitate to tackle issues related to moral failure, severe scriptural violations, or teaching that contradicts essential doctrines immediately in order not to compromise convictions. However, other issues may need to be overlooked or addressed more casually at this point so long as those convictions are not violated. You may, for example, not appreciate that a teacher is often late but you may or may not want to make an issue of it at this point. Pray for wisdom in knowing which problems to confront and when to confront them.

Another possible implication is the loss of members. You always risk losing the volunteer as a leader even if the issue is minor. They may take offense at the confrontation no matter how mild. In addition, you may lose the person that is confronted as a member of your church. Is it possible that they will influence others in the congregation and that division will arise or families may be lost? I am not suggesting that you do not need to address the leader—the more severe the issue the more important it is that corrective measures are taken. The key is to consider the implications prior to taking action. The congregation may actually be better served if the person is removed or chooses to leave. Place the protection of your church's biblical convictions and reputation first but do not neglect to weigh implications when addressing issues which although important are negotiable in the short term.

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### TAKE CAUTION AGAINST NEGLECTING SCRIPTURAL PRECEPTS

What does the Bible have to say about the issue at hand? What does the scripture teach about the restoration of believers who have failed? The teaching of the scripture absolutely takes precedent in all of the circumstances described in this article. The suggestions that I am sharing are based on experience, wisdom, and practical application for dealing with volunteers. Ignoring problems or failing to confront difficult situations will not make them go away. Balancing compassion and confrontation is a challenge for all leaders. Study the scripture, pray for wisdom, and seek to address problems with integrity that is Christ-honoring.

### TALK THROUGH THE PROCESS BEFORE THERE IS A PROBLEM

What would you do? You previously read a number of scenarios asking how you would address a variety of problems that can occur with Sunday school teachers. Confronting the problems can be awkward, stressful, and detrimental to relationships and the reputation of a church if not handled correctly. Sometimes it is better to talk about a problem when there is not a problem. Consider taking the scenarios described and discuss them at a meeting of your Sunday school leaders. You can conduct the discussion somewhat more objectively since you did not create the scenarios.

Get insight from your current leaders on the manner and procedures for addressing problematic situations henceforth. You might consider taking what is learned in the discussion to develop agreed upon guidelines for future reference. A team can be designated from among your leaders and in turn you can present to your teachers the process for dealing with difficulties in the future. A process such as this will not eliminate conflict but may reduce some of the stress involved since the manner for addressing problems was developed and agreed upon by Sunday school teachers from your church.

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### ESTABLISH WRITTEN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Written standards can assist you in dealing with problems much more objectively. Although you may be objective it is easy for someone to take your opinions as a personal attack. Applying church guidelines will lessen, though not eliminate, the personal nature of any confrontation. Do you have teachers who arrive late each week? Take a moment to find the document that describes what time their arrival is expected and underline that section. Do you have teachers that do not participate in training? Take another moment and underline the section of the document that describes the number of hours or frequency of involvement in training expected by your church. If you cannot place your hands on these documents you are postured for greater difficulty in addressing leadership concerns. Many problems that churches have with Sunday school teachers are simple failure of communication.

Call together a group of teachers to serve on a team. Assign at least one teacher from all of the age groupings: preschool, children, youth, and adults. Ask them to develop minimum standards to serve as guidelines and expectations of teachers as well as procedures for dealing with difficult situations. Though not exhaustive, consider including the following:

1. What time are teachers expected to arrive each week?
2. What records and reports are needed from leaders each week?
3. What are expectations regarding use of curriculum and preparation each week?
4. What frequency of participation in training is expected?
5. What is expected of teachers regarding class organization, leadership, and outreach?
6. What are the procedures if a teacher must be absent?
7. What are the expectations related to church involvement apart from Sunday school?
8. Is a doctrinal statement or summary available that teachers are expected to affirm?

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### CONCLUSION

You will find that it is awkward, stressful, and unsettling to deal with most problems severe enough to consider releasing a volunteer or asking them to step down. Do not neglect to address issues on one hand and do not proceed rashly on the other. Above all, pray for God's wisdom and always remember that restoration is preferred whenever possible.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Steve Parr serves the Georgia Baptist Convention as the Vice-President for Sunday School and Evangelism. He began his ministry with the convention in 1998 as a Sunday School consultant. In 2000 he was asked to serve as the Director of Sunday School/Open Group Ministries and named to the Vice-President's role in 2006. He travels across Georgia assisting churches, pastors, and leaders with their small group and evangelism strategies. Over 26,000 leaders from 1,000 Georgia Baptist Churches were trained by the Sunday School/Open Group Ministries staff in the past year.

Prior to his service at the Convention, Steve served the local church. He was the first full-time staff member at Hebron Baptist Church, and he served in a variety of staff roles during over fourteen years on the Hebron staff. The church grew from less than 200 to over 3500 in Sunday School attendance during that time. Steve has also led eight churches as their Interim Pastor over the past eleven years and currently serves with Rockdale Baptist Church in Conyers, Georgia.

Steve was called to ministry in 1983. Steve has a Masters of Divinity Degree in Christian Education from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry degree in Church Growth and Evangelism from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Steve currently serves as interim pastor of Concord Baptist Church in Clermont, Georgia and has authored a book for Kregel Publishing: *Sunday School That Really Works*.

Steve is married to Carolyn and has three children, Leah, Lauren, and Larissa.

## HOW TO LEAD A CHURCH IN A DYSFUNCTIONAL SITUATION - SCOTT HUTCHINGS

**T**he words you never want to hear, “There is a person here serving papers of a lawsuit brought by 71 members of the church.” Shortly after arriving to my new position as Executive Pastor of a 6000 member church, I started having lunch with key leadership within the church, and a Bible study teacher, trustee, informed me at the lunch that it was time for the Sr. Pastor to resign after 21 years of service.

I was totally shocked that someone would go there with a new staff member who was to manage their position within the church, but when an environment of disunity and division is prevalent, instead of honoring the Word of God, dysfunction is sure to follow.

Through the long grinding months, there was a daily battle to handle things in a secular or corporate way and not according to the Word of God. The answer lies within the Bible and any leader who finds himself in a dysfunctional situation, must first commit to live by and lead according to God’s way of handling conflict. The bottom line issue today within the church is; we do not value our relationships with each other, more than our programs or traditions. Jesus prayed in John 17 that we would be one and we are totally ignoring that prayer, supposedly in the name of God. God is never pleased with disobedience and the only way to help a church is to bore down to the core issue, which is allowing God to run His own church, which means we will have the utmost respect for the Bible and God called leadership which is acting, living, leading, loving, and serving others according to the Bible.

Somewhere along the way in relationships we allow trust to be broken and we stop dealing with conflict in a biblical way. We suppress the real issues and allow bitterness to grow within our hearts which make us insensitive to God and His Word.

With the lawsuit making national papers and our church being bashed on the news, I had to make a decision to allow only the courts to deal with the

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issue, or to address the issues one on one with the plaintiffs. I was advised not to speak with the plaintiffs while litigation was in process, but according to Matthew 18, I knew there had to be some personal interaction if this was ever to be resolved in a God honoring way. I made a decision to call one of the key plaintiffs and attempt to seek reconciliation with the plaintiffs and the church. In any dysfunctional situation, one must go to the Bible and see the roadmap for reconciliation. It begins in verse 15 of Matthew 18, with the decision to be honest and to go and have an honest conversation about what the issues were.

I asked for a meeting and began a long process of months of meetings. I spent over 28 hours in meeting with multiple plaintiffs and had glimpses of repentance, but when the group would meet as a whole, they could not all agree on how to work out the situation and would slip back into the emotional turmoil that brought the confrontation.

This brings up an important issue of working out grievances with the one whom the issue is with and not allowing gossip and disunity to creep into the church. Rarely will reconciliation be worked out with multiple opinions giving their input or feelings and they are not personally involved.

Through all the accusations, I found practical, biblical answers within God's Word and the accusations were dealt with one by one. This situation did not turn out well for the church, because a small group wanted to make a decision for the whole body and that is not biblical. We must not allow our desires or passions to supersede the church as a whole. When we do not put others ahead of ourselves and demand our rights, we have lost the war because we are not one body united to carry out the purpose of the church.

To sum up my experience of over two years of dysfunction and turmoil, one must:

- 1) Be willing to listen when someone feels wronged.
- 2) Be willing to go to an offended brother.
- 3) Pray about the amount of truth within the offense.

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- 4) Seek reconciliation without compromising God's Word.
- 5) Make the repentance as known as the offense.
- 6) Pattern a healthy, balanced lifestyle based upon the Word.

That was some more how to deal with an incident, but how do we end the dysfunction and develop a well-balanced environment where trust and genuine love abound?

### TRUST AND COMMUNICATION

If there is one thing that builds a biblical church, it is trust and communication. There are so many situations which could be avoided if leadership would learn to trust their congregation and the congregation would learn to trust their leadership. The reason the walls go up within a church and divisions are created, is because we live like we do not trust God to run His own church.

Some leaders live as though the congregation is the enemy and they develop plans around the body and then attempt to manipulate people to carry out the plans, while some congregations read conspiracy theories into everything. Where is the balance of a God called leader seeking God's face, with other God called leadership within the church, and a God called body willing to seek God with the leadership for the better good of the church and its purpose.

Leaders must learn to trust their church, after all the plan must be carried out by the body or it will not be carried out. The key to all this working is that the church senses God's man is seeking Him and being authentic. The key to authenticity is communication. It is amazing how many times I have heard that the lack of communication was the issue when dealing with marriages, broken relationships, church splits, etc. I have been in some great churches and the key to great leadership is great communication.

### DYSFUNCTION

Dysfunction exists because of a lack of knowledge and trust which is a result of a lack of communication. If we really just want God's will for His church and

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our lives, we would not try to manipulate, but pray, work, love, and lead the people God has entrusted to us. Change is work and church work that can be emotionally intensive, therefore we must commit not to attempt to cheat the process, but work within the guidelines of Scripture and lead our congregations (I Peter 5:1-3) not lord over them. The church body is to work together to accomplish His will (John 17:11) and God has taught me that He is as interested in the process as He is the outcome. The end never justifies the means and leaders must have the heart of a shepherd and genuinely love the people. Love truly does cover a multitude of sins. A leader truly must live, love, and lead with the best for the church and its mission at heart. If our churches loved each other the way they should and shared that love with the lost, we would not be able to keep people from coming, because that is what the world so desperately needs, genuine love.

Dysfunction is a result of disobedience and doubt of God's Word, let's work together to let it not be within the church or our families.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Scott Hutchings has served as the executive pastor at Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville, TN, since 2006. Scott has his Masters of Theology from Trinity Seminary. Before pastoring, Scott had a background in corporate America. He and his wife Rachel have two daughters: Kensley and Ellied.

**PARTNERSHIPS CAN HELP YOU!**

**- LARRY VOWELL**

**A**t some point, and I am sure you are feeling right now that it can't come anytime too soon, you will complete your education and will begin a full-time ministry in a church. Even though you might have served a church during your seminary training days, you will find that serving full time in a church will bring new challenges. You will be saying to yourself from time to time, "I don't remember learning about that in seminary." I want to take this opportunity to share with you about partnerships that can be a help to you and to encourage you to take advantage of these and the resources that will be available to you through them.

THE SBC AND PARTNERSHIPS

Every Southern Baptist Church is autonomous and makes decisions they feel are best for their church. Every church is self-governing and works very hard to ensure their autonomy is protected. Sometimes, however, churches are very slow to partner with another church, association, network, state convention or national convention. Some may fear that getting involved with other partners might threaten their existence or become a financial burden to the church. This has not been the case in partnerships I am familiar with.

Southern Baptist history tells us our forefathers discovered that they could do more if they partnered together. The Cooperative Program was born in order to carry out the Great Commission, take care of the needs of missionaries, and to support other entities that needed financial assistance. So, instead of one church attempting to support a missionary somewhere in the world, financial resources from many churches were pooled. The Cooperative Program guaranteed to missionaries a salary and assistance for a myriad of circumstances (i.e., they would be able to get out of their country if political unrest posed a threat to them, etc). Since 1845 this cooperative effort with other Southern Baptist churches has worked well, and we have been

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partners since. Similar partnerships are now found in national conventions, state conventions, associations and para-church organizations.

Since 1845 the Southern Baptist Convention has grown to include approximately 42,000 churches and 16 million members. This group meets annually, and through its Cooperative Program, supports missionaries, colleges, seminaries, hospitals and other Baptist entities across North America and around the world. The “glue” that holds these churches together in partnership is their belief in and adherence to the “Baptist Faith and Message”, a document that gives understanding to the different elements of the Baptist Faith as it is found in scripture.

In the United States most individual states will have a convention for Baptist work in that state. This group typically has resource people in most areas of ministry that you will have in your church. Most of these people are former staff members who have had experience in the local church and can help you in their areas of expertise. State conventions, 41 of them in the United States, have been around a long time, and their purpose is to coordinate the work that is being done by the many churches in their state. They give leadership and help in the areas of evangelism, Bible study, discipleship, church planting, men’s ministry, women’s ministry, mission organizations, building construction, fund raising and pastoral care. The programs that a state convention can offer will be determined by how large the state is and how much money they have available to provide staff to help churches. Some states, such as my home state of Texas, have two state conventions. In states like these, and there are not that many, the church you go to has made a decision regarding which convention they will be a part of, so you might possibly be limited to utilizing the personnel and programming that convention offers. Some churches dually align with both conventions and have the full benefit of what each convention has to offer. Whatever the choice of the local church, the state convention can be a tremendous help to you as you attempt to do your work in that church.

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Another group that is even more local for you than the state convention is the association. Associations have existed for over 300 years and provide help to churches in focus areas such as church planting, leadership training, providing demographics, consulting, coaching and counseling. The 1200 associations found in the United States are built around a designated geographical location such as a county or several counties so that churches can do things together without having to travel long distances. Most associations include 30-100 churches. There are some large metropolitan associations that might have 300-600 churches in it. Every association will have at least one employee, a Director of Missions, who gives support and leadership to the churches. As associations are financially able, they may add someone to work in the area of church strengthening, church planting, community ministries, etc. Most associations will have at least one ministry assistant to help with the clerical responsibilities of the association, and most of the time this person is a paid employee of the association. Sometimes, however, the ministry assistant/s are volunteers who are willing to do what they can to help. Associations can be a tremendous help to you and your ministry.

You will probably have the opportunity at some point in your ministry to work with para-church ministries. Groups like Campus Crusade, Young Life, and Family Life are just a few of the hundreds of para-church ministries that are located all over the United States. These ministries may have representatives in your area that will contact you and invite you to join in their ministries. Some may be very willing to partner with you and do some things in your church that might be helpful. Other ministries may be looking for financial support or want the church to schedule a time when their representatives can come and teach your people about their ministry focus such as marriage conferences, financial conferences, evangelism conferences, etc. I personally think that you will have to evaluate what they can offer to your church and decide if their ministry is one that will be of help in any way

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to your church families. If they can help, use them. If you don't see that their ministry will help you, pass on their offers.

At this point I would like to focus my attention to the two main partnerships I feel will be the most helpful to you in your ministry: state conventions and local associations.

### STATE AND LOCAL CONVENTIONS

When I was a young, fresh-out-of-seminary minister of education, I was fortunate that my first church was located in the same city where our state convention headquarters was located. I had previously met a few individuals who worked in the state office but not many, so I decided to take time to visit the state office and meet staff, particularly those who worked in the Bible Study and Discipleship areas. As I met them, I told them who I was, that I was a new seminary graduate, new to church work and new to the area. This began relationships with some of these people who became life-long friends and individuals I could call on when I needed help or information. I began to invite them to speak at various training functions in my church, and they began to invite me to help them from time to time in leading conferences. As I prepared for some of those conferences, I became a better minister of education.

Anytime I prepared for an assignment, I was learning something that I could use in my church and with my workers. Most of these state workers had been education ministers in local churches before they went to the state office. They had already done in the local church what I was trying to do in my church, and I learned from them.

I followed the same procedure with the first association office in the area where I served. I visited the association office and got to know the Director of Missions, the Church Services (Education) Director, and others who worked on the association staff. Again this led to new relationships that would help me in the future. I began to attend a monthly association-wide meeting of education and music ministers where relationships began to develop with staff members

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in other churches. When I had questions about what to do next or how to handle a specific problem that had come up, I had people that I could call and talk to. When I needed someone to help me with a training conference in my church, I had people I could call on to come help me. The association leaders begin to see that I was capable of doing some things that could help them, and I was invited to serve on some of the associational committees. I was serving the association and was learning how to serve from those that I was working with on those associational committees. My ministry took me to five associations over the course of forty-four years and I did the same thing in each new association-- I went to them, got to know them, and they got to know me. The result of being involved in the association was that I served as moderator in two of the associations where I served. They recognized my interest in the association, and they let me use my gifts to help them.

I am now serving on staff at an association where I have been for almost ten years. I enjoy having the opportunity to serve with other education ministers and pastors, some of whom have called on me for advice and help. In some ways I am a mentor or a coach to them, and they don't even realize it. Pastors in small churches who do not have a minister of education will call and ask for help or advice. As I was involved in the past by associational workers, I try to give opportunity for involvement to those who want to help on teams that help me plan conferences and programs the association offers to the churches.

Some of the helps that our association gives to our partner churches are Sunday School/Small Group training, Vacation Bible School training, Pastor and staff leadership training, church planting opportunities, demographics help, block party Ministry Trailer, discipleship materials in our Media Center, conflict mediation training and support, building consultations, organizational consultations, personal consultations, coaching, fellowship lunches for various staff positions, fellowship golf outings for ministers and laymen, tax training for ministers and churches, and disaster relief training and support for disaster areas that need help with chain sawing trees and cleaning out flooded homes.

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You have to take the first step in starting a relationship with someone at the state or associational level. They may meet you, but until you show an interest in being involved and take that first step to accept some kind of role or responsibility, they probably won't expect you want to help them. Even though I usually take the first step with a new staff member to welcome them and let them know who I am, unless they come to some of the associational meetings and begin to show interest, I am probably not going to ask them to take on a leadership role. Right or wrong, that is usually how relationships with denominational staff begins and develops.

### CONCLUSION

I would like to close with one last thought...the association needs you more than you need them. Most ministers of education find themselves serving in larger churches rather than smaller ones because of the perceived greater need in the larger church and the financial resources to hire someone for that position. The larger church may think that the association can do nothing to help them. However, even though that church is large and has a lot more resources than other churches, the association can still help that church with demographics, consultations about buildings and organization, a personal ear to listen to problems or needs, and give some feedback that could be beneficial to the church. Don't ever overlook the association when you are trying to develop strategy plans or work through some challenges you are facing. Give them an opportunity to be a partner with you and your church. Also, I want to encourage you to support the association financially. They are involved in helping smaller churches, starting new churches and providing leadership training for workers in all size churches. Smaller churches can help finance the association but not like larger churches with bigger budgets. Larger churches need to realize that as they give to the association, they are helping to start new churches and encouraging smaller churches who reach people who might never attend a larger church because of the intimidating size of the

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congregation and the building. Your gifts to the association are helping you in your ministry to the “Jerusalem” part of your great commission. This is a partnership that will help your church be more effective in your “Kingdom” ministry.

Partnerships are important in all areas of our lives and are really important as we work together in the church. Don't ever think that you don't need them and can do without them. As you develop relationships with people in all areas of denominational leadership, you will find that you can accomplish more, will make fewer mistakes as you learn from the experiences of others, and can celebrate the victories with others who have helped you accomplish things you could never do by yourself. Seek out partnerships, learn from them, and grow from the experiences that God brings to you. It will make you a better minister and you will be able to accomplish more than you ever could by yourself!

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Larry Vowell is Director/Church Strengthening for Collin Baptist Association in Texas. His area covers the northeastern portion of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex, which includes Plano, McKinney, Frisco, Allen and Wylie. Larry served in the local church for 35 years as a Minister of Education and Administration. He now serves the association as a consultant, coach and mentor to 110 churches and their staffs.

## SERVING WHILE SUFFERING

- LEWIS HOWARD

*The Spirit, Himself, bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* Romans 8:16-18 ESV

**R**ick Warren, in *The Purpose Driven Life*, writes:

It all starts with God... *“For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible . . . everything got started in Him and finds its purpose in Him.”* Col. 1:16. It’s not about you....The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It’s far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you are placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by His purpose and for His purpose.

Have you ever asked yourself . . . “Who am I?” or “Why am I here?”

Hopefully, if you are preparing for or are in ministry, at least part of that has been answered.

As Christians, regardless of whose family we were born into or how we were raised, we know who we are – we are sons of God, adopted into His family, heirs and joint-heirs with Christ. In so being we will find at some point that means suffering with Him.

Roy Thompson, former pastor of Cleveland Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, said one time, “If you preach to a broken heart, you’ll never lack for a crowd.” We all suffer at some point in our lives. No one goes through life unscathed. It’s part of the sin-nature. However, as Christians, suffering takes on a whole new form in the learning curve. I’m convinced that you cannot be effective in ministry until you have suffered and learned to suffer well. I’m not saying it’s easy to suffer, but there is a process in which God uses suffering to allow us spiritual growth, more effective ministry to others, and a way to glorify Himself in and through us.

Peter said in I Peter 4:12-13, 16, 19:

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*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation ....but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not be ashamed, but is to glorify God....Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. (NASB).*

Suffering can take many forms. God may allow you to suffer emotionally, physically, socially, financially, or even go through a dry land spiritually during your lifetime in order to make you dependent on Him and grow your faith.

Paul said in II Corinthians 12:8-10:

*Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (ESV).*

### WHAT IS SUFFERING?

The dictionary defines “Suffering” as:

Undergoing or feeling pain or distress; to sustain injury, disadvantage, or loss; to undergo a penalty, as of death; to endure pain, disability, death, etc., patiently or willingly; to undergo, be subjected to, or endure pain, distress, injury, loss, or anything unpleasant.

Suffering is a verb. It defines action. You really can't be passive about it. It changes you. Most of us will do anything to avoid it. It is not fun, pleasant, something we seek, invite (at least not intentionally), or look forward to. Yet, it can be a catalyst to make us better, more effective, and more like Christ if we allow Him to do His work in us – because it's all about Him. *After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. 1 Peter 5:10 (NASB).*

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There are many reasons why God may allow us to suffer. Of course, sometimes we bring suffering on ourselves through sin and pride, i.e., laziness, an unguarded heart, our thoughts, lusts, and words, or allowing our emotions to control us instead of the Holy Spirit. When suffering comes, we must ask ourselves, is this self-imposed or God-imposed. Sin in our lives will bring painful repercussions and consequences – even after we confess and seek forgiveness.

Of course, suffering can also make us bitter. If not dealt with correctly, Satan can use it as a way to defeat us. The wrong attitude toward suffering can make us quit the ministry or, in the very least, get us off track – take our focus off the main thing.

Regardless, suffering has a way of getting our attention, and sometimes God needs to get our attention! He teaches us through suffering to identify with Him, with others, and with our motives. David said, *Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!* Psalm 139:23-24 ESV

### MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH SUFFERING

In ministry, people have misunderstood my words and motives. We have suffered financial setbacks. I have had a family member who has caused me a great deal of pain. I have gone through a period of unemployment. I have suffered through the death of my father. I have had to deal with difficult staff members. But, for me, one of the greatest areas God has called me to suffer has been through physical illness.

In 2000, while on staff at First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, I got food poisoning and, subsequently, began to pass blood. I sought medical attention and over the course of the next year became more and more ill. Being misdiagnosed for months I went through a long period of not being able to keep food in me. At one point I lost 30 pounds in two weeks and was dying when I was finally admitted to the hospital where I was correctly diagnosed with

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Crohns disease.

Crohns is a nasty, debilitating disease – you can't really tell anyone what it's like without making them very uncomfortable. I spent over a month in the hospital and then two months recuperating at home. For the next six years I went every two months to the Cancer Center at Baptist Hospital for a three-hour intravenous drip of Remicade in order to be able to function. I had to drastically change my diet. I had continual joint pain to the point that I walked like a cripple at times.

The drugs I was on made me gain weight and be "puffy." They also had a tendency to make me irritable. I had to work hard to keep my emotions under control and not snap at people or come across angry. The drugs also took away my ability to focus and remember things. I had to make sure my assistant went into all meetings with me so that she could take notes and remind me of assignments, responsibilities, and things to which I committed. I had a hard time teaching and speaking because I couldn't remember, sometimes in mid-sentence, what point I was making.

I went through years of suffering. It was humbling. It was frightening. It was embarrassing at times. There is no cure for Crohns, but God has currently relieved me of the suffering. I no longer have to take medication. I still have repercussions from my disease that I live with but, for the most part, I am healthy. However, during those days, weeks, months, and years, God worked in my life to make me totally dependent on Him. I learned to pray and talk to Him in a whole new way. Those nights lying awake in a hospital room made me learn to seek Scripture in order to find peace. I found that when I couldn't do it myself, He was there to help me through it. I gained a new compassion for those who suffer pain, illness, and loneliness. I learned to eat right and exercise. I learned self-discipline. My marriage and family relationships are stronger. My ministry is more effective.

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### OUR RESPONSE TO SUFFERING

Is suffering easy? No! And, often our suffering causes our loved ones to suffer with us. But, if endured correctly, it is purifying, humbling, and a great character builder. It will make you a better spouse, parent, minister and person. We must see suffering as a gift from God. It is a way He may use to make us better.

Think of suffering in your life as the pressure that the earth uses to form a beautiful diamond. Most natural diamonds are formed under high-pressure high-temperature conditions existing at depths of 87 to 120 miles in the Earth mantle. Diamonds are brought close to the Earth surface through deep volcanic eruptions by a magma, which cools into igneous rocks. When harvested they are polished and cut to show their brilliance and reflect light and color like no other gem. The most perfect are costly and of great value – even priceless!

In the same way, God uses the high pressure and high temperature of suffering to mold us and shape us into more valuable ministers. If we allow Him to polish, cut and shape us with the expertise that only He can, we will be of great value to Him and His Kingdom. We would not choose suffering if it were up to us. However, we must choose God's will and in so doing, we will, at some point, experience suffering as God's perfect will for our life. How we respond to that suffering will affect our ministry. God is more interested in our response to the suffering than He is to our suffering. God's will is not always convenient – but it is always perfect - Romans 8:28. The following essay, author unknown, puts it all in perspective:

#### “The Road of Life”

At first, I saw God as my observer, my judge, keeping track of the things I did wrong, so as to know whether I merited heaven or hell when I die. He was out there sort of like a president. I recognized His picture when I saw it, but I really didn't know Him. But later on, when I met Christ, it seemed as though life were rather like a bike ride, but it was a tandem bike, and I noticed that Christ was in the back helping me pedal. I don't know just when it was that He

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suggested we change places, but life has not been the same since.

When I had control, I knew the way. It was rather boring, but predictable. It was the shortest distance between two points. But when He took the lead, He knew delightful long cuts, up mountains, and through rocky places at breakneck speeds. It was all I could do to hang on!

Even though it looked like madness, He said, "Pedal!" I worried and was anxious and asked, "Where are you taking me?" He laughed and didn't answer, and I started to learn to trust. I forgot my boring life and entered into the adventure, and when I'd say, "I'm scared," He'd lean back and touch my hand. I gained love, peace, acceptance and joy; gifts to take on my journey, my Lord's and mine. And we were off again.

He said, "Give the gifts away - they're extra baggage, too much weight." So I did, to the people we met, and I found that in giving I received, and still our burden was light.

I did not trust Him at first in control of my life. I thought He'd wreck it; but He knows bike secrets, knows how to make it bend to take sharp corners, knows how to jump to clear high rocks, knows how to fly to shorten, scary passages. And I am learning to shut up and pedal in the strangest places, and I'm beginning to enjoy the view and the cool breeze on my face with my delightful constant companion, Jesus Christ.

And when I'm sure I just can't do it anymore, He just smiles and says... "Pedal."

How do we handle suffering? First, we must saturate our mind with Scripture. We must learn to praise Him in the suffering with prayer, hymns and songs - suffering can be a worshipful experience. God will help you to be strong in order to showcase Himself.

### CONCLUSION

Have I arrived? Not yet! Would I want to go through it again? Absolutely not! Still, I am grateful for all the Lord taught me during those years of pain and suffering. Scripture is much more meaningful to me because I found God's promises to be true. I've learned how to trust Him even when it's hard.

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Hopefully, I'm a little more like Christ – because it's all about Him!

*For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.” I Peter 2:21 (NASB).*

*That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to His death . . . I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Philipians 3:10-14 (NASB)*

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lewis Howard serves as the Associate Pastor of Education at First Baptist Church of Naples, Fl. Lewis has been involved in ministry for over 34 years. He started in youth work at several churches in Ohio and Georgia before joining the staff at the First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, where he ministered for nearly 20 years with Singles, Men's Ministry, Young Couples and finally as Assistant Pastor of Programs before coming to First Baptist Naples in June 2007. Lewis is a graduate of Baptist Bible College in Springfield, MO, as well as Liberty University.

Lewis and his wife, Brenda, have been married for over 35 years and have two sons: Jeremy and Tim. Lewis and Brenda enjoy traveling, motorcycles, reading, and fellowship with friends and family.

## **SEXUAL ABUSE ISSUES IN THE CHURCH: RAISING THE BAR**

**- GREGORY LOVE, ESQ. & KIMBERLEE NORRIS, ESQ.**

**I**n recent years, our society has begun to better understand the widespread problem of child sexual abuse. Conservative studies indicate that one out of three girls and one out of seven boys will be sexually abused before reaching 18 years of age, regardless of religious or socio-economic demographic. Law enforcement sources estimate nearly 60 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse are living in America today. Sexual abuse is not limited to any racial, ethnic, or socio-economic class. It is no respecter of any religious denomination or creed. Sexual abuse can happen anywhere.

Parents allow their children to participate in ministry programs for the positive experience of Christian growth, fellowship, and spiritual mentoring. Obviously, this positive experience is shattered if a child is sexually abused while participating. Sexual abuse should never happen in ministry, but the church and Christian ministries have experienced its devastating impact. Families and lives have been devastated, churches of all denominations have been sued, ministries destroyed.

Unfortunately, the problem is growing. In the last three years, an average of 23 new articles each day have appeared in secular media sources revealing sexual abuse allegations arising in *Protestant* churches in the United States. Protestant denominations have been tempted to call sexual abuse a "Catholic problem"; this is simply not true. Within the past eight years, verdicts, judgments, or settlements exceeding hundreds of millions of dollars have been levied against Protestant churches for sexual abuse allegations arising from children participating in ministry programs.

The church and its children are increasingly endangered by sexual predators whose opportunity to ensnare children elsewhere is growing smaller, while the church opens its doors to anyone. Sexual abusers looking for access to children will gravitate to activities and organizations where there are fewer protective measures in place. Secular organizations have responded to this

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inevitable truth by implementing policies and training to reduce risk. Many churches, however, have done little, because ministries fail to recognize the risks or are laboring under the misconception "it won't happen here."

Standards of care embraced by public entities with children's programming have risen dramatically in the past 10 years. Secular organizations such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boy's and Girl's Clubs, theme parks, swimming pools, and children's clubs have grown far more sophisticated in screening employees and volunteers, creating policies and procedures that protect children from abuse, and implementing effective oversight and program accountability. These measures protect staff members and volunteers from false allegations, while safeguarding children involved in programming.

As public awareness and secular standards of care rise, sexual predators are looking for access to children in places where protections are few: *the church*.

While volunteers often undergo less scrutiny than paid staff, a 1996 study in Hammar's *Church Law and Tax Report* found that half of all sexual misconduct offences in churches were committed by volunteer workers. Paid staff constituted 30 percent of the cases, and the remaining 20 percent were committed by other children in the congregation (peer-to-peer abuse).

The church needs protection, but few churches are effectively addressing this risk.

### SOLUTIONS START WITH AWARENESS

The single most important step a church can take? *Train your people to understand the problem.* The creation of safe environments for children's programming requires training. When staff members and volunteers have an awareness of the basic characteristics of a sexual abuser, the process by which an abuser picks and prepares a child for abuse, key indicators of child sexual

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abuse, and reporting requirements (to supervisors and law enforcement) they are better equipped to recognize and prevent abuse in church programs.

### MISCONCEPTIONS LEAD TO A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

Church leadership often has misconceptions about sexual abuse, and methods of adequately addressing this risk.

These misconceptions may include:

- We don't have a problem
- We're okay; we do criminal background checks
- We're okay; we have policies ... we got them off the internet
- We're okay; we have cameras and a child check-in system
- We really can't afford to do anything

#### *"We Don't Have a Problem"*

In our current cultural climate, no church should assume that child sexual abuse will not occur within its congregation. Conservative studies confirm that child sexual abuse is a problem of epidemic proportion. As secular entities respond by taking more aggressive measures to reduce risk, the church gets "left behind," and sexual predators go to where safety measures are non-existent or less apparent.

#### *"We do Criminal Background Checks"*

Many lay people see the criminal background check as a "silver bullet"—as if a computerized background check system is sufficient to prevent sexual abuse. This is a big error.

Checking for criminal convictions *alone* will not protect children in church programs. Statistically, less than 10 percent of sexual offenders are *ever* criminally prosecuted, because children do not report abuse until years later, if ever. Many offenders are never caught, or are allowed to simply leave a prior volunteer or staff position, rather than face prosecution for molesting a

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child. It happens, even in the church. As a result, approximately 90 percent of offenders have no criminal record to check.

A criminal background check simply reveals whether a person has been involved in the criminal justice system; it does *not* vouch for or verify whether a person is safe, trustworthy, or appropriate to work with children.

Some churches have begun to screen applicants using state database resources meant to reveal criminal convictions. Unfortunately, computerized database searches are searching only a fraction of available criminal records, as many state databases are incomplete, and the majority of services check only the *current county* of an applicant's residence.

Remember, only 10 percent of sexual abusers will *ever* encounter the criminal justice system. Approximately 90 percent of sexual abusers have no criminal record relating to child sexual abuse—and they know it. Even if a church employed a criminal background check system that effectively located *every* brush with the law, 90 percent of sexual abusers would go unidentified.

### *"We Have Policies ... We Got Them off the Internet"*

It is common for churches to have something written down as policy, and equally common for staff members and volunteers to have little familiarity with these policies. As a result, the "policy" isn't being followed. Legally, the only thing worse than having no written policy is creating written policy that isn't followed. Policies are what you *do*, not what you *say* you do.

In some instances, an abuse allegation will occur in a church, and the children's director or youth pastor will be tasked to "find us some policies and procedures." He or she will call other churches for a sample, search for policies on the internet, or both. Often, the task is "completed" when the church gets "something" in writing, changing the names in the document to fit the church or ministry.

Unfortunately, the church winds up with a glove that doesn't fit; patchwork policies that are not tailored to specific ministry programming. The

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resulting document is filed somewhere, largely forgotten, until requested by someone. Regrettably, the next request for the document may be in the course of litigation.

### *"We Have Cameras and/or a Child-Tag System"*

Child-tag systems, which ensure no one takes a child without the appropriate tag, can be valuable in preventing child snatching. Camera systems, working properly, may provide additional surveillance and an effective deterrent, but are limited to the specific area of installation. A church may get hours of footage of an abuser grooming a child for abuse, but this is unhelpful if the person reviewing tapes is unable to recognize grooming behavior as such. Additionally, as children move to middle school and high school ministry, programming becomes less structured and contained, and more geared to contact work outside the church facility.

Child-tag and surveillance systems alone will not adequately address the risk of child sexual abuse, because 90 percent of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by a person *known and trusted by the child*. Less than 10 percent of sexual abuse involves "stranger danger" or a snatched child.

### *"We Really Can't Afford It"*

In reality, the reverse is true; the church simply cannot afford to ignore this issue. The cost of ignorance and denial are high, both in damage to children and financial liability. Ministering to young people is close to the heart of Jesus Christ (Mark 10:13–16). Children are the future of the church, and the church must properly appreciate and prioritize child safety.

## AN EFFECTIVE CHURCH SAFETY SYSTEM

An effective safety system for the church should include the following components. Each of these components is valuable as *part* of a program, but cannot create a safe environment *standing alone*.

1. Sexual abuse awareness training (for staff members and volunteers).

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2. Skillful screening training (for key screening/hiring personnel).
3. Appropriate criminal background checks.
4. Tailored policies and procedures (for Children's Ministry, Student Ministry, and ministry to vulnerable adult populations).
5. Effective monitoring and oversight of all ministry programs involving children or vulnerable adults.

### *Sexual Abuse Awareness Training*

The introduction of *any change* in a ministry program may meet resistance from those asked to comply—especially changes that place new responsibilities on volunteers. If volunteers and staff members are first *trained*, new policies make sense, and many emotional barriers to change are replaced by a desire to be part of a system that protects those who cannot easily protect themselves—our children.

### *Skillful Screening Training*

Together with appropriate criminal background checks, *effective screening* can encourage a sexual predator to "self-select out" of church staff or volunteer pools. Skillful screening measures deter or prevent a molester from having access to children through ministry programs. Put differently, background checks and screening are the measures designed to "keep the wolf out of the sheep pen."

Skillful screening requires training of intake coordinators and interviewers, providing them with information and tools to recognize high-risk responses on applications, reference forms, or during an interview. Risk indicators might disqualify an applicant for service or employment, or simply instigate follow-up questions to rule out risk. This training allows hiring personnel to assess whether a prospective employee or volunteer is high-risk for children's programming.

An applicant with inappropriate sexual motives carries with him or her various indicators and life patterns that help identify him or her as one who

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may not be appropriate for ministry with children or youth. Every church should be well versed in these indicators, but few are.

### *Appropriate Criminal Background Checks*

An appropriate criminal background check, coupled with skillful screening, can be critical in preventing an abuser from assuming the church's mantle of authority as a trusted ministry employee or volunteer. For each church staff member or volunteer, the depth of a criminal background check should be determined by the extent of direct contact with children, and degree of authority within a ministry activity or program. For a higher level employee, or a volunteer or staff member with extensive contact with children or students, a more comprehensive criminal background check may be advisable. A comprehensive check may include an actual county-by-county record search.

### *Tailored Policies and Procedures*

Every church should operate within carefully tailored policies and procedures that balance the mission of the ministry with the risks inherent in children's programming. For every program or activity, inherent risks must be evaluated and addressed in policies and procedures that reduce the likelihood of harm to children. At the same time, policy manuals can't look like *War and Peace*, or volunteers will *not* read them. (As an example, don't make your student ministry volunteers read the diapering policy. Create specific handbooks for specific ministry application.)

Policies and procedures cobbled together from various sources are rarely effective, because "patchwork" policies are seldom tailored to a ministry's activities, physical facilities, and specific programming risks.

### *Monitoring and Oversight*

Effective monitoring and oversight is imperative to the success of any safety system. Checks and balances include monitoring for adequate

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supervision of activities and programs, unscheduled drop-ins on programming, and performance reviews that include safety system compliance.

### THE CHURCH—LEFT BEHIND?

Sexual predators will gravitate to activities and organizations where fewer protective measures are in place. The church should lead the way in promoting a protective culture that is easily seen, obvious to parent and offender alike.

*Every* church has a vested interest in proactively communicating:

- this church is serious about protecting children;
- this church will require applications and interviews;
- this church will screen effectively;
- this church will train all staff members and volunteers to recognize and report grooming behavior;
- this church will skillfully monitor the behavior of staff members, volunteers, and children; and
- this church will expect ALL staff and volunteers to understand and comply with policies and procedures designed to prevent abuse.

When a pro-active church communicates effectively, sexual offenders will opt out of church programming, because "it's just too hard here." Perhaps someday offender access will be "too hard" in every church.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Gregory Love and Kimberlee Norris are partners at the law firm of Love & Norris, a national sexual abuse litigation practice, representing hundreds of victims of child sexual abuse. In addition, the firm represents secular organizations and ministries in legal matters related to child safety and sexual abuse.

Love and Norris also serve as directors of MinistrySafe, a consulting organization designed to help churches and Christian ministries understand and

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address child safety risks related to sexual abuse. For additional information, see [www.MinistrySafe.com](http://www.MinistrySafe.com).

**SUPPORTING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**  
**THROUGH THE ROLL OF EXECUTIVE PASTOR**  
- MARK RUSH

**T**he role of the Executive Pastor is relatively new, but vital none the less. It is vital in the fact that it allows the Senior Pastor to be able to execute the role he is called to fill. Many times churches fail to provide the Senior Pastor the resources he needs so that he can be free to focus on the things that only he can fulfill within the church organization. Looking at Christian Education as the primary tool to ensure both spiritual and numerical growth, the Executive Pastor becomes crucial as he works directly with Executive Staff Team to ensure that the goals for the church are achieved. In particular there are five core areas in which the Executive Pastor assists the Senior Pastor as they both work together to fulfill the vision of the church. Those areas are administration, catalyst, mentor, minister and overseer.

ADMINISTRATION

One of the main ways the Executive Pastor assists the Senior Pastor is by taking the administrative load off the Senior Pastor. The main role of the Senior Pastor is the preaching and teaching of God's Word to the people of the church. Along with this, he sets the vision and direction for the accomplishment of the goals that Christ has for the church. If the Senior Pastor gets bogged down with administrative duties then it becomes difficult for him to accomplish the tasks that only he can accomplish. This rings true in the area of Christian Education as it is such an administrative task, week in and week out. In order to free the Senior Pastor up and empower the Staff Team it is critical that the Executive Pastor have a solid grasp on who the Senior Pastor is and how he operates. He needs to know his passions and thoughts on key issues that affect regular decisions that need to be made. They need to be and act as one unit. This does not mean that there will not be differences of

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opinions, but those differences need to be hammered out in close door meetings so that in public they demonstrate a united front.

There are four key areas in which the Executive Pastor leads that staff team to accomplish the church's goals. This is true in the entire organization but is specifically applied to:

- 1) Day to day operations
- 2) Reviewing, setting and implementing church policies and procedures
- 3) Conflict management
- 4) Staff management

### CATALYST

Another way in which the Executive Pastor assists the Senior Pastor as it relates to Christian Education is by being a catalyst of growth/change in three key areas.

**Personal** – The Executive Pastor must be a lifelong learner who is constantly growing personally and professionally. The saying that all leaders are learners is truer now more than ever. The Executive Pastor must be the primary person who champions growth by demonstrating that he is willing to always be growing personally.

**Staff** – The Executive Pastor must also be the single largest champion of the Senior Pastor's desire for growth among the rest of the staff team. It is his job to ensure that the entire staff understands the Senior Pastor's vision for growth and that they follow through accordingly. He also is a catalyst for growth in making sure that resources needed for growth are ready and available. By doing this it leaves little room for excuse in regards to unfulfilled goals.

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**Laity** – When it comes to the laity, the Executive Pastor must be visible to key leadership when possible. He uses those times to come alongside them to hear what they need in order to grow.

### MENTOR/MODELING

It almost goes without saying, but one of the most important aspects of all ministerial staff members is to equip the saints. This begins with the Senior Pastor and is followed through by the Executive Pastor. A major role in this equipping is that of mentoring/modeling those with who he has direct oversight. It is not enough just to speak it; it must be demonstrated visibly and in concrete ways through the following.

**Work Ethic** – one of the ways in which the paid staff and lay staff is mentored is through the work ethic of the Executive pastor. Along with the Senior Pastor, the Executive Pastor should set the tone in the area of work ethic. Too many times executive leadership attempts to lead by statement rather than by action. An action that cannot be taught is that of work ethic. There is no replacement for a good old fashioned hard working attitude that is easy to see and emulate. This is specifically seen in being on time, being available, doing what it takes to get the job done, etc.

**Vision** – all that is done in an organization that ensures its success goes back to the root of vision. As stated earlier, the Senior Pastor sets the vision and the Executive Pastor is next in line in passing that vision down to the next level of leadership. If the Executive Pastor is doing his job correctly there should never be confusion among the ranks as to what the overall vision of the organization is.

**Spirituality** – one area that cannot be overlooked or underestimated is that of personal spiritual growth. John Maxwell talks often of the “Leadership Lid” and no more is it seen than in the area of personal spiritual growth. This should be the area of greatest competition in the heart of the Executive Pastor

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in which he tries diligently to be the best in this area. The attitude should be that of one who expects to be the most ardent pursuer of spiritual maturation.

**Grace** – in ministry mistakes are going to happen. In fact if they are not happening, then the first question that should arise is, “are we doing anything?” All good leaders know that if you are going to do things and take risks then mistakes are going to be made. When mistakes are made, then the Executive Pastor must be ready to apply grace in those situations. As a recipient of grace, he must also be the issuer of the same grace.

### MINISTER

At the core of any ministerial staff position (Senior Pastor to Intern); the simple desire of the heart must be to minister to the church body. This is certainly not mentioned as the fourth item because it is fourth in priority; in fact it is quite the opposite. The primary calling of any ministerial position should be that of minister. It is from this heart of a minister that the Executive Pastor will be most closely tied to the office of the Senior Pastor. He should know, understand and operate as a ministerial by watching and observing the Senior Pastor. The Executive Pastor should be competent in the area of hospital visitation, weddings, funerals and counseling of members and non-members alike.

Because the Executive Pastor position is such an administrative position, it could become an unnatural tendency to focus more on this part of the ministry. This is all the more reason that the Executive Pastor should strive for balance in the areas of administration and ministry. Becoming out of balance in either area would be detrimental to the office of Executive Pastor.

### OVERSEER

As an overseer the Executive Pastor fulfills all the duties mentioned above in totality. What is meant by this is that each area cannot stand independently. They must all be in operation at all times. If one area is emphasized over the other then the role of overseer cannot be accomplished effectively. By serving

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alongside the chief overseer, the Senior Pastor, and ensuring that all areas are in proper balance the organization has the best chance at achieving optimal results. The role of overseer will allow the Senior Pastor to focus on the things that only he is called to focus on to ensure that the church body is growing spiritually.

### CONCLUSION

The Executive Pastor's task is to assist not replace the Senior Pastor. The ultimate goal would be to increase the Senior Pastor's time and effectiveness in the areas of relationships, vision and ministry while decreasing his time and direct involvement in these areas. By doing this, it should allow the Senior Pastor more than adequate time to prepare, preach and teach the Word of God.

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## **TEAM BUILDING: THE IMPORTANCE OF A BIBLICAL BASIS**

- STEVE ECHOLS

### WHY SHOULD WE ATTEMPT TO BUILD TEAMS?

**N**o one can deny it. Team building is hard work. It is quite a challenge to get people to be on the same page and pulling in the same direction. Often we encounter situations where everyone has a different agenda. It is far too common that at least one person will have a knack for saying something or doing something that stirs up conflict. These are just a few of the reasons why many ministers are reluctant to build teams. So why should we bother with teams? Is it not just easier to do ministry in solo fashion?

One popular response to explain why we should build teams is the pragmatic reason. We realize that often one person cannot do everything a particular ministry needs, even if it is relatively small and specifically focused. This reality is especially apparent in the much broader context of what vocational ministers face. Yet churches have not always practiced this principle in developing ministry teams that would incorporate lay volunteers.

Beginning in the late 1950's and continuing even until the end of the economic boom in the early part of this decade, SBC churches were often in the mode of the "hire it out mentality." A personal example illustrates this trend. During the 1950's and early 1960's a favorite seminary professor of mine had been the pastor of a church of approximately 1,100 in weekly attendance. At that time, his church had three full-time ministers including the pastor. In the 1990's I was the pastor of a church of similar size. Our staff was more than double the size of what my seminary professor's church had been. It was not that his church was deficient in financial resources or sophistication of ministries or programs. His church was a leading an innovative church for its day and widely respected. What had occurred?

No doubt, the era of my seminary professor's ministry was a day in which people had more time to volunteer. Most wives did not work outside the home and less suburban sprawl meant that workers' commute times were often

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shorter than they are today. In addition, the expectations of church members concerning programming were much lower than the present. A good two-week VBS would have been sufficient for the summer children's program in the 1950s and 1960s, but such an effort would be only a small part of what many churches now do. In addition, church programs have not only grown in volume but in sophistication. As a result, congregations increasingly turned to professional staff rather than lay volunteers.

However, some recent factors have brought pressure to reverse this trend. Economic downturn and the fact that nearly 80 percent of SBC churches have a plateaued or declining attendance have greatly diminished local churches and their financial ability to "hire out the ministry." The emphasis on church planting where resources are generally limited for salaries for vocational staff has also added to this reversal. Yet a much healthier reason for building teams is the rediscovery of the importance of service as a key ingredient in developing believers. This perspective, along with the desire of many millennials and baby boomer retirees to participate in meaningful ministry is bringing a new opportunity to enlist people into teams.

Another reason some ministry leaders launch into team building is its popularity as an espoused leadership principle. This mindset is understandable, especially when well-known speakers and authors promote it. In addition, the challenging work of leadership has seemingly become tougher in recent years. The increased complexity of situations that leaders face, the fragmentation of the American society, the challenging communication revolution of social networking where false rumors gain an instant audience, a general cynicism toward leaders because of glaring failures of prominent leaders, and the warp speed of change have been factors that make leadership more difficult. Church leaders have felt these same factors. As a result, like everyone else, ministry leaders are always looking for the latest ideas of how to cope with these challenges. Team building has been one of the panaceas offered. Yet as noted by research scholar Teresa Kline, the high expectations for

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teams that have developed in the past few decades have for the most part failed to occur.<sup>1</sup> Those who expect that team building will be the answer to all of their leadership challenges will likely be disappointed.

I must confess that I have tried team building for both of the above reasons. In my very first years of ministry, I realized that I simply could not do everything myself so I attempted to build teams. Since it worked, I continued to do it. I also was further convinced to do so because various notables in certain books and conferences hyped it. Some of those ideas worked in my ministry setting and some did not. Yet such motives are not a healthy base out of which to make a commitment to teams. We need something more substantive. To sustain us in the challenging task of team building and to convince those that we lead that team building is indispensable, we need the unshakable foundation of a biblical basis. ***For ministry leaders, team building is not just an effective method or a new trendy creative technique for leadership. It is a biblical mandate!***

### THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR TEAM BUILDING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Is there a biblical basis for team building? The answer is a resounding yes. It is a dominant theme found throughout the Scripture, and it starts with an understanding of God as He is revealed in the Trinity. *This revelation of the nature of God and the subsequent relationship of humankind to God and to each other is the first foundational aspect of the biblical basis for team building.*

Noting the writings of the Eastern Church theologian, John of Damascus, George Cladis argued that the Trinity illustrates a type of teamwork among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Cladis referred to a theological term called perichoresis, which literally is translated “circle dance.”<sup>2</sup> It is an emphasis on the concept of the Trinity as equal partners while maintaining

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<sup>1</sup> Theresa Kline, *Remaking Teams: The Revolutionary Research-Based Guide that Puts Theory Into Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 1.

<sup>2</sup> George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 3-10.

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their paradoxical oneness and relational distinctions. A biblical understanding of the Trinity that avoids the heresies of tritheism or modalism obviously does not yield principles that are completely transferable to the limitations of human teamwork. Nonetheless, it is fascinating that God counsels within His own nature and that the three persons of the Trinity are one and work as one. Though this is mysterious and impossible for us to comprehend fully in our limited human understanding of the workings of the Trinity, it does indicate a relational aspect in the very nature of God. This relational aspect of God has important implications for human interpersonal relationships in building teams.

Paul utilized the analogy of the Trinity when speaking of the relationship between husband and wife. In 1 Corinthians 11: 3 he stated, “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.” (NAS) Concerning this passage Wayne Grudem observed, “Here, just as the Father has authority over the Son in the Trinity, so the husband has authority over the wife in marriage. The husband’s role is parallel to that of God the Father and the wife’s role is parallel to that of God the Son. Moreover, just as the Father and Son are equal in deity and importance and personhood, so the husband and wife are equal in humanity and importance and personhood.”<sup>3</sup>

From this analogy originally in the Trinity and then in the God ordained role of the husband and wife, we are reminded that teams are egalitarian in terms of the members status but not necessarily in terms of their roles. In other words, it is not a contradiction to say that you have equality within teams but at the same time have a team leader. This equality in status but difference in function is important in team building because every team must have a leader. This foundational aspect has an important implication. ***Team leaders need to realize that they have a function not a status. They lead as***

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<sup>3</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan., 1994) , 257.

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***servants not as despots to be served.*** They are to follow the example of Jesus as noted in Philippians 2: 5-8. As our ultimate team leader, Jesus emptied Himself of all privilege and became instead the foremost example of the sacrificial suffering servant. If team leaders will be like Christ in this manner, they will find team members highly motivated to follow their leadership.

Even more striking is a second foundational biblical basis for team building, *the transformational purpose of God*. The Scripture reveals that God desires to team with humankind in carrying out His will. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were partners with God in the function of ruling over His creation and keeping the garden. (Gen. 1: 28, 2: 15). After the fall, God's plan of redemption was to covenant with individuals, e.g., Adam, Noah, the patriarchs, etc. Yet, God did not just team with individuals, but he also partnered with a nation. He declared that Israel would be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' (Exodus 19: 6 NAS) In His plan of redemption, it is wondrous and humbling to think that he would use the human lineage of Israel and more specifically David to bring about the birth of our Savior.

Why would God utilize humans to carry out his plan? He certainly does not need us. Yet, after the birth, life, redemptive death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension of His son, He still partners with us. Jesus called the twelve and then commissioned the church. Could God have not placed Gabriel in the sky with a heavenly megaphone to circle the earth and proclaim the gospel? No doubt, he would have been more effective in getting the message heard. However, God has a greater purpose in seeking to transform us through the mission He has given us.

Discipleship is not just learning but doing. Team building presents that opportunity. E. Stanly Ott noted that a major distinction between a committee and a ministry team is that a ministry team does not just accomplish tasks, but also seeks to disciple the team members.<sup>4</sup> ***Team leaders need to***

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<sup>4</sup> E. Stanley Ott, *Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), ix.

***understand that as important as it is to accomplish a task, the ultimate goal goes beyond the task. The most critical aspect is the transformation that occurs in the lives of the team members and those they influence.*** That is why Ott believes every team meeting should have some focus on discipleship and not just on tasks.

In my most recent experience in leading a church through a building program, I had the benefit of an increased appreciation for the potential of transformational outcomes. In this project I stressed from the beginning that heaven's headlines would not be about the construction of a facility as much as the construction of lives. Of course, the building would make reaching more people possible. Yet the goal was also that in working together everyone involved would truly learn the meaning of the various aspects of the fruit of the spirit such as love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness. The emphasis on transformational outcomes brought a higher level of accomplishment and fulfillment in ministry than I had previously encountered in a building program.

The transformational aspect of team building has profound implications. Throughout the biblical revelation, we are amazed at God's mercy and loving kindness to those He partnered with. It is astounding that God did not give up on Israel and Jesus did not give up on the disciples. Ministry team leaders often find their patience sorely tested. Team members will sometimes not cooperate, be unkind, or very slow to catch on. They may even utterly fail at their assigned task. These disappointments do not lessen the importance of the accomplishment of the task. Yet building and leading a ministry team requires a love and belief that there is potential in every believer. In secular leadership literature, authors sometimes refer to the efficacy of the team, i.e., the ultimate potential of the team. Ministry team leaders believe that God's transformational power can reshape and reform team members to be more for the Kingdom's work than would be humanly possible.

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These two foundational biblical aspects are vital for us to understand why and how we need to operate teams. Team members are equals but with differing functions. The team leader is to be a servant not a despot. We do teams for the purpose of transformation: that we may all come into the “unity of the faith” and “the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13 NAS). Yet in addition to these foundational bases in the Scripture, there are other operative principles that are essential to follow.

### KEY OPERATIVE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES IN TEAM BUILDING

In leadership literature, authors have advocated a number of guiding principles for the formation and function of teams. I have found it fascinating that the most effective of these principles often have a direct biblical parallel. This connection exists because God’s laws of human relationships are fundamental and will bring success when leaders implement them, even if they are carried out in ignorance concerning their theological importance. The following are several key areas of parallels found in the Scripture that secular leadership experts often espouse.

***First, the integrity of the team leader and the team members is crucial.*** The foundational and extensive research of James Kouzes and Barry Posner discovered that integrity was the number one trait that team members wanted in team leaders.<sup>5</sup> More recently, Thom Rainer has noted the high expectations in this area among millennials.<sup>6</sup> In Proverbs 4: 23, the writer declared, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out it are the issues of life.” Nothing will work well in team building if the team leader and the team members lack integrity.

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<sup>5</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 14.

<sup>6</sup> Thom Rainer, “From My Perspective,” *Facts and Trends* (Winter 20110): 5.

**Second, the team leader must clearly articulate the vision for the team's purpose.** Philip Lewis asserted, "Vision is fundamental to all leadership."<sup>7</sup> Vision is especially critical in motivating team members to move together in the right direction. The writer of Proverbs declared, "Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained." (Proverbs 29: 18 NAS). The word translated "vision" literally means revelation from God. The word translated "unrestrained" is exemplified in the wild and rebellious behavior of the Israelites in Exodus 32. The teaching is simply that unless the people of God have a revelation from God that they purpose to follow, they will end up going in many directions that are inevitably ungodly. The natural tendency for teams is to struggle with unity both in purpose and in relational aspects. A biblically based vision can bring ministry teams together.

**Third, in the formation of teams it is important to have a variety of perspectives as well as a complementary gift mix.** While it is easy to understand the need for different gifts or skills, team leaders do not readily perceive the need for different perspectives. Team building literature warns against a "silo" mentality, which resists receiving input from different perspectives. Pat McMillan argued, "Team synergy is born out of the differences between team members. . . . The more distinctive the diversity among the team, the more options they have to creatively deploy."<sup>8</sup> When we look at the team Jesus recruited, we are astounded at the variety as most profoundly illustrated by having a Zealot and his archenemy, a tax collector, on the same team. Differences can produce new ideas and innovation. It may be a challenge to have team members with different perspectives, but as the writer of Proverbs declared, "iron sharpens iron." (Proverbs 27: 17 NAS)

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<sup>7</sup>Phillip V. Lewis, *Transformational Leadership: A New Model for Total Church Involvement* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 93.

<sup>8</sup> Pat McMillan, *The Performance Factor: Unlocking the Secrets of Teamwork* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 135.

***A fourth principle is somewhat of a balance to the previous one in that willingness trumps skill in determining the positive potential of team members.*** Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith noted that a common error is to “*overemphasize skills in team selection.*”<sup>9</sup> We often look at skills and skill is important, but research has shown that people can learn skills easier than they can change their attitudes. While a variety of perspectives are helpful, you do not want someone on the team who has another agenda or is very narrow in what they are willing or not willing to do. I learned this lesson the hard way. I have recruited very talented or influential people onto a team only later to discover that their toxic attitudes greatly hindered the function of the team. It is difficult to predict what challenges a team will face. Having a team composed of members who are willing to do whatever is required gives the flexibility that is often the difference between success and failure.

***Fifth, communication is always a challenge and team leaders must enhance it through multiple attempts and personal contact.***

Communication is not an easy process. Communication theory has shown that there are many barriers to communication between the time a message is formed, delivered, heard and interpreted. The old saying “I think you heard what you thought I said but I don't think I said what you thought you heard” is unfortunately very true. Good team leadership must make every effort to be sure communication has occurred. John Kotter claimed that leaders often underestimate the need to communicate by a power of ten.<sup>10</sup> I have noticed that inexperienced ministers often initially think they have communicated when they have utilized some general means such as an email blast or a bulletin announcement. Yet when God sought to communicate with

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<sup>9</sup> Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 48.

<sup>10</sup> J. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 9.

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humankind, He not only spoke directly to certain individuals and through the prophets but also came in person. The effective team leader cannot ignore having personal communication with each team member.

**Sixth, team leaders must be willing to deal with conflict.** Theresa Kline's research demonstrated that team members want a team leader who will solve problems and deal with conflict in an immediate and fair manner.<sup>11</sup> In Matthew 18, Jesus gave a three-step process as a guide concerning the handling of disputes. The principle of first dealing with the issue privately prevents the public embarrassment of the individual. Face to face in private is the best first step. If the individual is not receptive to the first step, going with others to the person is the next step. Finally, the team leader may need to enlist the entire team to reestablish the vision and values of the team. Likewise, Paul gave numerous passages about the importance of Christians remaining in harmony. In Titus 3: 10-11 he wrote, "Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned." (NAS) Problems of disunity will not go away. When team leaders deal with divisive issues promptly and in a biblical manner, they will have a better opportunity they for a positive resolution.

**Seventh, team leaders must empower team members.** To empower a team involves providing them with the resources needed. Glenn Parker noted that teams "need resources to survive and thrive."<sup>12</sup> A major team morale killer is giving teams tasks without resources. Resources are not just money. It refers to all aspects of support including time, facilities, calendaring priorities, etc. Jesus was the ultimate example in empowerment. He did not send out His

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<sup>11</sup> Kline, 43-44.

<sup>12</sup> Glenn M. Parker, *Cross-Functional Teams: Working with Allies, Enemies and other Strangers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 206.

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disciples without resources, but gave them the ultimate resource (the Holy Spirit).

Jesus provided the ideal example of what Parker referred to as the balance between empowering and abdicating.<sup>13</sup> Jesus did not abandon His disciples, but He also gave them the freedom to learn even if that meant some initial stumbling. In order to maximize the potential of team members, they need the freedom to extend their limits even when that possibility includes initial failure. At the same time, empowering a team also means to grasp the limitations of a team. Another morale killer is when the expectations simply are beyond the resources and scope of what the team can accomplish. God never called us to save the whole world. That is what Jesus came to do. Our job is to be faithful in carrying out our portion of the Great Commission, which is the ultimate task of ministry teams.

### CONCLUSION

Building teams has proven to be an effective component of leadership and successful ministers may justifiably promote it. Yet there is something much more important. Building teams is an indispensable biblical principle of leadership that carries out a transformational purpose through a servant mode. The hard work of developing teams may discourage some from the task. However, the labor of building teams pays great dividends. Churches and ministries may be limited in what they can do in terms of affording professional staff, but as long as there are people to reach there is no limit to the number of teams that leaders can enlist and empower for the work of the Kingdom.

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