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ARTICLES

practical resources for everyday ministry

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Delegating and Staffing in Church

Practical Thoughts for Team-Building

by Daniel A. Brown

Why is it so difficult for pastors to delegate significant work and ministry to the people in their churches? There are several basic reasons, and it is often a combination that gives rise to the reluctance to entrust programs and responsibilities to others. Most of our behavior as leaders is unconscious, but what we do and do not do sends unmistakable signals to our church about what we value.

For instance, even though we might tell people to “get involved, volunteer,” we can be sending conflicting behavioral signals that communicate, “just kidding, we’ve got everything taken care of with the people who are already engaged.”

While we recognize the importance of mobilizing increasing numbers of responsible ministry partners, we rarely do a self-inventory to see to what extent we’re unknowingly working against that goal. Is the problem exclusively that “It’s nearly impossible to find committed people”? Here are some common reasons why pastors find it hard to replace themselves with people they disciple/train:

- ☑ *Pastors sincerely want to serve the people in their churches*, and that servant heartedness sometimes forgets that giving others opportunity to serve is one of the most loving things a leader can do. Jesus explained that the pathway to significance is through the servants’ quarters. Pastors who do not want to “bother” others and ask for their help are unintentionally barring ministry doors.
- ☑ *Pastors are sometimes worried that the delegated task will not get “done right,”* which is to say, exactly like the pastor would have done it. Perhaps because of faulty notions of authority, some pastors have come to imagine that they really are authorities on every subject and type of activity from decorating to worship to retreat-planning to budgeting to graphic design, etc. Aren’t we glad God does not espouse, “If you want something done right, do it yourself”?

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- ☑ Many pastors confuse delegation with dictation. If a leader spends all the time to think a job through, and spell out how it is to be done, the leader has already missed the point of delegation. Jethro's advice for how Moses ought to delegate ministry to others contains a simple, but often overlooked detail: let others be the front line; let them be the first to deal with situations, and whatever they decide they cannot handle should be brought to Moses—not the other way around.
- ☑ Pastors have been burned by previous experiences with delegation, and they are not eager to be disappointed all over again. It only takes a few dropped balls by volunteers to condition pastors not to trust the quality or quantity of others' work. Actually, most of the disappointments in delegation happen because leaders: miscast people in unsuitable jobs; fail to give enough information or support; choose not to deal with preexisting attitude problems; or, unintentionally prevent people from really taking ownership of the job.
- ☑ Pastors fall into the whirlpool of being too busy to look for, disciple and enlist more workers. Since it takes longer (initially) to adequately delegate than it does to do a job themselves, pastors, who are already crunched for time because of all the things they are doing themselves—because it is quicker, have a hard time justifying the “lost time” that delegation and follow-up require. Eventually, the church ends up only able to produce what one extremely busy leader can accomplish.
- ☑ Pastors can fear losing importance if many other people start doing lots of great things. Pride urges leaders to keep the credit (thereby the work) for themselves; the truth is that unless they have a pride problem themselves, people will respect a leader who delegates significant responsibility far more than they will regard a leader who does not.

Staffing Suggestions

“It is to your advantage that I go away...”—Jesus, the Savior of the world

When we left our home church in late 1984 to plant The Coastlands, this scripture kept coming to my heart again and again—along with a simple prophetic understanding: I was to structure this new church in such a way that it functioned as well without me (in its daily operations) as it did with me. In other words, disciple people, develop systems and delegate significant responsibilities within those systems to those people.

If Jesus left the world in the keeping of humans, it is hard to justify a leadership attitude that struggles with entrusting church work to those same humans.

Not that it has been a smooth journey, but between the bumps and potholes (sometimes through them), I have learned a few things that might help you in staffing your ministry, so that more people (volunteers and paid workers) can be involved meaningfully in the process:

- ☑ The work of church is not primarily the programs and services it puts on, but the transformation in the lives of the congregation; therefore, do not use the people to get the jobs done, use the jobs to help complete the people.
- ☑ Inspire people by believing in them more than they believe in themselves. They tend to perform to the level expected of them. When their job is “to do what they’re told to do,” do not be surprised if they fail to take much initiative.
- ☑ Adapt the particulars of a job to the uniqueness of the person doing it, not the other way around. Define the core tasks of the assignment, but let the new person accomplish those tasks their own way; and, encourage that person to branch out into new areas of interest.
- ☑ Several part-time workers will usually be a better use of limited salary funds than one full-time worker. With rare exceptions (finances, graphics, scheduling, etc.), the main assignment of staff is to mobilize more people to do the jobs assigned to the staff.
- ☑ Once staff and volunteers understand and agree to what you are ultimately trying to accomplish, the greater freedom and authority they can be allowed to fulfill their assignments. The more clear you are about the goal, the less detailed you have to be with instructions.
- ☑ Trust people—not to be mistake-free, but to truly do their best with the understanding and tools they have. Trust is the single most significant factor predicting people’s satisfaction with (and willingness to get involved with) an organization.

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- ☑ For Real Estate it's "Location, Location, Location." For church staff it's, "Attitude, Attitude, Attitude." There is a world of difference between character, heart issues (pride, selfishness, resentment, fear, jealousy, etc.) and plain old mistakes and miscalculations. We all have both varieties. Address them differently in your workers' lives.
- ☑ Staffing needs change often—in response to new seasons and priorities in your church.

Pastors are praying for disciples and volunteers rather than developing them. Leaders wait for mature disciples to miraculously appear in church, forgetting that disciples are not sent from Heaven but made on Earth.

And that is precisely where mobilizing people in our church comes into play. We are desperate for more ministry workers, not only for our church programs, but also to more effectively reach out to the surrounding world.

Could it be that a merciful and kind God is giving us the biggest clues imaginable—linking His most basic assignment for us with our most obvious and continuous need?

We need more workers; He wants more disciples. Hmmm. What would happen to our thinking if we connected our primary frustration with our primary mandate?

Discipleship, like church itself, is a process, an active on-going shaping of one person by another, enabling the disciple to develop in ways he or she probably could not develop alone—or, at least, not as quickly. Its goal is to "perfect every man in Christ" (Colossians 1:28), and its means include both public and private admonition.

Mobilizing people, making disciples and delegating responsibilities to those disciples is an engrossing, all-engaging activity of the heart and of the mind. It forces shifts in priorities, time allocations and basic orientations towards ministry. Therefore, it will require a rethinking of our entire approach to ministry.

A Cloud Isn't a Crowd:

Where God Leads Isn't the Same for Everyone

by Daniel A. Brown

On a recent trip to Norway, I heard of a newly married couple who spent their honeymoon with in-laws building a small chapel in eastern Europe—using materials they had purchased with the “wedding gift” cash they requested instead of toasters and bath towels. Their home church was pioneered by a friend of mine in Oslo, far away from the doctrinal preoccupations in North America and seemingly unconcerned with the prominent locations where we are told God is moving.

Whenever I learn of sacrificial ministries like the young couple or my friends who have labored to build a church in post-Christian Scandinavia, I have mixed reactions. Mostly, I celebrate their obedience to their calling, and I enjoy the thought that I'm a relative of theirs—much like my daughter's friend who wore a big smile the week after her uncle, Mike Holmgren, won the Super Bowl.

My other feeling is sometimes one of doubt. Marveling at other people's ministries causes me to second-guess the legitimacy of my own. I don't mean that I am especially tempted to compare my labors with theirs in terms of whose is greater—though carnal bragging rights are occasionally a vain question: Whose work for God is better?

But that question isn't the one that primarily torments me as a pastor. There is another question that I really do care about: Have I missed what God had for me?

It is a question born of sincerity, not insecurity—a desire to be and do everything God has in mind for me and my service to Him. The less my ministry resembles the details of another's testimony, the more I wonder if I am wasting my time or missing the boat. That's when I try to remember the cloud of witnesses—spiritual patriarchs and matriarchs who accomplished so many different sorts of things by faith.

Not everyone gets told to build an ark.

Individualized Instruction

God's approval is not attached to a particular feat or to one of His promises over another. We gain our testimony by obeying His unique set of instructions to us—not by eavesdropping in on and aligning ourselves with His instructions to someone else.

But when I hear about someone building an ark, I secretly wonder if I should, too. When I go fishing, I want to find out what bait everyone else is using. Maybe it's normal to think others know better than I do. I feel rather unspiritual most of the time anyway, so when spiritual-seeming manifestations break out elsewhere, it is especially tempting to presume that I've missed something that I better not chance missing again.

DON'T FOLLOW THE CROWD

I suspect church and ministry leaders everywhere face the pressures of that nagging uncertainty. Because we know our labors are in vain unless they correspond with what God is building, we are desperate to know *what* He is building. We want to get it right. So we seek and pray and study and look for any clue that will help us align our hearts and hands with His.

That's why books about God's will for our life are so popular, and why we attend so many seminars about church. We want to discover His will for our ministries and for ourselves.

When I re-entered the U.S. after my Norway trip, I waited in a large room with several hundred passengers from various other flights while the customs agents checked our passports. At one point there was a commotion on the far side of the room, and everyone turned to see what was happening.

That's how crowds work. Individuals spontaneously respond to the movement of the crowd. If the crowd starts going in one direction, most everyone goes along. A few people looking to the back of the room soon have the whole crowd looking there because everyone else is looking. There may be nothing to see. Crowds have a natural momentum to them.

Sincere spiritual leaders constitute a sort of crowd. Our eager, almost desperate search for what God is doing can easily be swayed by the momentum of those around us. When several leaders are led in the same direction, or when an especially visible flow of grace manifests in the ministry of other leaders in the crowd, a movement develops. That activity can be very compelling to the rest of us who are a trifle unsure whether or not we have been correctly following our directions from God.

We don't want to miss God, so when lots of other people seem sure about the direction they are to take, we are tempted to abandon the uncertain directions in our own hearts in order to follow the more certain-seeming directions that they are following.

We who deal so often in the realm of the unseen long for substantial confirmation that we are on the right track. Thus, when tremendous physical evidence (numbers, manifestations, etc.) attends someone else's ministry or style or city, it is hard to resist the momentum that draws us toward such tangible *assurance*.

If we are not careful, our desire to find what God wants for us individually can become confused in the midst of thousands upon thousands of other leaders who are asking the same question. Though spiritual leaders should be asking the same question, they will not necessarily be receiving the same answer. Jesus tells Peter that John's assignment will be different than his: Peter's focus should just be on following the instructions he hears for himself.

Remembering Individuals

I want to be careful to side-step the usual discussion about various revivals, renewals, movements and cities that have captured so much interest among spiritual leaders. Rather than offering my limited assessment of what is or is not happening in other quarters, I want to focus on the subtle and dangerous pressures that plague leaders, like me, who may be waiting with the crowd in the same large room to have our passports checked.

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I might be waiting in a line mostly comprised of travelers who arrived back in the U.S. on a different flight than mine, and maybe the three individuals in front of me are all going from this port of entry to Atlanta. Their excitement about Atlanta or their reports on what they saw overseas shouldn't cause me to change my travel plans.

It's fun to swap stories about what we've seen on our respective trips, and I might even long one day to visit where these fellow-travelers have journeyed. But spiritual leaders aren't traveling without itineraries: God has sent us on various trips with particular destinations in mind. We aren't really free to go wherever we want to go.

When I arrived back at San Jose, CA, I was met by two wonderful members of my church who had so much to tell me about their ministry dreams. It confirmed my sense of direction for our church—a direction that has little to do with the large ministry rivers that are capturing so much attention. I'm excited about where God is taking us, but I am even more thrilled to be going there with the people who call me pastor. If I went to Atlanta with those guys in the Customs line, who would have flown to San Jose to hear this couple's ministry dreams?

Right now in the worldwide Body of Christ, there are numerous large-scale ministry orientations—not to mention hundreds of doctrinal and denominational groupings. Godly men and women espouse widely divergent ministry priorities, from racial reconciliation to prison reform, from worship renewal to spiritual mapping. There are those who think cell groups are the answer, those who urge us to more prayer, more activism, more worship, more friendship evangelism, and more discipleship. Concern for the unborn, relations with Israel and men's ministries are priorities for different leaders and Christian groups.

Multiple Moves of God

Which of these are moves of God? If I want to align myself with what God is doing, which of these *streams* should I follow? Of course, all of them. But I cannot fully give myself to even most of them—there isn't enough of me to spread around. It reminds me of soccer: though the untrained eye can't readily see it, the players have definite positions (and responsibilities).

In my sincere desire to play my best for the Lord, I am tempted to think I ought to play the positions I see others play. A team has many positions; if everyone plays the same one, the team will lose.

Being on the same team rarely means playing the same position.

Spiritual leaders need encouragement to remember that. Our zeal to “get it right” often leads us to a preoccupation with what others are called to do. About two years ago the Lord gave me one of those *I'll never forget* encouragements to listen carefully to Him.

For the same two-day period a few years ago, I received invitations from three different and noteworthy ministries. I would have been eager to follow the momentum that had developed around each of them, and I was frustrated that my schedule forced me to choose which invitation I should accept. All would have been excellent opportunities for me to learn and share, but I couldn't make it to all three.

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In fairness I must add that none of the three ministries was very close to anything I had been led to be involved with in my ministry, but I want to be open to New Wine, and not miss whatever the Lord wants to do with me. Probably, discouragements related to things He had called me to made me more open to abandon the old course for a new one. So, I asked the Lord which of the three I should pursue.

His answer was quick and clear: *None!*

With the answer came a picture of a small mountain valley through which a river ran. It wasn't big enough, like the Mississippi, to show up on a world map, nor was it significant enough, like the Feather River, to be identified on a national map. But then again, the people who fish and play in a river are, likewise, too small to show up on a map.

Just as our nation has several large, distinct river systems (i.e. the Columbia, the Colorado, the Ohio), so too does the Body of Christ. The approach taken by Seeker Sensitive churches, Cell group churches, Worship and Warfare churches and traditional churches all differ from one another. And even among similar type ministries, there can be a wide divergence of mission. For instance, church planting may have a higher priority than local evangelism.

In this picture I could sense three big rivers flowing powerfully in other parts of the country, but they were a long way off from where I live. Instantly, I got the point: not all small rivers are tributaries of larger ones; just because the Norwegian newlyweds don't show up on a macro-level spiritual map doesn't mean they have missed God moving.

In fact, given the Lord's predisposition to work with insignificant and unimpressive things, I'm inclined to join them more than to join some of the larger-scale movements I see. I'm not at all denying that God does sovereignly capture the attention of His Church and bring us to times of collective awareness like He did with prophets of old.

Spiritually discerning leaders will find themselves drawn again and again by the Holy Spirit to see the reality of systemic racism in our national church. Likewise, in His mercy, He will use individuals to heighten our understanding of worship, spiritual warfare, the plight of the unborn, family, etc.

Streams of Living Water

But that is very different from a kind of Charismatic legalism that tries to make one type of experience or one type of manifestation normative for everyone and for every ministry. The more one or two such spiritual *happenings* (like revival in one country or a uniquely focused parachurch ministry) get highlighted through conversations and Christian media, the less able the rest of us are to simply rejoice at what God has done for them, and the more we are forced to have opinions we would rather not have to have about other players, other rivers.

No one means to do it, but when people talk about a *mighty move of the Spirit*, or renewal and revival in conjunction with particular events or experiences, it exerts crowd pressure for everyone else to follow certain examples in our meetings and our services. American Christians are so oriented toward large meetings (rather than one-on-one discipleship settings), that we tend to look for validation and spiritual commendation in what happens in those meetings. This puts a pressure on pastors to

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match their church program with “what God is doing” elsewhere. And that may not be God’s plan at all.

When medical researchers announce a tremendous breakthrough in the treatment of diabetes, other scientists and doctors studying cancer, brain disorders and Alzheimer’s disease pause to rejoice. It is unlikely that the discovery about diabetes will have any direct effect on their research. How foolish it would be if they left their specialized studies in order to get in on the diabetes breakthrough. They might be very close to discoveries of their own. The same is true for ministry leaders: what we are doing faithfully today may be the very seeds of tomorrow’s great harvest.

The point is that the global Body of Christ needs even more ministry variety and Body parts than a local church does. All are neither eyes nor ears. The biblical secret for a healthy and growing church (whether it is local, national or global) is found in Ephesians 4:16:

...from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Pastors and ministry leaders will gain new courage to keep up with their unique assignments from the Lord the more that they remember the real point of all ministry—the eternal consequences.

When people get saved, they have different experiences: feelings of electricity coursing through them; being flushed with warm water from the inside out; shaking with relief; weeping; being overcome; feeling nothing. The message that touched them may not be the same one that will touch others; the goal is neither a particular experience leading up to their salvation, nor a particular experience accompanying it.

Likewise, the Bible urges believers to be examples in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity (1 Timothy 4)—not necessarily in experiences. Maturity is measured by true life-change. Despite all the incredible large-group happenings in the Body of Christ, the call to affect people with the Gospel, the mandate to make disciples, is given to *individuals*—not to movements or to revivals.

Most of the talk about what God is doing in the world today has little bearing on what He is doing in our local churches. It’s like the national economic picture: it is interesting on the macro level, but it doesn’t really affect most people’s monthly budget.

The more we recognize the enormity and complexity of what the world-wide church has been given to do, the more we will realize that it will take millions of us being obedient to our unique callings. In our zeal to find the move of the Spirit in our day, let us not forget He resides within and gives directions to individual believers who have distinct parts to play.

It is one thing to be encouraged on our way by the cloud of witnesses surrounding us; it is something else to be caught up in the crowd pressing us.

Getting Your Church Unstuck

Practical suggestions for taking your church to the next level

by Daniel A. Brown, Ph.D.

Most of us have been stuck somewhere, somehow—in the desert sand off the main road; up a tree we climbed in our pre-adolescence; or, on a tricky algebra problem. But somehow, somehow we got unstuck. When our tires spun uselessly in the sand, we tried different approaches; when the algebra equation withstood one thought, we assaulted it with another.

Getting stuck forces us to adapt our approach to life. In fact, one theory of learning says the brain is wired to solve predicaments, and true learning only happens when the mind tries to figure something out. God designed us to *keep at it*—knocking, seeking and asking—but to do so in close counsel with Him.

One of the shame-inducing truisms floating around the Body of Christ goes something like, “All healthy organisms grow.” Pastors of smaller or plateau-ed churches feel the implied jab: *lack of growth is symptomatic of underlying sickness*. That’s not very helpful in the real church-world. To begin with, there are limits to the size any organism can reach (Trophy trout are rare—especially in small streams), and if you *keep* growing after the legal age, it’s called getting fat.

We may find more solutions to what hinders our churches from growing larger if we think in terms of getting unstuck, rather than just getting bigger. Mega congregations are the exception, not the rule, but they—like the oversized athletes who play in the NBA—get far more coverage than the many-times-more-numerous weekend warriors on teams sponsored by local leagues.

Significance

Besides, the point is not, I hope, just to grow bigger congregations. Our true aim ought to be to grow more spiritually significant people. Rather than trying the latest sure-fire program emphases just to attract more people, we can actually focus our church growth strategies on the very things that make for bigger people. If we remember that the goal has never been to put on church per se, but to develop people with the *tool* called *church*, we can still find several ways to get our people unleashed *and* our churches unstuck.

The statistics are clear: 80% of all churches in the U. S. average fewer than 200 attendees each weekend. Without major change in leadership style, congregational dynamics, ministry vision, or some other significant aspect of church-life, churches that have existed for more than 5 years will most likely stay the size they are now, with only moderate growth over time.

Studies on church growth have sought to identify possible elements that accompany increases in the size of congregations. Some pastors mistakenly criticize church growth statistics, claiming that numbers do not tell the whole story: one’s passion for

Jesus, one's radical obedience to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, one's diligent study of the scriptures, etc. cannot easily be translated into numbers for analysis. That is true, but if we presume that every pastor is equally diligent and committed, then *other* differences can tell us something interesting about what elements may promote or retard church growth.

While we must reject too clinical an approach to church growth—making it devoid of God's sovereign working—so too must we refuse to attribute all the growth of some churches to the arbitrary whims of God-sent revival. Thus, a healthy perspective on church growth leaves to God the things that only He can do (the stuff we pray about), but it willingly assumes responsibility for the things we can do something about. God gave me the teeth He gave me, but I brush them.

Likely Stick Points

When my computer fouls up, I call a friend who knows many (secret) things about how they operate—the apparently logical explanations for why/how they do what they do. Being at a distance from my hardware and me, he can only guess at why I might be stuck with an unresponsive machine. His favorite line begins, “*Why don't you try...*”

Some congregations remain the size they are because of physical limitations (community or building size) or assignment. Your church situation may be so unique that suggestions such as the ones to follow are of little help. In that case, keep praying. But just as 95% of all the fish in a lake inhabit a mere 5% of the space, and most computer problems can be traced to a limited number of common issues, so, too, do growth stick points tend to cluster around a few factors.

Of the many such elements, there are three that seem most critical to me: **staff** composition, **fellowship** grouping and people **mobilizing**.

1. **Who comprises the staff**—both paid and volunteer? A church will rarely grow beyond the capacity of its staff. One of the easiest, surest ways to foster church growth is to add people with staff responsibilities (not necessarily salary). The benefit to each of those new “staff members” and to the whole church cannot be overstated.
2. **What fellowship groups exist in the church**, and how easy it is for individuals to attach themselves to those clusters of people? Small churches stay stuck by trying to keep everybody doing all the same things as one big, happy family. Multiple services, small groups, choirs, and other groupings within the church will gear congregations for expansion—and open more opportunities for individuals to lead meaningfully.
3. **Have significant levels and types of responsibility been delegated** to people in the church? If God entrusts His church with increasing levels of responsibility based on proven faithfulness, He will bless churches that do likewise. Besides, the more leaders are freed from doing “the same old same old,” the more they initiate new enterprises. Growth churches keep generating new ministries that inspire and challenge the congregation.

Churches get stuck at some sizes more than others, and while the plateau numbers may not be exact figurings, they do present pastors with slightly different challenges for trying new strategies in staffing, grouping and delegating.

Under 60 People

Generally speaking, the leader feels his job involves knowing everything about each and every person in the congregation, and “being there” personally for everybody. Church is a big family at the dinner table; that’s why potluck meals work so well within this size church. Pastor cares and does so much, that he lulls the congregation away from its own responsibility to bear one another’s burdens. For the most part, he responds to problems and reacts to situations that arise in the normal course of people’s lives.

Acting more like a chaplain or a concerned parent, the pastor of the typical small church delegates almost nothing, and if he does ask someone to oversee an aspect of church life, he will keep checking on it so often and so intrusively, that the individual feels about as empowered as a youngster with a learner’s permit on her first driving lesson with mom.

Suggestions:

- Identify three ministry jobs (i.e., doing the bulletin, selecting the worship songs, running the sound system), turn them over to volunteers, and after explaining the job for an hour, do nothing and say nothing related to those jobs for three months.
- Do not attend the next church fellowship function, and for the next three months always invite someone different to open any gatherings (with a prayer or a greeting) and to close them. Have neither the first nor the last word.
- Redirect one hour of your weekly schedule—something you normally do—and go sit somewhere like in a coffee shop with pen and paper; write down any new ideas for church (not reminders).

90-120 People

Having broken free from the previous stick point, churches of this size are developing into a comfortable community, not just a family. Usually, there are not (yet) many structural or logistical problems. The first faint glimpses of a leadership structure are emerging, but delegation is probably friendship-based and related almost exclusively to small or easily controlled aspects of church life. No one is really being freed to do things the way they think is best. Rather, the pastor has thought it through and merely tells someone what to do and how to do it.

There will always exceptions, but generally speaking, a church of 90 will stay stuck without a full-time pastor and a half-time assistant who keeps regular office hours.

Suggestions:

- Legitimize your operations by making the “office staff” more substantial—setting prescribed hours when you’re (always) open,

filling those hours with workers (paid and unpaid), getting a ‘real’ piece of office equipment, having a “staff lunch” for volunteers, etc.

- ☑ Begin to establish multiple gatherings of the same kind, like dividing into two weekend services even if your building is not full, starting three breakfast groups for emerging leaders; for five months discontinue regular meetings with your elders, so they can each meet during that time slot with their own group of the same size/gender composition as the former elders’ group.
- ☑ Identify three main areas of ministry (i.e., CM, worship, men’s meetings), and invite at least five people in each area, to two brainstorming sessions to dream big. Delegate specific jobs and responsibilities to each participant. Help them to do it *if* they need the help, but expect them to do it. Leave it in their hands.

200 People

The vast majority of all U.S. churches stay stuck here because it marks the limit to the number of people with whom the pastor has the time, the energy or the personal reserves to stay close. People drift in and out of the church because the pastor has unknowingly set up the expectation that he, personally, is going to attend to them. Sooner or later, the pastor will unintentionally violate that agreement, and they will feel like things “just aren’t the same anymore” since all the new people came.

The pastoral strategy must be to remove himself slightly from the whole congregation in order to concentrate on a few present or prospective leaders. Forced to become more strategic and long-term in thinking, the pastor must back away from the people and get ahead of them.

Suggestions:

- ☑ Staffing plays an especially critical role in pushing past the 200 barrier. Even if it seems like the money is not there, seriously consider ‘hiring’ two full-time, pastoral-level staff with two full-time support personnel. Begin by paying salaries to the two support personnel and add pastors to the payroll as you can. (They’re much more expensive to hire, and far more likely to be excited about the role—even as a volunteer).
- ☑ Identify a fairly major work project and bond people to each other by getting them to work together on it. If people scrape paint side by side, they will feel like they are a part of the body, and the church will begin to grow. It builds esprit de corps, a vital replacement to the “big, happy family” feeling.
- ☑ Write down the names of the seven most *active-in-leadership* individuals/couples in your church and the “hats” they wear; ask each individual/couple to help you think of other people to whom you can delegate all but two of your leaders’ jobs.

400 People

The pastor is absolutely convinced he or she cannot and should not pastor all the people in the church, so significant administrative and discipleship measures to utilize "the few" to pastor the many have already been adopted. Pastoral care, along with virtually every other ministry segment of the church, must be delegated the way Jethro instructed Moses. Church is administratively and relationally complex. Individuals and groups shift the focus of attention, and some "widows" are not going to be serviced properly.

The church becomes its own mission field, needing sub-congregations almost like new churches pioneered within it. Leaders are beginning to have an ambition for the people they directly oversee, and sometimes that internal ambition will cross grains with the whole program. Internal expansion and program needs should win out over the larger church program at least some of the time.

It's time for the youth pastor to be his or her own person. The senior pastor should welcome times when various ministry leaders "buck the system," (developing kingdoms within a kingdom) not in the spirit of Absalom, but in the spirit of true servants who, like you, are in the business of ministry because they see the sheep needing more shepherds. Commission and appoint people, full of the Holy Spirit and power, to oversee vast areas of ministry responsibility.

Suggestions:

- Staff for sanity, staff for growth. If you keep an appropriate ratio of staff/people, sanity calls for the equivalent of 6 full-time staff, and growth will likely require a couple more than that. Make a list of everyone you would hire (to do what?) if you were given \$500,000 to be used only for salaries. Don't wait for the money. Ask the people on the list to *start* doing what you'd like them to oversee.
- Appraise and repair the church program offerings to increase the number of strands—fellowship situations or opportunities—in the net you're using to fish for people. The two main types of groups are *getting* (people come for care and nurture without having to do anything) and *giving* (people come in order to provide service for others). With an apprentice leader at your side, start two new groups, one of each variety, with very specific focuses—i.e., one targeting fathers in blended families, and the other developing prayer teams.
- One of the most substantial ways to build team spirit and cooperation is to encourage members of the team to share their stories/successes/struggles with the whole group—especially with the primary leader present and attentive. Pastors who do all the talking at leadership gatherings miss a great opportunity to promote others into greater involvement and service. At your next church-wide leaders meeting, ask at least eight people to give a 5-7 minute presentation (complete with handouts) on the current condition of and the future vision for the 'department' they oversee. And (you) take notes while they are speaking!

Burn Your Church Up

It's too bad that so many pastors approach ministry with an Old Testament concept of anointing, which is an over-used, under-understood expression in church today. In the old days, Elisha hoped to get Elijah's sole ministry mantle—and it was a bit iffy that he would get it. In the new days since Pentecost, the mantle has been divided up into countless spiritual flames, distributed innumerable upon church people everywhere. That's the beauty of fire; it can be divided again and again without losing any of its original significance.

If we're going to burn the hell out of our world, it certainly doesn't hurt to have a few bigger bonfires. But there's a lot to be said for firing the flames of even the smallest campfire, so that it will jump outside whatever presently rings it in. The kingdom principle has always been multiplication. We find our spiritual significance not through collecting people, but in gathering them for the purpose of sending them out to replicate their experience with us.

Raising more people to their full kingdom potential is a higher calling than simply building a larger sanctuary. And frankly, churches of every size struggle equally with the tension between gathering and releasing people.

Indicators of a Healthy Church

A Quick Diagnostic of Church Healthiness

by Daniel A. Brown, Ph.D.

If size alone is not a legitimate indicator of spiritual health—since political conventions, Mormon Temples and stock car races all attract crowds—are there other, more telling signs of well-being in church? What should church leaders look at to assess the health of their churches?

Here are some of the pulse points I keep my finger on in my congregation:

- ☑ **Leaders' Lives**—Like OT prophets, are the true leaders in my church experiencing the strange and marvelous reality of 'living out' stuff that God is doing in the whole church? For instance, this last week four different men told me of their desire to volunteer on afternoon a week at the church. Coincidence or Godincidence? What is happening in leaders is especially diagnostic of seasons God may be bringing our way; look for changes in the prevailing winds...
- ☑ **Post-service Conversations**—Do people want to stick around after 'church' is over, and what are the subjects of their conversations with one another? If the same groups of friends are just chit-chatting or tacking down details, I'm not nearly as excited as if I notice the normal groups are split up among newer people, and they're talking about what God has done in them recently.
- ☑ **Expectant Worship**—Regardless of the piano player or song selection, I'm curious about the atmosphere in times of corporate celebration of the Lord. Are people leaning in or back? I thrill when many individuals seem to form their own little pockets of personal intimacy with the Lord in the midst of the whole congregation—not doing their own thing apart from the rest of us, but 'lost' in communion with the Lord in the midst of us.
- ☑ **Stories**—The more I hear testimonies about what God is doing or saying in people's lives (as opposed to just the normal goings-on), the happier I am. And when the talk around church moves a bit further toward friends' and neighbors' encounters with God through evangelism, the more certain I am that we're healthy.
- ☑ **Affection Levels**—I think that *godliness* (the whole hope for church goers) shows up more in qualities like kindness, patience and tenderness than in thunderous pronouncements and self-righteous judgments. People on whom God has been working tend to manifest soft hearts, and Jesus' trade secret says, "Who has been

forgiven much, loves much.” Beyond what is normal for friends in a Rotary Club, what signs of affection do I pick up in my church?

- ☑ **Cheerful, Heartened Buzz**—Forgive the pagan allusion, but the best way I know to describe this attribute in church is to call it pixie dust. When that stuff gets sprinkled on a congregation it creates an excited joy, a sense of expectation about the future, coupled with such enjoyment of the present, that no one is in a hurry to move on. It’s like enjoying a fabulous meal and spying, and the same time, the dessert tray with its exquisite possibilities. Such timelessness and inability to contain the entire blessing is a touch of Heaven to come.

Developing Specific Aspects of Church

Key factors for growth and health in churches

by Daniel A. Brown, Ph.D.

According to C. Schwartz, ([Natural Church Development](#)), a few key factors best explain the difference between churches that are thriving, as opposed to languishing. The survey itself involved over 4 million respondents in 1000 churches from 32 nations. Although there can always be extenuating circumstances that may hinder or advantage a church, these “*Quality Characteristics*” were found to be the key elements for a quality church.

1. ***Empowering Leadership***—purposefully equipping, supporting, motivating and mentoring individuals to become all God intends them to be.
2. ***Gift-Oriented Ministry***—encouraging and teaching everyone to be who and how God designed him or her to function in ministry.
3. ***Passionate Spirituality***—being “on fire” for the Lord, and living our daily lives with faith, joy, inspiration and a spiritual perspective.
4. ***Functional Structures***—having the “intentional development” of other leaders as one of the most important “jobs” of being a leader.
5. ***Inspiring Worship***—providing public services at which the people experience God “at work” and get personally touched by Him.
6. ***Holistic Small Groups***—continuously multiplying small groups that encourage personal sharing among members, and real-life application of Bible truths.
7. ***Need-Oriented Evangelism***—focusing personal and corporate outreach on the questions and felt-needs of people with whom we already have relationship.
8. ***Loving Relationships***—connecting with one another in real, practical ways that create a feeling of belonging and attachment.

Greater Growth

The underlying rationale for all these suggestions is found in Ephesians 4:11-16, which is the New Testament's most obvious discussion about church growth. Remember what we're supposed to be growing—congregants not congregations. For some amazing reason, Jesus did not chose to bequeath to His church a special potion to be poured on pews to attract people like bees come to honey. He didn't give us a *franchise-church-in-a-box*, or limitless sources of money to erect impressive buildings.

Instead, He gave the church *people-gifts* (prophets, mercy-showers, exhorters, etc.), and a prayer focus (more laborers). Hmm...

Paul puts it all together when he says, “the proper working of each individual part causes the growth of the body” (Ephesians 4:16). The more that we develop people in their unique ministry gifting, and empower them with training, permission and opportunity to act meaningfully, the more they (and our churches) will grow. The key is the work supplied by each member.

So, whether a church has big or small numbers, God's interest is the same. And even more to the point, that interest is a sobering reality check for us pastors, regardless of how big or small our congregations may be. The true question is not *How can I get a bigger church?* but *How can I empower more of my church in ministry that really matters?*