

The background of the entire page is a complex geometric pattern of overlapping triangles in various shades of teal and blue. A solid black vertical bar runs along the left edge of the page. In the center, a large black circle contains the main title and subtitle. Below the title, there is a small teal square separator.

Cultivating a Positive Church Culture

LEADERS & STAFF



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Practical Ministry Skills: Cultivating a Positive Church Culture

Leader's Guide2

CREATING A POSITIVE CULTURE
by *Bill Nicoson*3

MINISTRY TEAM DIAGNOSTICS
by *Nancy Ortberg*5

LEADING A HOLISTIC CHURCH STAFF
by *David R. Fletcher*10

TURN COMMITTEES INTO COMMUNITY
by *Roberta Hestenes*13

OVERSEEING YOUR TEAM
by *Don Cousins*19

THE MIXED-GENDER TEAM
by *Sarah Sumner*26

BE TRUE TO YOUR CHURCH'S DNA
by *Kevin G. Ford*31

Resources

FURTHER EXPLORATION.....34

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Leader's Guide

How to use "Practical Ministry Skills" by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS in your regularly scheduled meetings.

Welcome to BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS: Your Complete Guide to Leadership Training. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you develop leaders who can think strategically and biblically about the church. Selected by the editors of Building Church Leaders, the material comes from respected thinkers and church leaders.

"Practical Ministry Skills" is completely flexible and designed for easy use. Each theme focuses on a practical area of church ministry and offers brief handouts on specific aspects of that ministry. You may use these handouts at the beginning of a meeting to help launch a discussion, or you may hand them out as brief primers for someone new to a particular ministry.

This special theme on **Cultivating a Positive Church Culture** is designed to help church leaders evaluate their current culture and make changes that will benefit their staff, ministry team, and the entire church. You may either use these handouts for personal development or for a group training session. Or you may choose to provide copies to the church board, staff members, or those involved with specific ministry teams at your church. Simply print the handouts you need and use them as necessary.

In "Creating a Positive Culture" (pp. 3–4), you'll receive insights for moving your church from a negative, inward-focused congregation to one that's positive and focused outward. What destroys unity? What keeps a team from flourishing? Find answer and help for building stronger teams in "Ministry Team Diagnostics" (pp. 5–9). "Leading a Holistic Church Staff" (pp. 10–12) hones in on discovering and encouraging the unique gifts and talents of each person on your team. If you want to help people enjoy committee and board assignments (*and who doesn't?*), check out "Turn Committees into Community" (pp. 13–18). You succeed when those you lead succeed—that's the thrust of "Overseeing Your Team" (pp. 19–25). "The Mixed Gender Team" (pp. 26–30) explores how men and women can effectively *and respectfully* work together. Then finally, "Be True to Your Church's DNA" (pp. 31–33) challenges churches to look to the past to make sure their true mission remains front and center—the focus of who they are and what they're all about.

We hope this training tool will guide your efforts to create a positive, life-giving environment for your various teams, ministries, and entire congregation.

Need more material or something on a specific topic? See our website at www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

To contact the editors:

E-mail BCL@christianitytoday.com
 Mail BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS, Christianity Today
 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Creating a Positive Culture

Strive to build confidence and self-esteem in your people.

1 Thessalonians 5:10–12

At Cornerstone Church Network, we work with numerous congregations from multiple denominations and with significant demographic differences. A common thread that runs through our experience is that a church's perception of itself is directly related to its health as a congregation.

A church that suffers from an inward focus expresses itself in negative actions, often self-destructive, language, emotion, and self-image. There is negative self-talk like, "Yeah Pastor, I remember how that last project went," or, "Why doesn't our church do those things?" Another phrase often heard is, "We don't have those kinds of resources." Inward-focused churches are pessimistic about the future, have frequent pastoral turnover, and are easily impacted by their circumstances. Apathy permeates these congregations.

Some of the causes for this negative self-perception are a declining attendance (particularly if the church is program-driven), the inability to fund necessary staff, decline of their community, repeated failures, or the stressing of success over effectiveness. As a result, any vision they once held is lost. Many of these churches have a history of pastors with low self-esteem.

So how do you turn around an inward-focused congregation? You begin by creating a culture that builds confidence and self-esteem in the people. Words mean everything. Begin to talk about how special the church is. A common error is to try to be all things to all people. Narrow your options and find the two or three things that the church does really well, and focus on those things. Smaller churches have too many voices that weigh in on what the church should be doing. The key to focus is to eliminate ministries that do not help you achieve your vision and goals. Celebrate how members take care of each other. Praise the worship team if that is a strength. Always exude positive energy and affirmation. Keep reporting on progress that is being made.

Leaders have to believe in the potential and possibilities of their congregations. Celebrate the good things. Look for ways your congregation is having an impact on individuals and in the community, and share them each week. Play together and pray together. Clean up your building and keep it that way. Never trash-talk your congregation or berate them. Identify and transition out any staff or leaders who are hurtful rather than helpful and who immobilize rather than empower people.

Finally, make it personal. You are the leader; own it. One of the best things you can do is to continually and consistently communicate with your congregation. Years ago I started sending five short notes a week to let people in our congregation know that I was praying for them. I began at the beginning of the alphabet in our church directory and sent everyone a card. I told them that I was praying for them the next week and asked them to let me know via e-mail, phone, or registration card what they wanted me to pray about concerning them. I also sent another five cards per week thanking, praising, and noticing good deeds by members. Sometimes I would just send them a card because they came across my mind. I thanked them for their faithfulness or some other trait they exhibited that was biblical and honoring to God.

What we do as leaders is often more caught than taught. Our deeds speak for us, too! If you are not experiencing your own transformation, how can you expect it from your congregation? What next steps will you do take to create a positive, God honoring culture and vibrant life giving church?

—BILL NICOSON serves as the executive director of Cornerstone Church Network, a ministry providing, guidance, counseling, and support for pastors; adapted from an article appearing on Cornerstone Church Network, ©2011 by Cornerstone Church Network. Used by permission.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Discuss

1. What are indications that we might be creating a negative or even self-destructive culture?
2. How do we currently recognize and celebrate progress? What do we do that inhibits growth and progress in our church and its various ministries?
3. How can we as leaders be more encouraging and more engaged in the lives of our members?

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Ministry Team Diagnostics

How to avoid the five most common dysfunctions of a ministry team.

Ephesians 4:16

I work with lots of teams that are either in crisis or transition. But I rarely hear of teams that are both achieving results and are a pleasure to be a part of. This is due, in part, to a misunderstanding of the word “team.”

Simply put, “team” is just business language for “community”—the glorious intersection of task and people. For thousands of years, the Bible has spoken of using our giftedness in community. Strong leadership emerges in biblically functioning, God-honoring, Christ-forming community. On the other hand, since community is made of people, you can be sure every community is susceptible to dysfunction. So how do we develop and sustain a group that doesn’t simply tout the buzzword of teamwork, but is actually the real deal—a healthy, high-performing team?

My introduction to Patrick Lencioni’s work on leadership came when my boss at Willow Creek Community Church assigned us to read the first 30 pages of *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive* by our next meeting. I had been inoculated enough times to be skeptical of “the next best leadership book.” So I took the book, nodded my head, and left with absolutely no intention of reading it.

The night before the meeting, a sliver of guilt prompted me, begrudgingly, to crack open the book so I could at least participate in a cursory discussion the next day. I read the book cover to cover—couldn’t put it down—captivated by Patrick’s leadership principles and his view of the dignity of people. I sensed I had just read one of those rare books that, if I could implement its ideas, would transform my leadership for years to come. Patrick’s later book, however, may be his hallmark work: *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. Focused on the leader’s role in helping a team do its best work by overcoming common dysfunctions (I learned I was guilty of all five), the book is an excellent ministry resource. The result is a team that is aligned with their gifts, makes good decisions, gets great results, and loves working together. Let me explain how we applied his insights to our ministry teams.

Absence of Trust

Trust forms the foundation for everything else that happens on a team. Interestingly, though, I think ministry teams assume trust rather than work on building it. Stop for a minute and think: can you name five things you have intentionally done in the last month to build trust on your team?

Trust takes time, but it doesn’t take years. Trust can be broken, but it can also be repaired.

Most of what has been written about trust focuses on character and competency—two key components of trust, to be sure. But Patrick pushes us to think of trust that’s based on vulnerability. Vulnerability-based trust makes a team great; without it, people position themselves for personal gain, and teams become what Patrick calls a “Petri dish for politics.” Imagine, politics in a church?

When leaders admit to their weaknesses, they are inviting others to participate in leadership by filling in the gap. No one can do everything, and this kind of vulnerability allows for everyone on a team to contribute in meaningful ways.

I have worked for leaders who led from a façade of omni-competence and the best I could hope for was to be an implementer of their vision and their decisions. I have also worked for leaders who, because of their appropriate admission of weakness, have invited me to participate as a peer and really lead. I’ll take the latter any day.

Vulnerability-based leadership invites others to initiate, innovate, and take ownership of the ministry by making significant contributions. In this way, energy is generated throughout the team and not only by the strong central leader. Our churches are hungry for this kind of leadership.

We recently spent two days with a church leadership team that, by all accounts, got along well but felt “stuck.” They represented a collection of well-run but very “silo-ed” areas without much collective direction.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Well into the second day, while we were talking about vision and strategy, the senior pastor interrupted and tentatively said, “I think I need to go back to yesterday when we were talking about trust. This is very hard for me to talk about, but ...”

For the next 30 minutes or so, he poured out his heart. He explained how this had been the most difficult 6-month period of leadership in his 20-year career. He admitted that as it got more and more difficult, he hid more and more behind the façade of “I’ve got it under control.” This invisible barrier created distance between himself and others. He avoided the difficult conversations as well as the honesty and vulnerability his staff needed, and they responded in kind by doing their work on the surface and ignoring the deeper issues that threatened to derail the church.

After he finished speaking, the staff responded in remarkable ways. The first person said how good it felt to get those words said aloud, where they could all respond to them. All of them said his words helped them understand what it would mean to really be a team that supported each other and had the courage to tackle the real issues they were all facing in the church.

Sometimes trust starts with just such a conversation; it is not a one-time conversation, but ongoing vulnerability that connects people in ways that produce significant results, both interpersonally and corporately.

Another significant thing that vulnerability does is put our teams in places where Christ is deeply formed in us. Church staffs and key volunteers ought to be the people who are the most “transformed into Christ-likeness.” Our teams ought to be places of deep community where there is encouragement, challenge, prayer, and honesty. That can only happen when there are deep levels of trust.

This isn’t just some touchy-feely concept; it is a practical component of leadership that allows teams to make better decisions, directly affecting results. If any teams ought to be building and maintaining trust, it is church leadership teams. The kind of community and leadership that exists at that level will inevitably replicate itself, in time, throughout the church.

Fear of Conflict

Of all the organizations we work with, churches tend to be the worst at engaging conflict in an open and honest way. Somehow we’ve gotten the idea that Jesus was a Mr. Rogers character who just walked around with beautifully permed hair, blessing everyone. One look at the Gospels will tell you that Jesus was a walking defining moment. His call for transformation was often imbedded in rather terse and direct language.

Les and Leslie Parrot, Christian psychologists who work primarily in the area of marriage, insist, “Conflict is the only way to intimacy.” That startling claim has enormous implications for teams as well as marriages.

Avoiding conflict almost guarantees that we will fail to build relationally deep teams, and that we will be unable to make the best decisions for the organization. When teams don’t engage in healthy, passionate, unfiltered debate around the most important issues, they inject more politics into the organization and make mediocre decisions that will deliver mediocre results.

A number of years ago, we worked with a ministry team that found itself stuck in a number of areas. During our second day with them, some interpersonal conflict emerged that apparently had been simmering under the surface for years.

At the break, four or five members of the team found my partner and me and told us how glad they were that we were able to surface this issue, because it had frustrated them for such a long time. I was amazed that they had been wasting all of this time hoping someone else would talk about it. That team learned a lot that day about the value of honest, direct conversations versus languishing for months or years in chronic avoidance mode.

In another situation, one staff member had strong feelings about someone who had been fired five years previous. Interestingly, he had sort of held the rest of the team hostage since then by connecting almost every issue that came up for discussion back to this incident, which he perceived to have been terribly unfair.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

At literally every break, someone on the team would corner my partner and me and tell us we had to confront this guy about his behavior—that it was the major obstacle to the team’s functioning well. It was pretty telling that they thought this was our job after they had been allowing this to go on for years.

It was apparent that although his behavior certainly added to the dysfunction of the team, the rest of the team, by allowing him to get away with it, was no less dysfunctional.

When he finally brought the issue up one more time, I found myself exasperated and said, “Okay, let’s assume that firing five years ago was the worst firing in the history of the church. And just for the sake of argument, I mean the Church Universal. Now, does there ever come a time, after discussion and process, that letting it go becomes the healthiest thing to do?”

The guy in question looked at me for about 20 seconds and then said, “I think I can do that. No one has asked me to do that before.”

Everyone else on the team breathed a sigh of relief that someone had finally said it out loud, but I directed my next sentence to them: “You realize that by allowing this behavior to go on for five years without asking for a change, you have facilitated the problem.”

A very interesting conversation ensued, and I could almost see the repair work being done on that team.

It’s not always as simple as a conversation, but a conversation is almost always the starting point.

One of the biggest challenges a leader faces in helping the team get better in this is that you have to allow yourselves to do it poorly in order to learn to do it well. This isn’t the kind of thing that you just read about, tell your team about, and then expect to do well. It takes practice, sometimes painful practice.

But it is one of the most profound ways to grow a team. If one of the ways we can understand our ability to love is by our capacity to forgive, then conflict gives us a great arena in which to practice.

Conflict is basically energy, and when it is not dealt with directly, it goes somewhere else. Unaired conflict goes into the parking lot or behind closed doors. It becomes “malicious compliance” and results in artificial harmony, not deep community. Conflict isn’t pleasant, but it’s your necessary friend. Do not avoid it; insist on it.

Inability to Make a Commitment

Ever left a meeting wondering what, if anything, was actually decided? Ever lead one of those meetings? Healthy teams know when it is time to make a commitment, and they do it. There are no perfect decisions, but there are good and great ones. At the end of an appropriate amount of debate, there comes a time to decide and to plant the flag.

Different decisions require different amounts of time to debate before commitment. Great leaders help their teams calibrate the importance and time needed and then move the discussion toward that end. Once a decision has been given an appropriate amount of time, research, discussion, and input, great teams make commitments based on what emerges as the best decision possible.

Then, there is consistent execution based on that decision, rather than continual debate, second-guessing, or sabotaging the original decision. Doing the hard work before the decision allows you to release your full energies toward implementing the decision.

One team we are currently working with has just made some significant breakthroughs in this area. For years they had been operating in such a culture of fear that even when they made a decision, people were so afraid of making mistakes that they actually avoided the work that needed to be done.

They would end a meeting with a decision, and then the next week come back, either acting like they didn’t know a decision had been made, or so overwhelmed with the work they already had on their plate that they came with a boatload of reasons why they hadn’t gotten the work done.

Some of them didn’t like the decision, so they were subtly sabotaging it by neglect, and others were just waiting to see if anyone really expected anything to change.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

It wasn't until the senior leader began, at every meeting, reviewing the decisions that had been made and the resulting changes required that people on the team began to actually believe that they needed to implement the changes they'd decided on.

He started going around the team before the meeting ended and asking for a verbal "buy-in" to the decisions they had just made. Slowly—imperceptibly, at first—they began to gain momentum toward their ministry goals. Soon areas like evangelism and service to the poor began showing life.

Leadership is, at its heart, about the promises we make and the promises we keep.

Avoidance of Accountability

Holding people accountable is hard work, and it's not usually fun. In fact, I worry a bit about people who enjoy it too much. But we need it. And you don't have community or leadership without it.

In fact, most of us who have been leading for very long will have memories of a time when a leader we respected held us accountable. What might have been an awkward and embarrassing conversation, in retrospect, was a turning point in our development. Everyone needs that, and community is obligated to do that.

I have had ministry leaders speak to me about talks I gave that needed more work, leadership decisions that were not well thought-through, and interpersonal relationships that could have been handled more honestly or kindly. In the moment, I did not like any of those discussions. I was embarrassed and hoped they would just go away. But they didn't, and now I am glad they didn't.

I delivered my fourth or fifth sermon as a staff member at Willow Creek when our senior pastor, Bill, was out of town. The previous sermons had been debriefed and coached through with him, and when he returned from his trip, he called me into his office to do the same with this sermon.

I had my pad of paper with me to take notes. Then he asked me, "What were you thinking?" I began to explain the structure of my talk.

"No, Nancy, that was a rhetorical question," he said. "When I listened to this sermon, I had no clear sense of what you were saying, and it felt to me like you had not given it the work it needed to be a good talk."

Now, at that moment I was wishing that the ground would simply open up and swallow one of us. I was just still debating which one of us. I was mortified, embarrassed, defensive, and mad.

Oh, and one more thing. He was right.

I'm not sure if it was because my first few sermons had gone well that I figured I didn't have to work as hard, or what. But he was right. I had not done the kind of diligent work on that talk that I owed the congregation. Not only was he right about my failure, but he was right, too, to hold me accountable.

Great teams get to the point where the members hold each other accountable. Failing to live up to group commitments does not result in private, one-on-one talks about the failure, but to team discussions of accountability. Teams do this so they can pursue the cause about which they feel so deeply, and so that they are involved in helping each other learn and grow.

Inattention to Results

Here is the tension that we all live with in ministry leadership: the results are not completely in our hands, and yet we are to work with all of our efforts to accomplish the results. Much of leadership is about managing tensions, and this is a big one.

In Joshua, the nation of Israel stood poised on the east side of Jordan, waiting to cross. This moment was the culmination of over 400 years of captivity in Egypt and 40 years wandering in the desert. Generations had gathered their children by the fire and told of the coming day when they would be in the land that God had promised them: a land whose trees groaned under the burden of the abundant fruit they bore.

Repeated 14 times in the book of Joshua was the phrase "the Lord has given you the land." Sounds easy enough. We have waited for hundreds of years, and God promised, so let's go.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

The second most repeated phrase in Joshua is “be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid.” You see, Israel, even in the face of the promise, still had a lot of battles to fight. And for us, there’s a tension between what only God can do and what he expects us to do to allow him to do his work.

As leaders in the church, we understand that results are not completely in our hands. We are not ultimately responsible for everything. However, that is very different from saying that it is okay to excuse the fact that the ministry is not moving forward because of our poor or misguided efforts.

Great leaders perform autopsies on poor results. They are constant learners who listen to God, as best they can, and relentlessly pursue doing things better and more effectively. They are passionate about results, because results affect people. Sometimes results *are* people.

Even in churches, it is possible to get our eyes off of people and onto the wrong things. People in teams should be transformed, and the people with whom we are doing ministry should be transformed. The work we do should result in the grace of God pouring out into his beautiful and broken world.

What could we have done differently? What did we learn from this, for future decisions? Has this ministry been allowed to go past its prime, and is there, perhaps, a new and better way? These are the questions of a team that build great ministries that deeply impact people for Christ.

As leaders it is great to see clearly what dysfunctions can derail a team and put our best efforts toward overcoming them. It will take courage and perseverance, but it will be worth it. It will create a culture in your churches in which teams become a place where people can come and do what they do best with people they love being with. What a great picture of the Kingdom.

—NANCY ORTBERG is founding partner of Teamworx2.co, a consulting firm, and the author of *Unleashing the Power of Rubber Bands*; adapted from our sister publication *Leadership Journal*, © 2008 by the author or Christianity Today/*Leadership Journal*. For more articles like this, visit www.LeadershipJournal.net.

Discuss

1. When it comes to functioning as a team, where do our strengths really shine? What are some examples of these strengths?
2. How many of the five dysfunctions are having a negative impact on our leadership, staff, and overall church or ministry culture?
3. If we were to pick one dysfunction we need to begin working on immediately, which one would it be? What would be our first step in dealing with this dysfunction?

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Leading a Holistic Church Staff

Positive and healthy leaders focus on developing the giftedness of each person they lead.

Romans 12:3–13

Charlie couldn't lead the church staff. The harder he tried, the more he failed. With 3,000 people in worship each week, the church seemed healthy. The staff, however, seemed emotionally sick and suffered from high turnover. When people left the church staff, they invariably stepped out of full-time ministry. Former staff members expressed bitterness and unhappiness with how they were treated. Charlie knew his ministry was failing. He couldn't lead and mentor the staff. Charlie couldn't release the staff to each person's potential, fully using their gifts for ministry in the church.

Stories like Charlie's always get our attention, but they don't provide much positive traction for growth.

I spent time recently talking with executive pastors of significant churches around the country to discover their best practices for leading staff. What I found surprised me—not the best practices themselves, but the fact that my independent interviews, without any prodding by me, all connected to one common thread: holistic staffs.

A holistic staff is one in which the leaders intentionally pursue a path of developing the whole person. This may be evident in a multi-person leadership team, where each person brings a different and essential gift to the team. Successful church staffs have members who know their unique contribution to the team. Staff members have—and need—structure, but also need to develop as whole persons.

Let's look at how these leaders develop and oversee holistic staffs, and the lessons we can learn from them for our own ministries:

The Power of Many

Roger Dermody is the executive pastor at Bel Air Presbyterian Church. With more than 3,000 people attending the weekly worship services, Bel Air employs 7 full-time pastors and 62 full-time staff members. The church's approach to ministry leadership is different than many: It uses a triad comprised of Senior Pastor Mark Brewer, Executive Director Glenn Reph, and Dermody.

"That has been informally referred to as either the unholy troika or the Three Stooges," Dermody says, showing the humor that permeates the staff culture. Humor aside, why a triad? Brewer, Reph and Dermody feel that their individual gifts complement each other, "and make our entire leadership stronger," Dermody says. Thus, at the heart of Bel Air is a leadership community where one individual does not have all the gifts. There is an open recognition that others are essential to a fully developed team.

Hosanna Lutheran in Lakeville, Minnesota, uses a similar approach, recognizing the power that comes from intentionally identifying and using a variety of gifted people. Mary Carroll is the executive director of this church, which averages 4,000 people each week at worship services. "A huge part of my life and my faith story is a passion to help others see themselves as the wonderfully gifted and talented person the Lord created them to be, rather than believe the lies they may have heard," she says.

Carroll and Bill Bohline, the lead pastor, demonstrate the high value placed on the giftedness of the individual. In their reporting relationship, the pastors report to Bohline for vision, theology, pastoral leadership, and worship. The pastors then report to Carroll for strategic planning, performance management, resource allocation, and process integration.

"At Hosanna, the model works very well because it allows Pastor Bill to focus on the highest priority matters that only he can do," Carroll says.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Carroll notes that she and Bohline are “the exact opposite of each other in terms of Myers-Briggs personality type and varied in our Gallup Strengths themes; we approach situations differently and complement each other well.”

She says she feels that affirming each person’s giftedness is essential for a strong team.

“No one is more ‘important’ than anyone else,” Carroll says. Each team member has “differing roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority.”

Using Structure to Spur Creativity

Stacey Campbell is the executive pastor of Christ Community Church in Greeley, Colorado, where 2,100 people worship each weekend. He comes at the issue of giftedness from a different perspective. Central questions for Christ Community are:

- *How can we boost morale to communicate trust, ownership and belief in the individual and the team?*
- *How can we challenge each staff member to become the leader that God designed him or her to be?*

The culture at Christ Community is about gifts and wanting each person to rise to their God-given potential. But the church’s mechanism for doing this is different than many others.

“I believe structure enhances creativity. In fact, you can’t have creativity without structure,” Campbell says. He uses the metaphor of a sandbox and emphasizes that he wants staff to have *a large sandbox with clear boundaries*. Campbell feels that this gives freedom for staff members to innovate while moving in the same direction at the same time.

With a highly relational and decentralized leadership style, Campbell gives “suggestions and opinions, but [I] trust the point-people to make the final call,” he says.

Though staff members make the “final calls,” Campbell holds the staff accountable to meet their goals.

Get Personal

Nicholas Smith is the executive pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Lindenwold, New Jersey. Bethany, led by Bishop David Evans, is a dynamic African-American church that draws 30,000 people.

Smith begins with giftedness and then adds a highly personal dimension. “At Bethany we try to get to know the person’s ministry side as well as personal side. I want to know the person outside of their gifts and get to know them as an individual,” he says. “I believe in meeting the spiritual and natural side of people.”

Bethany emphasizes the whole individual, made up of gifts, ministry, spiritual dimension, and their natural habits.

Smith bases his perspective in the leadership model of Jesus. He emphasizes the “patient, hands-on, team-builder and good teacher” aspects of the life of Christ. The fact that Jesus chose some of his disciples by saying “follow me” is important to Smith.

“It’s in the following process that the real change happens in leading people,” he says. “Giving them something to follow, as well as teaching along the way, will bring transformation.” He enjoys helping people transform into the potential leader that God intends.

This model can build successful ministry leaders, Smith says. “Jesus worked this model in a team setting, allowing the disciples to grow together and find a sense of purpose and unity amongst each other. The Twelve

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

became his extensions and, as a team, shook up the world. The team process allows a leader to save time by teaching in group settings, rather than one-on-one meetings.”

The issue with a team setting is that everyone does not grow at the same rate. So as leaders we must then become a coach and inspire them in the way that is the most effective to them. Thus, even with a one-on-twelve teaching format, the leader must acknowledge and work with the unique learning styles and giftedness of each person.

We’re Not Dealing with Cogs

Great leaders do not treat people as cogs in God’s giant wheel. Great leaders see beyond the stated needs of people and challenge them to grow in their multi-faceted life with others and with God.

Mary Carroll puts it this way: “We incorporate and publish the Gallup Strengths for each of our staff to increase understanding of our differences and to encourage complementary partnerships.”

Roger Dermody says, “I’ve seen firsthand that there really is no such thing as ‘one size fits all’ in management.”

—DAVID R. FLETCHER is executive pastor of The Chapel in Akron, Ohio; he also runs XPastor.org, a global ministry tool for leaders of churches of all sizes; adapted from ManagingYourChurch.com, © 2010 by the author or Christianity Today/ChurchLawAndTax.com. For more articles like this, visit ManagingYourChurch.com.

Discuss

1. How is focusing on a person’s unique giftedness different from focusing on a person’s job description? How should a staff member’s unique giftedness and passions impact the way we shape that person’s role and responsibilities?
2. What tools or evaluation methods do we currently have in place for determining the gifts each staff member brings to the team? How might we do a better job at identifying each staff member’s gifts, unique abilities, and unique contributions to our team and church?
3. What key concepts or principles from this article could be applied to our own leadership structure and style?

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Turn Committees into Community

Secrets to helping people actually enjoy committee and board assignments.

Colossians 3:12–17

We dreaded the meeting but attended once a month anyway. It always ran long. We usually went home frustrated. None of us, if we were honest, could say we *enjoyed* the meetings of our governing board.

One night the issue was how to revitalize our worship services, which we all agreed were flat. Someone had argued at a previous session that the elders should “exercise some responsibility.”

The solution: we organized a committee and assigned an elder to be in charge. What happened? Nothing. Month after month, no report, no report, no report. The tension and pressure kept rising.

Each meeting began to follow a pattern: After prayer, we’d go directly into committee reports. Although scheduled, we’d get to old or new business only rarely. We would rehash each committee’s report or, in the case of the worship committee, the nonreport.

Bob, the chairman of the board, would make a speech lamenting comments gathered from parishioners who took him into their confidence that month. He’d report “some people” were about to leave the church.

Jim, the music director, would respond defensively, saying he receives only positive comments and is still awaiting guidance from the worship committee.

Bill, the worship committee chairman, would invariably have another explanation for why the committee was unable to meet or still wasn’t ready to offer recommendations.

Speeches would get louder and less subtle. And all this over how to worship the God of love.

One night, as I pulled into the parking lot, I couldn’t help but wonder, *If we leaders of the church don’t know how to be the church to each other as we do church business, where will we ever be the church?*

The Other Extreme

Some people react to the distasteful side of working within a church structure by avoiding the institutional responsibilities. Their involvement in church extends no further than worship and home Bible studies or support groups.

Many people attracted to these relational groups want little to do with filling traditional roles in the church. They expect Sunday school and childcare during the worship services. They enjoy hearing a choir and quality music. They’ll participate in the church programs. But they don’t want to get into the structure themselves. That doesn’t “meet their needs.”

If a committee workhorse talked honestly with one of the relational types, the conversation might sound something like this:

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Charlie (the committee worker): I helped found this church and served as its chairman for ten years. I've seen Bible studies and young couples come and go. But the church and its programs continue. Frankly, I'm tired of people coming and taking, enjoying the benefits of the program, and never contributing.

Ron (the relational person): Committees and bureaucratic offices leave me cold. I want to be in a group that shares needs and relates the Bible to what's going on in the real world. Hasn't the church grown since we've started so many small groups?

Charlie: If the church has grown, why are we struggling to keep its programs afloat? Why aren't we meeting our missions budget? Why the shortage of Sunday school teachers? Why are Sunday evening and midweek services so poorly attended? It seems your relational-ministry people don't really care about the church.

Ron: But don't you see? *We are* the church!

Charlie: Well then, maybe we should start passing the offering plate at these groups to support the missions program. Maybe you should cancel your home Bible study the week we have a revival scheduled. Maybe your people should take responsibility for the church by filling more positions. To be honest, I'm getting burned out from giving and giving and never getting my own needs met.

Ron: But that's what our groups are all about—meeting needs!

Charlie: Then why don't they start meeting some of the church's needs by relieving some of us who shoulder the administrative load for the rest of you?

Why the Expectation Gap?

To some extent these different perspectives reflect a generation gap. Often the younger church members (20s and 30s) are more attracted to the relational approach. They prefer relationships defined more by quality than by formal titles. They come to a church and ask, "How can I use my gifts?" If the answer is, "Join a committee," they say, "That isn't what I asked."

Relational people aren't motivated by tradition or denominational loyalty. They want to know, *Will this activity give me a meaningful, authentic, significant experience?* They want to feel they count as individuals. They want their personal concerns recognized. A task-oriented committee usually feels, to them, cold and impersonal.

Program-oriented people, on the other hand, tend to hold an older view that sees talking about yourself and your problems as boorish and impolite. If you have tension in your family, telling people not related by blood or marriage violates a basic taboo:

"We are loyal within our family; we do not tell outsiders what is wrong with us." The way to handle a bad day, they feel, is to put on a good face, do what has to be done, and move forward without griping about it. Anything else is bad form.

The relational person reacts: "If we can't talk about real stuff and real life—if I have to sit here and play phony games—I don't have the time, energy, or interest. I'll add another involvement only if the situation enables me to satisfy those needs that go unmet in the world. Everywhere else, I have to pretend I'm competent, pretend I'm in control. I don't want to come to church to pretend."

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Institutionalists see themselves not as pretending but as selflessly getting things done. To them, the bottom line for a committee: What have we accomplished and how much did it cost?

How Does Ministry Happen?

When one group finds fulfillment through relationships and the other through the exercise of power, tension between the two is inevitable. The people trying to keep the institution on course will become increasingly discouraged about not having enough money, resources, or support for what they are doing.

The relational people will build small-group networks and attract people who find these groups meaningful. But as the church begins to grow (and with it, demands on the program), the institutional people will ask why the relational people don't "get with the program."

A turning point for me came when I asked myself, "How does ministry happen?" I realized I had a whole group of people committed to ministry. They were the people in the structure. Yet they needed more than they were getting.

They experienced church in two places: the worship service and committees. They had an unspoken assumption that in a committee you no longer live under biblical guidelines; you live by Robert's Rules of Order. It was almost as if Jesus said, "Love one another—unless you're in a committee meeting. In that case, love takes a back seat to getting your point across."

Several years ago, when I was on a pastoral staff and involved in numerous committees, I made an appointment with an elder. We had lunch, and then he said, "Okay, now tell me what you want."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I've never been to lunch with someone in leadership who didn't want me to do something." It took me the rest of our time together to convince him I only wanted to get acquainted, to find out how his life was going and how I might better pray for him. I had no hidden agenda.

The program-oriented person isn't used to being nourished as a person rather than a producer. But concern for the personal side is necessary to sustain anyone in a ministry. Even institutional people, who work with a deep sense of loyalty, commitment, and duty, will end up getting burned out or cynical if they try to make the church work without receiving personal care.

One sign of this: Whenever I meet elders and board members from other churches, I ask how they'll feel the day their term is up. The overwhelming response is, "Relieved! I'm not really satisfied in this. I am doing it because it needs to be done."

This fatally flawed perspective fails to see roles as ministries carried out in the context of community. Unless leaders catch this vision, the church can never be anything more than an institution.

I obviously reject both the impersonal committee approach and the ingrown, feel-good group approach. We need a new understanding of how we minister together. I've called this new approach a "mission-focused community."

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

The Mission-Focused Community

“We’ve got an important mission to accomplish here and we’re going to make it happen!” should be the rallying cry of committee members. But sadly that’s usually not the case. In fact, committees traditionally fall short of being true mission-focused communities in a number of areas.

Commitment. For the average committee member, commitment means “I come to meetings and respond to anything I’m supposed to vote on. If something doesn’t happen, it isn’t my fault; I’m not responsible for taking initiative unless it’s on the agenda.”

In addition, the traditional time commitment is usually inadequate. Most committees assume a handful of people meeting once a month can renew a church in areas like worship or Christian education or discipleship. What often happens is this: We take a month to recruit people. We don’t meet in August or between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The flu wipes out February. By year’s end, we’ve met eight or nine times, usually starting late or with latecomers yet to arrive. On an average night maybe two hours actually were productive. Two hours times nine is supposed to revitalize our church in a vital area of ministry? It wouldn’t even provide minimal maintenance.

Frequency. A committee usually meets according to a set calendar. A mission-focused community, on the other hand, meets as often as is necessary to get the task done.

In one church the evangelism committee met each month and issued a report on how somebody else should do something about evangelism:

“The pastor should give more invitations.”

“The congregation should get out and win neighbors to Christ.”

As far as I know, not a single person came to church or accepted Christ as a result of that committee, but it met faithfully and cranked out resolutions.

Finally a new chairman announced he would quit unless the committee took the lead and became personally active in evangelism. The group accepted the challenge and became a mission-focused community. Sometimes they met for a whole day at a time. Sometimes months passed without a meeting, because they had no need to meet, but they always kept in touch. Each person grasped what needed to be done and did it. By the end of the year, more than 100 people had professed Christ as a direct outcome of that committee’s ministry.

Calling. “Please tell people,” my banker friends plead, “that bankers don’t necessarily want to serve on the finance committee.” One accountant friend says, “I keep ending up as finance committee chairman, but that’s what I do all day! I really want to work with kids, but nobody asks me because they assume my life’s vocation indicates my church calling. Well, it just ain’t so.”

In the traditional system, a nominating committee would have put Saul, the tent maker from Tarsus, on the maintenance committee. Men like Saul will cheerfully do this work, but they need a way to discover other gifts.

Calling also influences the number and type of groups formed. In many churches, certain committees exist because they have always existed, whether currently needed or not, and needs may exist for which there are no

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

committees. Mission communities, on the other hand, form in response to real needs and are staffed by people who have chosen that mission personally and whose gifts and calling determine their roles.

A prison ministry group, for instance, may form because some people feel called to that ministry. Other mission-driven communities may develop that other churches in the denomination don't have, but they uniquely fit this congregation's situation and the people's needs and sense of call.

For roles to be self-chosen, you may have to set needs and tasks before your people and ask, "Which do you feel called and committed to doing?" In one church I worked in for over ten years, we found people became more committed to their ministries when we gave them time to pray, talk about the needs, and choose their tasks themselves. They now owned the problem and the solution; they didn't grudgingly accept an assignment. Energy levels rose because it was no longer "this job someone else stuck me with."

Responsibility. In one church, a four-person elder board didn't like how the Christian education office looked. They reasoned, "We are elders; we have the authority." So, one Saturday they came in and rearranged it. When the women who ran the program—recruiting teachers, ordering supplies, and arranging the lessons—came in on Sunday, they were confused and dismayed. And they quit on the spot.

Traditional committees often separate authority from responsibility, and this is deadly. Committee members end up with a low sense of responsibility for their decisions, while those who do the work often lack authority needed to make responsible decisions.

Mission-focused communities, on the other hand, tend to keep responsibility and authority closer together.

Uninvited guests. There are always *invited* guests at a conventional committee meeting: our brains and our seats. We are supposed to bring ideas and information and sit as long the meeting runs.

The *uninvited* guests are our emotions, family problems, and personal concerns. Like little gremlins, they sneak in and mess up a meeting by discharging frustrations in speeches on topics totally unrelated to what is really bothering us.

When you hear anger in someone's voice, probably this person is tired or stressed out, or somebody didn't treat her right. She has all these feelings, but because feelings weren't invited to the party, she can't deal with them directly.

This harms more than the effectiveness of the committee. It fails the individual who came to a group of fellow believers, where help should be available.

One way of identifying all the guests is to have everyone answer a brief question—either for the whole group or in smaller groups of three or four. Some people feel uncomfortable with anything too personal. But if they feel the discussion is relevant to the ministry assignment, they'll share. For instance, if we're to discuss an evangelism report, I might ask, "What most influenced you to come to Christ?" The key is to ask questions related to the assignment while avoiding loaded questions and ones some cannot answer.

In a community, there are no uninvited guests. The whole person is invited. We take time to catch up with each other, pray for needs, and then go on to business. Before we do business, we need to know who is here—physically and emotionally—and what we have to work with.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Getting There

I began this article with our governing board's dilemma—a worship committee that wasn't reporting. The episode turned out nothing like I would have imagined. In fact, the actual events proved to be a major step toward community for our leaders and the church.

As it happened, we decided to spend the first 15 minutes in groups of four or five to discuss three questions:

What has your week been like?

How can we pray for you?

What is one area of your ministry we can pray for?

The worship committee chairman shared last:

“Well, this week's been like all my others. You know my wife is dying of cancer.” (We knew nothing of the sort!)

“I get home from work and cook the meals. I put the kids and Irene to bed, and it's midnight. Then I drop into bed to do it all again seven hours later. As for ministry, I just can't seem to get anything accomplished. Taking care of Irene takes every bit of energy I have. I wish you would pray for me.”

At that point all our ill feelings toward this man dissolved. Instead of being irritated, we were devastated. Not one of us had prayed for him during these months. We criticized him. We gossiped about him and wondered why he didn't get moving.

“Why didn't you tell us sooner?” I asked.

“Somehow it never seemed appropriate,” he said. “What was I to do, interrupt a discussion of the music director's ideas to say, ‘By the way, things are bad at home’? Besides, I was afraid I might cry.”

I resolved at that point never again to let committee business squeeze out the community essential to being the church. It doesn't matter what problem or project we're working on: prior to being performers, we're people who have to care for each other. And that makes us work together even more effectively.

—ROBERTA HESTENES is an author, educator, and speaker; she serves as teaching pastor at Community Presbyterian Church in Danville, California; adapted from an article appearing in *Growing Your Church Through Training and Motivation*, © 1997 by the author or Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit www.LeadershipJournal.net.

Discuss

1. What is the overall mood and attitude toward committees and boards in our church? What problems brought up in this article are present in our own committees and boards?
2. What might we need to change so that our members get more excited about serving on committees and boards?
3. How can we as leaders do a better job at ministering to, guiding, and mentoring those who serve on committees and boards?

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Overseeing Your Team

We must constantly remind ourselves that we're here to help other people succeed. It's in their success that we experience success.

Matthew 20:24–28

One of the most critical responsibilities a church manager has is to build a well-functioning team of workers. In few areas of church life is there more latitude for grand opportunities or dismal failures. A unified team of motivated, well-trained church workers can accomplish just about any ministry objective. But allow that work force to degenerate into factions, or neglect to properly equip workers for their tasks, and a church can wither.

The key to fruitfulness in ministry is fruitfulness in the lives of the individual workers. Therefore, an effective leader must be committed not only to the organization's goals but also—and especially—to the people making them a reality.

Commitment to Others

Jesus said, “The greatest shall be a servant,” and then he modeled servant-style leadership. What is this kind of leadership? Simply put, a servant-leader is more committed to the fruitfulness and fulfillment—the success—of his staff than to his own.

He knows that if his workers bear fruit, and if they make a significant impact, they'll be enthusiastic. And if they experience the satisfaction of sensing God's affirmation of their service, they'll be motivated to encourage others to serve more faithfully, too. So, the wise leader makes the personal effectiveness of his staff a primary goal, knowing that their fruitfulness and fulfillment will have a rippling effect.

Ken Blanchard, author of *The One Minute Manager*, describes such commitment to staff as an upside-down pyramid. Most organizational structures resemble a pyramid, with the CEO at the top, several levels of middle management as the pyramid broadens, and then the workers and constituents at the wide base. Blanchard, however, turns the pyramid on its point, placing the leader on the bottom. The leader serves the people above him, who in turn serve those above them, until ultimately the constituents are served. This way, everyone in the organization benefits.

The rewards of staff-oriented leadership are obvious, but they don't come without effort. Enhancing the fruitfulness and fulfillment of the people who work for us involves three specific steps: communicating clear expectations, providing personalized leadership, and offering accurate and honest evaluation.

Communicating Clear Expectations

Peter Drucker has observed that one of the major problems in business today is that employees often see their primary tasks differently than do their employers. If the worker thinks he's supposed to do one thing and his boss thinks he's to do another, misunderstanding and conflict are inevitable. Therefore, from the start, leaders need to make sure expectations are clear. I accomplish that with two tools:

A job description. By that, I mean a general guideline listing what a worker does, not a detailed job outline. A job description that's too broad, such as “oversees the youth ministry,” functions more as a position title than a working description. But a grocery list of specific assignments—“plans games at summer camp” or “buys supplies for Sunday school”—makes the job description unwieldy.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

A good job description typically lists four to six major responsibilities. For a small-groups director, it might include: recruit new leaders, train them, match them with small groups, and provide them ongoing support. This draws the rough boundaries of the position. It doesn't answer all the questions of specific tasks, but it tells the worker he won't be responsible for securing curriculum or maintaining group directories.

Individual assignments may change. The youth director may plan a retreat over President's Day weekend, but that shouldn't be put into the job description. I'd rather have something like "plans and executes special events to build youth leaders' commitment." The particulars of execution are then left for planning with a supervisor.

A monthly listing of priorities. The amount of input this requires from me depends on the worker's experience and competence. New workers may not know yet what their priorities ought to be, so I help determine them. Experienced staff members simply submit their lists to me to keep me informed. In either case, every month the workers and I both see on paper their essential tasks for that month. That keeps us on the same wavelength.

I began spelling out expectations because of how often I found confusion in my workers. I would ask someone well into her job, "Why are you working so hard personally counseling every small-group leader who is struggling?"

"Well," she would reply, "isn't caring for my leaders one of the main things you want me to do—something I really *need* to do?"

I'd have to reply honestly, "No, it's not. I see the priority as designing ways for those leaders to be counseled without having to do it all yourself. Practically speaking, you don't have time for that sort of interaction with the number of leaders you oversee."

I decided it wasn't fair to expect those working for me to read my mind. But if people mutually communicate expectations, they can avoid many problems.

Such communication must, of course, take place in a safe, secure environment. The leader creates this environment through his or her attitude and manner of speaking. I can't say to a staff member, "Here's a list of priorities. I expect you to produce, because I need these tasks finished. I'm going to be checking up on you next month to make sure you're not goofing off." That creates a threatening psychological environment.

Instead, I need to say, "Let's work out your priorities for this month. I'm committed to helping you fulfill these tasks, and I have confidence that you can accomplish great things." That tells staff members I'm on their side and frees them to trust me enough to willingly say, "Hold me accountable."

Occasionally a staff member comes in at the end of the month and says, "I didn't accomplish my goals." If this person is certain I have his or her best interests at heart—that I'm not just waiting to pounce on a mistake—the tenseness of the situation will be greatly mitigated. I can question gently, "Okay. Why not?" without posing a threat.

Such conferences, over a few months, can point out inconsistent work habits, overloaded job descriptions, or inappropriate placement. They help both me and the worker refine or alter the expectations we mutually agree upon. That not only enhances the individual's personal fulfillment and job satisfaction, but it also makes the church's ministry more fruitful. Workers whose time and abilities reflect their priorities usually accomplish their ministry objectives. Over the course of a year—if we're setting the right priorities and the workers are well suited for their positions—they should enjoy significant fruitfulness and fulfillment.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Providing Personalized Leadership

Any parent knows you can't handle every child alike. One disobedient child may need to be rebuked sharply or even spanked. Another crumbles at the mere look of disappointment on his mother's face. Treat both children the same, and one will be crushed or the other unswayed. For parents, the challenge is to know what kind of leadership each child needs.

Likewise, different workers need different kinds of leadership. Some people need a tight leash, others space. Some need to be shown clearly, almost harshly, when they blunder, because their characteristic response to mistakes is a blasé, "Oh well." Others need only a gentle prod, because they've already died a thousand deaths over their error. Giving individuals the type of direction they need is one of the most important aspects of pastoral management.

The best model I've seen for individualized leadership comes from Ken Blanchard's *Leadership and the One Minute Manager*. He calls it *situational leadership*. I prefer to call it *personalized leadership*, because it reminds me that I'm leading people, not just handling situations. Blanchard sees four different leadership styles—direction, coaching, support, and delegation—which should be used according to workers' competence and confidence.

Consider *direction*: If we hire an inexperienced youth pastor straight from seminary, I can hardly delegate the ministry to him; he doesn't yet know how to run a ministry. He lacks confidence because he's never done it before. He comes to our planning meetings with a blank slate and says, "What do I do? Where do I go first?" He may have admirable character, a strong spiritual life, and the basic gifts to get the job done, but he needs point-by-point direction until he gains experience. My job is to give him detailed instructions and basically lead the ministry through him, probably for at least a year.

Coaching is the next step. We can coach workers whose confidence and competence is growing. They come to us with good ideas, and we add some of our own, so that the ministry becomes a joint venture. Coaches are involved enough to know exactly what's happening at each step. The key words for coaches are *affirmation* and *redirection*. Coaches are generous with praise and ready to correct when necessary.

Typically, after a year of coaching, a worker is ready for the third leadership style: *support*. At this point, the worker sets his own agenda; he comes into meetings with his priorities listed and says, "This is what I'm doing." The supervisor's role is to provide emotional support, encouragement, affirmation, and whatever correction and advice is necessary. The worker being supported knows what to do; he primarily needs to know that someone backs him. In short, for the next year, the leader's role is to be a cheerleader.

The final style is *delegation*, which means the leader turns the ministry over to the individual, for the most part. Reporting continues, but it becomes less frequent; the leash is long.

Delegation doesn't, however, mean abdication. The delegating leader doesn't hand over the responsibility, walk away, and provide no further leadership. He says, "This is your ministry. You build it. But I want to stay in touch. I'm here to serve you."

Obviously, direction, coaching, and support take more of a leader's time than does delegation. That's why it's so tempting to bring people on staff, direct or coach them for a few months, and then say, "All right, go at it." But too often these workers aren't ready for the delegation stage. What's worse is that often delegation slides into abdication; the leader offers no feedback or communication. When that happens, seeds of discord and disarray grow.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

My goal is for each individual I manage to become independent enough to reach the delegation stage. Usually it takes around three years—one year in each of the preliminary stages—to reach that point. If a person gets stuck and is unable to progress into delegation, it's either because I placed the person wrongly or I haven't supervised sufficiently. My responsibility in that case is to make a careful evaluation and take steps to alter the situation.

A common mistake is to move people through the process too quickly. Generally, staff members tend to slot themselves one step further in the process than they ought to be—a person needing direction, for instance, usually thinks he needs coaching. Too often supervisors, wanting to minimize their output of time, yield to the worker's desire to speed through the process.

But we pay a price when we do this. Almost always a worker prematurely moved into coaching will have to be moved back into direction, and that will foster resentment. A horse that has run free in the pasture inevitably chafes when he's brought back to the stable with a bit in its mouth. Better to keep the horse in the stable until you're sure you want it to run free.

The number of people to whom a supervisor can provide personalized leadership—his span of control—depends on two factors: One, how people are divided among the four stages of supervision, and, two, the supervisor's relational capacity. In other words, I couldn't adequately oversee ten workers who needed direction or coaching, but I could if they moved to support or delegation.

In like manner, I couldn't schedule six to eight conferences a day with leaders under my care; that would drain me emotionally. Being a mild introvert, I have to limit myself to three or four meetings a day if I want to stay emotionally strong.

I learned this lesson the hard way several years ago. Each day I left work exhausted; I had no energy to talk to my wife; I wasn't enjoying my ministry. I finally realized I was overseeing too many people. Although I'm not a total recluse, neither am I a raving extrovert. I can't spread my relational energy that thin without burning out.

Every leader has limited time and relational capacity to invest in personalized leadership. The wise supervisor gauges his span of control by those limits.

Offering Accurate and Honest Evaluation

Good parents openly affirm their children: "We appreciate your good behavior." Or, "You're doing a great job in school." They also know when to discipline: "If you jump on your bed again, you will be punished." Thus, children know where they stand and what they need to do.

Staff members need similar feedback. They should not be left wondering, *What does my supervisor think of my work? Am I valuable here? Do I make a difference?* The more secure an employee feels, the more freedom with which he can operate. That's why leaders need to offer accurate and honest evaluations of those they lead.

I emphasize accurate and honest for good reason. If feedback is inaccurate—all sugar and spice, or clearly out of touch with reality—people lose respect for it. In other words, if I praise efforts for a job poorly done, workers will lose respect for my opinion. Similarly, if feedback is dishonest—if I twist the facts or misrepresent a person's performance—the person naturally will lose trust.

I would rather have my workers know where they stand—even if they stand on the bubble—than have them wondering what I think of their work. They won't have to play guessing games if I care enough to say

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

accurately and honestly where they stand. If people are doing well, they can rejoice in that and work with confidence. If their work is unacceptable, they can determine why and make the necessary changes.

Leaders avoid heartache by providing immediate feedback regarding inferior work. If their initial feedback doesn't bring about the desired change, they need to offer more. Eventually they may have to say, "In spite of my repeated expressions of concern, you are making the same mistakes again and again. If this continues, it may lead to the loss of your job." Yes, that creates insecurity, but ultimately honesty is in everyone's best interest.

Several years ago, we had a talented staff person who turned out excellent work but at the expense of the people with whom he worked. I held conversation after conversation with him expressing appreciation for his work but trying to explain, "Look, you can't go on bruising people as you accomplish your tasks. This has to stop." But nothing seemed to change. The necessary people skills just weren't there.

After much thought and prayer, I found a task-oriented position for him in which he didn't have to work with teams of people. I relieved him of his previous responsibilities and placed him in the new position more suited to his abilities. Nine years later, he continues on our staff as a respected worker, appreciated and loved for his contribution.

In spite of our attempts to be fair, there inevitably will be occasions when the outcome is painful. At those times, fairness may be the most we can expect to offer.

Leading the Team

Workers who are led well and who enjoy fruitfulness and fulfillment can join together to form a strong, smoothly functioning work team. But just like an individual, the team needs to be led. It needs to be encouraged and motivated; it needs to be informed and educated; it needs to have its vision renewed. The avenue through which this happens is the staff meeting.

The staff meeting is similar to the team meeting a coach schedules prior to an important game. Because the coach knows his players are about to confront the opposition, he prepares his agenda carefully. He determines what his team needs most and lists his primary objectives for the meeting.

A church staff faces a challenge far more important than any athletic event, so it's good for pastors to view staff meetings as opportunities to motivate or equip their team for the battle. It's not effective to make a few announcements, work through a brief agenda, and then wonder why workers comes up with so many excuses for missing these weekly meetings.

If staff meetings exist mainly to enable the leader to communicate his agenda, staff morale will suffer. But the leader who thinks, *What does my staff need? How can this meeting help them grow in their effectiveness?* will find the staff eagerly anticipating the meetings. And when staff members feel served by the leader, they will breathe life into the organization.

A leader who recognizes the various functions of staff gatherings will be able to serve his staff's needs better. First is the business meeting, in which the work of the organization is contemplated and communicated. It's the time for making announcements and comparing calendars. Second is the training meeting, where the staff is educated for greater effectiveness. Third is the relational meeting, which builds unity.

Many organizations spend the bulk of their staff time in business meetings. But leaders devoted to building up their workers know that business is their least important staff objective. If they do have to make announcements, they do so in the context of the vision and purpose of the ministry. For instance, I can say,

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

“Well, folks, we need to fill 15 slots for small-group leaders. Who can we get?” That’s an announcement. But I build our common vision if I say, “Friends, our people need to taste what it is to be used of God. One way we can help them do that is to give them a chance to lead small groups ...”

We try to use 25 percent of our staff time for relationship-building activities. Relational meetings can include anything from a volleyball game to pour-out-your-heart sessions of sharing and prayer. Most of our staff meetings include regular times of sharing and prayer. Special events also contribute to the emphasis on the relational. We may have lunch together or attend a Cubs game. One of our ministry directors actually ran his key lay leaders through a boot-camp-like obstacle course, where they had to work together in order to make it through. Such activities pay large dividends in team spirit.

Devoting time to nurturing staff members’ competence and interpersonal relationships says we value them, not just their ministry output. Organizing staff meetings to meet their needs is one of the most important ways we can serve our workers.

Results

Overseeing a staff is hard work. It takes time and energy to communicate clear expectations, provide personalized leadership, and offer accurate and honest evaluation. It takes even more time and energy to forge individual workers into a smoothly functioning work team.

Leadership is particularly draining when it involves making tough decisions. But the rewards validate the efforts. Some time ago I received a letter from a staff member that reads in part (with names changed):

I wanted to encourage you regarding something you said in the ministry directors’ meeting yesterday. As you put it, “It is better to do the painful task of redirecting someone now than to let it go on, making the task more painful in the future and the rebuilding process that much longer.”

One reason that’s true is that those under such misplaced people also suffer. For the two years I worked under Ted, I was in agony. Though he tried to do the right things, his methods left me hurting (to this day). Part of what devastated me was the thought that you must not have thought much of me to have left me in the care of such an inept person. ...

Your moving Ted out and putting Jeff in restored my faith in you. Now I know you care, because you provided me with a leader who can do the job well.

I don’t know how much longer I could have worked under the old conditions. But I’m still here, more fulfilled than ever—and dare I say more fruitful?—and it’s because you faced up to a tough management decision and did the right thing even though it caused you pain.

Thanks for enduring that for me.

A letter like that reminds me that the decisions I make have repercussions that go far beyond the people I oversee directly. It’s the rippling effect again. My effectiveness in leading them determines their effectiveness in leading others, and eventually that impacts the entire congregation.

That’s why the way I lead is so important. The people under my supervision need to be built up and encouraged, so they can enjoy maximum fruitfulness and fulfillment, and produce that in others. If I don’t provide leadership to bring that about, I’m not doing what I’ve been called to do.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

—DON COUSINS is a writer, teacher, coach, and consultant; he wrote this article during his time on staff at Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois; adapted from an article appearing *Mastering Church Management*, © 1990 by the author or Christianity Today/*Leadership Journal*. For more articles like this, visit www.LeadershipJournal.net.

Discuss

1. What would need to change so that our organizational structure resembles an upside-down pyramid?
2. What kind of training and/or coaching do we provide those we lead? How do we evaluate whether or not our training/coaching is effective? How often are we guilty of abdicating rather than appropriately delegating?
3. How can we make sure those we lead are experiencing success and fulfillment in their positions and ministry roles?

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

The Mixed-Gender Team

How men and women can work in sync.

Philippians 2:1–5

To be a team requires at least two things: unity in purpose and commitment to a group dynamic. In other words, it doesn't mean *team* if individuals merely work on the same staff as independent contractors who oversee separate domains.

We know, as followers of Christ, that biblically we are all members of one body. We are not to be isolated or in competition with each other. On the contrary, the apostle Paul plainly says that “there should be no division in the body” (1 Cor. 12:25, NIV). Instead there should be a striking unity in the body and on our ministry teams.

Regardless of one's view of the role of women in ministry, virtually all Christians agree that ministry teams can be staffed with both males and females. Most of us agree that it's God's plan for men and women to serve him together corporately.

Let me offer some practical insights partly garnered from my own experience and partly gained from others. Three main attitudes—respect, humility, and love—are needed in every leader who wants to harvest the full blessing that a mixed-gender team can bring.

Show Some Respect

Men love to be respected, and they hate to be disrespected, especially by a woman. Though women in the church already know this, they don't always realize what showing respect to men entails. From a woman's perspective, it isn't necessarily disrespectful, for instance, to interrupt a man mid-sentence. Though to him it may appear that she simply cut him off—which is obviously disrespectful—to her she just got excited and overlapped his speech—which is perfectly acceptable, even affirming.

According to Deborah Tannen in *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, women typically talk simultaneously to each other. To them, doing so is natural, not rude. Women, therefore, may be less sensitive than men to how offensive interrupting can be.

I start with this example, not for the purpose of justifying women who interrupt, but simply to make the point that both men and women can be disrespectful to each other unintentionally.

Not all women approve of overlapping speech. But even those who do probably don't interrupt as an intentional act of disrespect. The offense, more likely, goes unnoticed. But that's exactly the point—disrespect is characterized by inattention to others.

The English word *respect* literally means to “look again.” It comes from the Latin *spectare*, “to look,” and the prefix *re-*, which means “again.” To respect someone is to notice them again instead of being focused on oneself. To respect is “to show esteem, deference, or honor.”

Some women in the church *do* feel esteemed; they see no reason for other women to complain. To be honest, I used to have that mindset myself. For me it was easy to measure things strictly by my own experience and not empathize with women who were struggling.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Back in college when I attended First Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, I was asked to be the teacher of 500 college students. How was I to know that women in other settings were prohibited from serving as teachers of their peers? Later I learned that my mostly positive experiences were not representative of theirs.

It's hard for people to flourish when they are disrespected, especially by team members. That explains, in part, why many women leaders prefer to work with men. When women disrespect women leaders, problems in the church multiply.

There is also a problem with men not respecting women. At the risk of being too blunt, I dare to say that the reason some pastors pay less respect to women is because that pastor has unresolved issues with his wife.

Some pastors are married to wives who feel threatened by women leaders in the church. As a result, those pastors may be afraid to respect women leaders, not because they fear women in ministry, but rather because they fear the wrath of their wives at home. Of course, the opposite can happen as well. Some pastors feel embarrassed because their wives have giftedness that appears to outshine their own.

Disrespect of women runs deep. If that were not the case, then why does it appear that the ultimate jeer against manhood is to call a man a woman? And why is it so laughable for men to think of having female role models?

Recently I asked a group of pastors to name the women in Scripture whom they pray to emulate. They laughed.

Following that, I said, "If women in Scripture, including the woman whom Jesus said should be remembered for anointing him, are not upheld as role models, then how can women today be lifted up as role models in the church? How can women today be taken seriously when they speak?"

I know very few women who feel listened to in staff meetings where men and women both are present. Almost every woman I know who serves in ministry with men feels she's given too little space in group discussions.

Granted, some women tend to meander when they talk and thereby burden the group, when they could state their remarks more concisely. But what I'm talking about here is more subtle. Though Christian men are routinely polite to Christian women and sincerely wish them well, they often put them in an awkward situation while working together.

On one hand, men want women to quickly get to the bottom line. On the other hand, they desire to hear the special insight women offer. If a pastor wants to access women's insight, he has to let women talk freely. Pastors have to listen and engage the conversation with patience and expectancy alike.

Personally I've been listened to a lot. The lead pastor at New Song Church, where I serve, literally invites me to "interrogate" his ideas and give the best feedback I can. He's not threatened by my input. On the contrary, he appreciates hearing what I, and other women, have to say.

For women in less welcoming environments, being sought out for critique simply doesn't happen. In many settings, women struggle to be heard at all. In many settings, a woman who asserts herself by jumping into the conversation is likely to be labeled as "pushy."

Here I want to acknowledge that some churches are way beyond having these issues. I can think of several I know in which women at every level feel esteemed.

But overall, I can think of far more in which women feel disrespected.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

To clarify, I'm not talking primarily about women who want to be senior pastors feeling disrespected. I'm talking about women who work as lawyers in society or mothers who stay home to raise their kids.

This fall I got a letter from some stay-at-home mothers in Texas who wrote to let me know of their idea to write a book to all the un-esteemed mothers who feel totally invisible in the church. How can those women effectively communicate that they feel disrespected?

More generally, how can women say to men that their desire to be respected is really no different from a man's?

With regard to church ministry teams, what does it mean for male ministers to pay respect to females? Here's a short list of suggestions:

1. *Give women leaders the benefit of the doubt.* Trust that they're on board with the church's mission statement. Trust that God has called them to be members of the ministry team.
2. *Coach the women.* Invest in the women on staff by providing opportunities for them to develop their giftedness.
3. *Talk up, not down, to women.* Ask two or three trusted women to draw it to your attention if you ever unintentionally sound patronizing.
4. *Seek women's input.* Take it seriously without being defensive or dismissive.
5. *Give women credit.* Acknowledge female team members for their ideas and contributions.

Banish Pride and Prejudice

Humility is essential for mixed gender teams because pride is so destructive. Pride leads us to presume and prejudice one another. This in turn leads to issues of stereotyping, transference, and entitlement.

How many men and women feel offended by one another based on an unfair presumption? A man presumes, for instance, that a woman is against him—when really she is trying to help him. Or a woman presumes, for instance, that a man is avoiding her—when really he is busy with a task.

While both of these accusations sometimes truly fit the situation, many times presumptions are mistaken, and the truth does not come out because people fail to be humble enough to take the time to clarify team-splitting problems such as these.

Presumptions are akin to prejudice. To presume is to pre-judge, to decide you already know when, in fact, you haven't heard all the facts.

Presumption can destroy church unity. It leads people to assign malicious motives to each other. The result, too often, can be stereotyping and transference.

To stereotype is to generalize, that is, to conclude that all people are like one person that you know of. Stereotyping tends to happen at the level of impressions rather than as clearly articulated thoughts. It is not uncommon, for instance, for a woman to stereotype men as all being oppressive, based on a bad experience in the past. Conversely, it's not unusual for a man to stereotype women as being weak and emotionally immature.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

The issue of transference, by contrast, is more complex. Transference refers to the act of transferring onto another the unresolved issues that you have with someone else.

I can't speak as a psychologist, but I have heard counselors say that men and women in the church transfer their issues frequently. For example, if a male leader has a strained relationship with his mother, he may transfer his frustrations with her onto another woman in the church. Men who have either domineering mothers or especially frail mothers may see other women as being either too strong or too weak. For women serving on staff or in key volunteer posts, this can be particularly hurtful, especially if it causes the man to limit her unfairly.

Humility is the antidote to presumption and the defensiveness that drives it.

Humility is also the antidote to a sense of entitlement. How many women, for instance, feel utterly entitled to dress however they want? I have heard Christian women, even worship leaders, claim that they have “the right” to dress fashionably, even if the fashion is immodest.

Entitlement in this context is a form of human pride. To feel entitled is to feel as though you deserve to have certain privileges, regardless of anyone else.

However, not all women who dress immodestly have a prideful sense of entitlement about it. I'm convinced that most of them have no idea of how desperately men at church need women to dress modestly, especially during worship services. Part of the problem here—perhaps the bulk of the problem here—is that men and women lack the trust to participate in frank conversations about sexual temptation. Typically it is said that men should talk to men and women should talk to women, and that genders shouldn't mix when dealing with our respective struggles.

Overall, I agree that it's unwise for men and women to discuss sex in detail. But I believe it would be healing for followers of Christ to humble themselves to the point of making it a goal to help each other be sexually mature.

Since most sexual problems are heterosexual in nature, it makes sense to me that we need to work together—and pray together—to solve them. Yet many Christian leaders are taught not to be friends with the opposite sex, not to share meals with women.

It is notable that Jesus was friends with Mary and Martha. He shared meals with them and talked to them without sexualizing their friendship in the least. How many pastors have the spiritual formation to be friends with women and invite women leaders to sit at the table with them?

Certainly it is foolish for men and women to over-share. But if they can establish genuine friendships in the Lord, they can develop into becoming each other's allies in the war against sin. Once men and women truly fight on the same team, all kinds of petty issues will dissolve, and big issues will be attacked by them jointly.

Love Your Brother—or Sister

In 1 John 4:18, we read, “Perfect love casts out fear.” If men and women will decide to put on an attitude of true love, we'll no longer feel so threatened by one another.

To love means to believe in one another. It means for men to champion women and help them advance the kingdom as much as they can. Likewise, it means for women to trust and respect the men instead of giving up on them.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

One of the great blessings of my life is that I am very close to my brother. He and I even chose to live together in our 20s. In those younger years, both of us struggled against sexual temptation. But we couldn't have that struggle with each other because we were siblings, and that made it a nonissue.

I believe it's possible for Christian men and women to learn to regard each other as brothers and sisters. Siblings aren't afraid of each other's sexuality unless terrible violations are made. The same should be true of the church.

Christians shouldn't be afraid of each other's sexuality. Rather, we should be protective of one another. But how are we going to cultivate a sibling mentality?

I believe the answer is for church leaders to pray and cast vision. Pastors can pray for God to help them paint a picture and model it in the staff and ministry teams, of brotherly-sisterly love in Christ.

—SARAH SUMNER is dean of A. W. Tozer Theological Seminary and author of *Men and Women in the Church*; adapted from our sister publication *Leadership Journal*, © 2006 by the author or Christianity Today/*Leadership Journal*. For more articles like this, visit www.LeadershipJournal.net.

Discuss

1. How would we describe or characterize the male-female dynamic of our staff or ministry team? What positives do we see? What issues or potential issue do we see?
2. What parts of Sumner's article offered fresh or helpful insights for understanding how men and women in ministry together should relate to one another? Were there any parts that were troubling or controversial?
3. What steps can we take to assure that men and woman serving together on various boards, committees, and ministry teams treat one another with respect?

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Be True to Your Church's DNA

Each church has a unique make-up that's essential to its life, health, and future.

2 Timothy 2:1–10

Aurora Advent Christian Church, located just outside of Chicago, was stuck. The church was dynamic in many ways. The leaders were talented and highly motivated, but as a unit, something was wrong.

The first things I noticed were the signs—in the office, in the gymnasium, on the doors to the bathroom. The place was plastered with “do not’s.”

1. Do not bounce balls on the wall.
2. Do not wear black-soled shoes.
3. Do not leave the lights on.
4. Do not sit here.

Each notice was signed: “The Trustees.”

The meetings I attended were formal, focused on procedure and rules. Yet everyone seemed so friendly, warm, and passionate about ministry. When I took a direct, left-brain approach and told leaders they were overly focused on the business of the church, it did not go well. On a return visit, I focused on trying to understand the church’s code. I took a more intuitive, right-brain approach. In focus groups, I asked people to go back as far as they could in memory and recall first or powerful experiences with church. I was amazed to hear their stories.

“It was the one place each week where Mom and Dad were with me.”

“I remember holding Mom’s hand, and it was the only place where I held her hand each week.”

“I remember going to Grandma’s house after church.”

Nearly all of the people told me of deep experiences relating to family. It didn’t take a genius to figure it out: the church’s code was all about family—warmth, caring, and connection. In leading the church like a business, Aurora Advent Christian had become a stranger to its own code.

Meeting with the leaders, I explained what I’d heard and what I sensed was their code. Then I asked: “In your board meetings, do you function more like a government agency or a family?”

There was a long silence. One by one, they admitted: government agency. They vowed to be more like a family.

By appealing to their code, I gave them “permission” to change, to operate more in line with their DNA.

MyCode, Not McCode

What is code? It’s the essence or soul of a church. We can talk about what code does, which is to shape the face of how the church displays itself to the world. Code is the often unspoken assumptions that shape a

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

church's vision, values, and mission. It's subtly mirrored in a church's symbols, stories, and history. It is difficult to define because it is invisible, like the air we breathe.

But perhaps code is most easily understood when things are out of alignment, when something isn't quite right. In fact, a church incongruent with its code is the single greatest cause of conflict I see, and it creates far more damage than clashes over worship styles or even theological differences. Incongruence with code can be highly destructive.

For example, several years ago when Sears launched "the softer side of Sears" campaign, it landed on deaf ears. Why? Because when people think of Sears, they think of tools and appliances, not nightgowns and dress suits. It didn't fit their code. Healthy churches have a clear sense of identity. They know their code. And they don't readily deviate from it.

That code gives a church a sense of collective personality and uniqueness; it defines each fellowship as one of a kind. Churches must work at keeping their operating culture in alignment with their code.

Unfortunately, too many churches fall prey to formulaic approaches, becoming McFranchises of something else. If a Quarter Pounder, fries, and Coke taste as good in Denver as they do in Dayton, then why can't a church in Charlotte do ministry just like a church in Tacoma?

Or so goes the thinking. But simply adopting the Next Big Thing exposes a number of negative unintended consequences, as the church:

1. Slides toward mimicry, which inhibits true community;
2. Can't find natural ways to bond folks in shared ministry;
3. Loses the critical ingredient of local context to focus a church;
4. Depersonalizes ministry as leaders spend all their time keeping the machine running smoothly.

The tendency to import church models and styles in an attempt to reach the same results as a church across the country contrasts with God's desire for each church to embody the gospel in its own cultural context—to live by a defining and aligning code.

Digging Deeper

If we think of code as the collective identity of a given culture, we can look for code at both macro and micro levels.

Every church is connected to a macro code within the larger context of biblical narrative and church history. I see within the Bible a series of short stories, each providing context and meaning, all connected to a larger story. Tolkien called such a framework "the metanarrative"—the one story that explains and encompasses all other stories.

So the Scriptures form a metanarrative for the church. Reading throughout Old and New Testaments, we find those same themes of redemption, covenant, revelation, and promise. In these overarching ways, we should also be like and look like our Father. That is our DNA.

Our response is fourfold:

1. Every church is to participate in God's work of redemption: sharing the gospel and working to redeem a fallen world.
2. Every church is to function as a covenant community, caring for each other with self-sacrificial love.

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

3. Every church is to understand how God has revealed himself and continues to reveal himself.
4. Every church is to cling to an eschatological hope that drives everything toward God's promised future.

When any church lives outside these elements, it strays from its genetic and experiential relationship with its Father. Beyond this “macro code,” each church is formed uniquely. It has a “micro code” that is identified by listening to the stories of the people.

In the churches I visit, I ask

1. Who are you as a church?
2. What first attracted you to this church?
3. What is most different about your life since coming to this church?

The answers people give to these and other questions help crack the code. Then we can determine whether a church is living outside its code, or if the code itself should be changed.

Epilogue

Six months after my meetings at the Chicago-area church, the pastor sent me an e-mail saying the board meetings were the best they had been in his 12 years at the church. They took a few minutes for business, and spent the rest of the time interacting like a healthy family—sharing with each other, praying for each other, reading together.

At times, the only way for a church to move forward is to look back. Paradoxically, change can come only when the best of its past is guarded with passion. Code shapes church culture, values, focus, and mission. It creates a context for vision and strategy to emerge

—KEVIN G. FORD heads up TAG Consulting; adapted from *Transforming Church: Bringing Out the Good to Get to Great*; © 2007 by Saltriver/Tyndale. Used with permission.

Discuss

1. What is our church's code? In what ways are we operating according to it? In what ways are we operating against it?
2. What is the difference between *being stuck in stale tradition* and *properly aligned with our code/mission statement*? How can we tell the difference? How might the difference age groups and generations in our church answer this question?
3. How can we make sure we're properly aligned with our code/mission statement and yet open to change where change is needed?

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE CHURCH CULTURE

Further Exploration

Books and other resources for cultivating a positive church culture.

- BuildingChurchLeaders.com**: Leadership training resources from Christianity Today:
 - “Building the Team” *Assessment Pack*
 - “Growing a Healthy Church” *Assessment Pack*
 - “Developing an Emotionally Healthy Church” *Practical Ministry Skills*
 - “Understanding Unity” *Practical Ministry Skills*

- ChristianBibleStudies.com**: Adult Bible studies and teaching tools from Christianity Today:

- LeadershipJournal.net**. This website owned by Christianity Today offers practical advice and articles for church leaders.

The Case for Antioch: A Biblical Model for a Transformational Church by *Jeff Iorg*. After analyzing the New Testament church in Antioch, the author discovered a biblical model of what healthy churches should look like today—and shares methods to help your congregation implement positive changes. He’ll show you how to emphasize the empowering of the Holy Spirit, advance the gospel, maintain doctrinal integrity, resolve conflicts, strengthen leadership, and live sacrificially. (B&H Books, 2011; ISBN: 9781433671388)

Cracking Your Church’s Culture Code by *Samuel R. Chand*. Why is it that the best strategic plans and good leadership often are not able to move churches in the desired direction? The author says toxic culture is to blame. Quite often, leaders don’t sense the toxicity, but it poisons their relationships and derails their vision. This book describes five easily identifiable categories of church culture (inspiring, accepting, stagnant, discouraging, toxic). The reader will be able to identify strengths and needs of their church’s culture, and then apply practical strategies to make their church’s culture more positive. (Jossey-Bass, 2010; ISBN: 9780470627815)

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable by *Patrick Lencioni*. Just as with his other bestselling books, the author has written a compelling fable with a deceptively simple yet powerful message for all those who strive to be exceptional team leaders. Throughout the story, Lencioni reveals the five dysfunctions that go to the very heart of why teams—even the best ones—often struggle. He outlines a powerful model and actionable steps that can be used to overcome these common hurdles and build a cohesive, effective team. (John Wiley & Sons, 2002; ISBN: 9780787960759)