

Develop a Culture of Equipping

by [EFFECTIVECHURCHGROUP](#)

July 22, 2010 Bill Easum

Church leaders constantly ask me how to get people to commit enough time to do lay ministries. “My people are just too busy,” they say.

Folks, let’s face it; that’s nothing more than a copout from doing authentic ministry. Most people have time to do what is meaningful to them. Sure, time is now as valuable as money. People don’t have enough of it to go around. However, that isn’t the reason most churches have a hard time getting people to commit their time. The real problem is that their church life just isn’t meaningful enough. They want more than just a church life. If our churches were growing them in a faith worth living and/or dying for, that would be another matter.

I suspect that too many church leaders look for a magical program that offers a quick fix to the time crunch. What they really mean is “How can we get people to do the mundane work of the church?” Well, take it from me - those days are over.

Instead of more programs or quick fixes, church leaders need to spend time creating a culture in which people want to grow more like Christ. The solution to the time crunch is faithful dedication to one of the primary ministries of the church: growing spiritually mature Christians. Growing mature Christians is a world apart from doing programs that keep people busy or running the church by sitting on committees. Growing mature Christians takes time and dedication over an extended period of time.

The solution to the time crunch is to create a Body culture in which people are eager to serve others in the name of Jesus. Every organization has a body or corporate culture that oozes from the pores of the organization. One of the challenges of creating a biblical Body culture in which people eagerly serve is having a group of spiritually mature leaders willing to commit themselves to creating it. Often, creating Body culture takes years. Most pastors do not stay in one place

long enough to change or even affect the Body culture. Often those who do stay long enough are not willing to commit the time to changing the way people live out their faith. They just take care of them and let them drift in their faith.

So what's a leader or group of leaders to do if they want to create a Body culture in which people eagerly serve others in the name of Jesus? I know of several steps leaders can take. I'm sure you can add a few, so feel free to email them to me at easum@easumbandy.com.

How To Create Body Culture

First, a leader must assess the current Body culture. Like any good explorer, a leader needs to know the landscape before starting out. One of the reasons I wrote my latest book, *Unfreezing Moves: Joining Jesus on the Mission Field* (Abingdon Press), was to give leaders a toolbox for evaluating a congregation's culture and deciding where to begin the transformation. I have found that how and where one begins the transformation of Body culture is crucial to the ease with which it can be achieved, as well as to the long-term value of the transformation.

However, knowing the present landscape won't change anything. **The leaders must be able to visualize and articulate a different Body culture so convincingly that a handful of people are inspired and motivated to taste and feel this new culture.** This means that this new vision permeates everything the leaders do. They take care to emphasize the values of the past while casting a vision of a new future.

This new culture must resonate from deep within the growing spiritual maturity of the leaders who are beginning to "get it." Too many leaders try to "cut and paste" someone else's vision into their setting. Copycat visions always fail. Leaders can't inspire what they have not lived and spiritually died to. So part of creating this new culture is for the people to experience a spiritual presence in their leadership that they have not experienced in a very long time. This means that the leaders must spend time in prayer, Bible study, and meditation. I hope you're beginning to see that creating Body culture isn't just another program.

At the heart of the new Body culture is the switch from thinking volunteers to

servants. On the surface this may not seem like much of a change. But when it comes to application, it is huge. Think about it for a moment. Volunteerism often means “I’ll give you time when I want to and how I want to, and don’t you try to hold me responsible.” Such a mind-set contributes to the unwillingness to commit time. Effective volunteer ministries must be led by committed people who are held accountable to the same standards as paid staff. Otherwise, the ministry fails to live up to the standard of excellence. And of course when that happens, the time crunch becomes a problem. People won’t commit themselves to mediocre ministries that don’t make a difference.

However, if people think and feel like servants, they will more likely commit to some form of covenant or commitment, which takes them beyond giving their time when/how they want to and holds them accountable. I’m finding that faithful congregations hold their unpaid servants to same standards of commitment and excellence as they do their paid leaders with one exception: the amount of time they commit.

The most important step in creating a new culture is the embodiment of the new culture throughout the leadership team. When leaders begin to act and talk like servants, everything changes. One of the great stories of our time is the spiritual transformation of Dick Wills, pastor of Christ United Methodist Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Because of a deep spiritual experience that transformed his life, Dick began acting like a servant leader instead of a professional pastor. His congregation could not help but notice the change as he began doing things that they had never seen a professional pastor do, like giving the custodian the day off and personally cleaning the toilets (now don’t run out and start cleaning toilets). After a year of watching the embodiment of servanthood in his life, the unpaid leaders began to change.

A servant culture does not mean taking care of people. I am referring here to the kind of servant culture Jesus exuded. His service to others changed their lives and motivated them to serve rather than to be served. Now we’ve found the heart of the culture problem. Pastors, quit

changing spiritual diapers, cutting spiritual hangnails, and burping gaseous Christians. Instead, start serving them like Christ and motivating them to go and do the same. **Laity, quit expecting your pastor to play “pastor fetch” every time you want something spiritual done.** Instead, you do it. **Church leaders, quit acquiescing to the bullies who want to control everyone and everything.** Instead, escort them out the front door. I guarantee you the Body culture will begin to change.

What would you have to change as pastor in order to embody a more biblical Body culture? Layperson, what has to change in your life for you to become a servant leader? When leaders begin to embody a servant culture, everything changes.

As the new Body culture emerges, leaders must be diligent about continuing to cast and live out the new culture. It has been my experience as a consultant that keeping focused on the vision and new direction is the hardest part of creating a new Body culture. As a church transforms into a new way of life, the leaders can easily get distracted, becoming so busy or getting so far removed from the playing field that they begin to forget the vision and embody the new culture less and less. So managing the vision is one of the most important day-to-day responsibilities of the lead pastor. I call it being the “guardian of the vision.” When building the wall, Nehemiah found that **he had to constantly reinforce for the people why they were building the wall,** even though they could see the enemies’ eyes just over the hill. People get so caught up in their day-to-day lives - making a living, taking kids to school, paying the bills, etc. - **that recasting the vision over and over is essential.**

It is necessary along the way to make heroes out of role models. A lot of leaders don’t want to do this because they think it means playing favorites. But it’s okay to play favorites with servant leaders; they don’t mind since God is the one who ultimately receives the glory. Make heroes out of them if you want more people to be like them. You get what you emphasize. You also get what you spend your time on. If you spend most of your time listening to the complainers and whiners, you wind up with a church full of dysfunctional people. If you talk about the

spiritual giants in your church and hold them up as role models, you wind up with a church full of spiritual giants.

Finally, if you have hopes of making a major difference in your area of the world, create processes or systems that permeate and support the Body culture. Small congregations don't need such processes, but congregations that want to make a serious impact on their communities do. The process is designed to support the Body culture from the time a person drives by the church till the time that person is sent out into the mission field to live out the Body culture. The actual processes will vary from church to church depending on the Body culture, but all effective ones will include at least the following: identifying, equipping, matching, deploying, and coaching new servants who embody the vision.

It's time now to go and create a whole new Body culture and see what God can do through it.

Callouts:

Take care to emphasize the values of the past while casting a vision of a new future.

Too many leaders try to "cut and paste" someone else's vision into their own setting.