Team Work
by Ken Behnken

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How is your ministry team? The response to this question usually is, "What ministry team?"

The seminary trains theologians. "Pastor" is often interpreted as a person who has been called to take care of a congregation by himself. We see church boards and committees as a necessary part of the church at work, but we have not been trained to think or work with the concept of a ministry team. When team is mentioned, we often think of another trained and called professional church worker. Consequently, the first rebuttal for a team ministry in a new church plant is, "There is no way we can afford it!"

Team ministry was the apostolic plan. The apostolic leaders found other people to work with them. Ministry was not seen as something they had to do by themselves. Only occasionally, such as Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian, do we see individuals on a mission alone.

Peter and John worked together as a team. When they selected seven men as a team to work on congregational problems, those men were commissioned, indicating their work was seen to be as important as the apostles'. In time, these men also caught the greater vision of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ as we see in Stephen and Philip. In Acts 8:14, Peter and John joined Philip to form a team for ministry in Samaria. Acts 13:4 tells us that the church at Antioch sent out the team of Barnabas and Paul. John Mark joined the team of Paul and Barnabas as a helper. In Acts 15:39–40, Paul and Silas formed a team while John Mark and Barnabas formed a second team. Later it was reported that Paul went with his companions (16:6). Other teams were: Paul, Silas, and Timothy (17:5); Aquila and Priscilla (18:8); Timothy and Erastus (Acts 19:22); Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions (Acts 19:29). In Acts 20:4, Paul's team had grown to seven men, each from different places where he had ministered.

Entrepreneurial schools today teach the importance of teams--surrounding yourself with people who have skills which complement yours. Scott Browne, director of the entrepreneurial study program at Concordia University, Irvine, California, shared the result of his study on entrepreneurial teams: "Studies show that your business undertaking will grow in relationship to the number of people you have on your team. The more leaders you have, the faster you will grow."

Dynamic Church Planting International, a non-denominational church-planting organization with an 84% success rate with their church plants around the world, starts

every new church plant with a ministry team. They place great emphasis upon the careful selection and gifts of each team member.

In our LCMS church planting strategies, we have discovered that the “lone ranger” church planter often gets buried in administration, peripheral demands of people, and program management to the extent of losing the excitement of the initial vision and the energy. Team ministry, on the other hand, provides prayer partners, shared responsibilities, encouragement, and multiple gifts. A team, sharing the multiple tasks of a church plant, will experience less frustration and the ability to accomplish more ministry and faster growth in a shorter time. Team members can be trained volunteer lay people. They can be part time people employed for a specific ministry task. Develop these people to be your “ministry team” to work with you and share your ministry. It’s time to ask, “How’s my team?”