

Teaming the Ministry by Ken Behnken

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Where did we get the idea that ministry is something we have to do alone? Many pastors suffer defeat because they try to lift the whole load alone. Ministry in the church is not about what “I” can do but about what “we” can do. St Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians refers to the church as the body of Christ where all the parts, working together, are able accomplish the task of ministry and outreach (Eph. 4:16).

John Maxwell wrote, “It has been estimated that if man could get all the muscles of his body to work together he could lift over 25 tons (50,000 pounds). The world record for using full capacity of only one major muscle is just over 1,000 pounds. This same principle works with the body of Christ.” A 25-ton vision, which may be impossible for one man to accomplish alone, is attainable with a team working together.

In smaller churches and new missions, one often thinks that team ministry is impossible because you don’t have the budget to pay for more trained or called workers. This is where the priesthood of all believers takes over. Have you ever thought of pulling together a ministry team of lay people who have spiritual gifts in areas that you don’t? A good leader is one that knows his weaknesses and surrounds himself with people who can fill his weak spots with their strengths.

Be in prayer and ask God to lead you to people in your congregation who can serve on a “ministry team” with you. Carefully select them for their spiritual gifts and their ability to love people and to work with them to fulfill the great commission. Of utmost importance is that they understand your vision and buy into it. Ask them if they would be willing to give 8-10 hours a week to a specific phase of ministry which matches their skills and gifts. Once you have prayerfully selected these people, let them know that they are not volunteers, committee chair-people, or drafted into service, but are a part of the “ministry team” of this church, in ministry leadership with the pastor.

The next challenge is to work with these members as a team. Install them as a “ministry team,” not as members of a committee or a board. Let the congregation know that they are a part of the ministry leadership, and inform them of the ministry role of each leader. Let each team member use their ministry strengths. Do not feel that you, as a leader, have to tell them everything they are to do. Allow team members to use their gifts and creativity to work in their assigned area to reach the vision. Meet regularly as a team, pray together, study God’s Word together, and allow each one share how their area of ministry is working to accomplish the vision. Listen to each other. Let the team respond to each other both positively and correctively. Be honest with each other in a loving, caring way. Build up one another in Christ. Your job as the team leader is to help

everyone work as a team toward a common goal, the vision of the church, not as a group of individuals all going in different directions.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, feeling that you can't do it all by yourself, or that no one is really interested in helping you, start to build and work with a ministry team. You will find your vision unfolding at twice the pace, while you are providing a way for others to participate in the ministry of the church, and together bringing a new strength and vitality to the ministry. ■