



Leadership Vignette

A pastor of a rural church tells how a personal spiritual quest led to church renewal.

As a part of a Doctor of Ministry class assignment, I began a daily discipline of spiritual journaling. As a spiritual discipline, I asked myself, "What would it mean for me to put people first in my ministry?" As a result, each week I wrote the name of one person. I selected an inactive church member, someone known to be angry with the church, or someone who felt they had been hurt by the church.

Each day I prayed for this person. Then, the part I really dreaded, I went to see the person I had been praying for all week. Whereas I felt anxious to call on these people for fear of a negative reaction, I found only a warm reception. I discovered that they needed to talk about their relationship to God and the church as much as I felt a need to talk with them.

I have followed this discipline of prayer and visitation faithfully. This practice has been one of the most important things I have done in my ministry. I am committed to continuing it.

As an outgrowth of this spiritual discipline, nine new persons are now participating in the church. I baptized two elderly men that I came to know through this practice. However, my goal in doing all this was not to see an increase in church participation. My goal was my own spiritual condition and service to others. I am reminded that John Wesley did not start out to lead a new religious movement. Instead, it was his personal spiritual quest that led to church renewal.