



It Takes Teamwork

By Kevass J. Harding

Teamwork is essential to the vitality and life of the church. One person cannot do it all. The pastor of the church should not attempt to do all the work in the church. When God spoke to Ezekiel, God spoke to Ezekiel only about prophesying to the dead bones. God did not give Ezekiel all the work. And even today God does not give the work to one person but gives the work of ministry to the entire body. This is also seen in the “feeding of the five thousand” When Jesus took the two fish and five loaves of bread, he didn’t hand out the fish and bread individually to each of the five thousand people. Rather, Jesus took what was little and handed it to his disciples. The disciples in turn had the people sit in groups; once the people were in groups, the disciples gave the fish and bread to the group leaders. The group leaders in turn gave the fish and bread to the group; the entire body ate and was satisfied. What this shows is effective administrative team work.

Trying to do everything is not an effective method of doing ministry. God did not call us to be “Lone Ranger” ministers; rather, God has called us to be in relational ministry where God’s people work together for the building up of God’s kingdom here on earth.

Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan, the famous basketball player for the Chicago Bulls, knew that, though great, he could not win by himself. Michael knew it took teamwork to be effective. Michael’s acknowledgement that he needed help made him even more effective on the court, and season after season the Chicago Bulls won championship after championship. Why? Because of effective teamwork. Michael may have been the star player on the team and even the centerpiece in some people’s eyes. However, Michael understood that in order to be effective, he could not be the centerpiece of the puzzle; rather, he just wanted to be a piece of the championship puzzle. Teamwork!

Moses and Jethro

In the book of Exodus we find a perfect example of teamwork and how it can help an ineffective context become an effective context.

The next day Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him from morning until evening. When Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people he said “What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me. I will give you counsel . . . [L]ook for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. (Exodus 18: 13-14a, 17-19a, 21-22 NRSV)



This text has Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, giving advice on how to do ministry effectively as a team, not as an individual. Although Moses was a leader, his administrative skills were leading him to an early death. Administratively, Moses was not effective, nor would he have been able to sustain the ministry. “We do not know whether Moses is so concerned with control that he wants to handle all the cases himself, or if he is unreflective and has never thought about a more workable, practical system.” Think about that first statement, of Moses being concerned about control and power. This kind of attitude will always kill a church. Not only was Moses unsure of himself, “Moses seems not to have much common sense about administrative matters.”

Domineering people who have poor reflective skills and lack common sense tend not to be good administrators. They burn out quickly, far before ministry actually launches from the pad. This type of ministry is hurting and even killing thousands of churches today. From reading the text, it seems Jethro already knew what this type of ministry could do to Moses and the people of Israel. Jethro knew that Moses had to learn quickly the art of delegation.

Jethro thus proposes a judicial system, distinct from the primitive practice of one-man adjudication. The proposal includes the recruitment of good people (v. 21); their training and preparation (v. 20); a system of courts for different social units (v. 21); a “high court” over which Moses would preside (v. 22); and continued affirmation that the entire system would be referred to the will of God (vv. 12, 23). Such a system will save Moses from burnout, but more important, it will let the community go in [shalom] – i.e., in harmony and wholeness, free of conflict, enjoying a stable, shared welfare (v. 23).

Even today, the type of system Jethro advised to Moses can be a model to help noneffective, nonsustainable, and dying churches become effective and sustainable, vital, and healthy churches. Regardless of what size the church may be, when we realize that all people are a part of the body of Christ and that it is God’s Spirit that connects, guides, and empowers the church to work together as a team for the will of God, we have the great joy of knowing that all churches, no matter what size, can take little and do much.

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Jesus Asked the Right Questions

By Marc Brown

In the ninth chapter of Mark, Jesus asked his disciples: “What were you discussing on the way?” He was evidently aware that the disciples had been debating who the greatest was among them. Jesus could have responded to the disciples’ power struggle by telling them their discussion was nonsense. He could have told them to stop dealing with petty and trivial matters and get a grip on reality. Instead, Jesus asked the right question: “What were you discussing on the way?”

Jesus did not get drawn into the triviality of the disciples’ power struggle. Rather, his question helped the disciples focus on the importance of being a disciple: “If any one would be first, that person must be last of all and servant of all.”

When churches are caught in the midst of power struggles, our first impulse is often to provide answers to problems. But leaders do not need answers. They must instead ask the right questions. Perhaps the best question we can ask is the question Jesus asked his disciples, “What were you discussing on the way?” This right question will open the door to conversation about greatness and power in God’s kingdom. It will allow us to define our identity as we seek to be servants of all. Perhaps this question will allow persons entombed by power struggles of the past and present to see that the stone has been rolled away.

In Mark, Jesus defines the reality of God’s kingdom and his own identity by asking the right questions. For a list of questions found in Mark, go to

www.churchleadership.com/leadingideas/leadassets/questionsofmark.pdf

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The Right Question

*Leaders do not need answers.
Leaders must have the right questions.*

Regular worshipers are often too close to the church to see it from the perspective of the outsiders. Martha Grace Reese in *Unbinding the Gospel* (Chalice) suggests asking non-churchgoers to talk with you to get their perspective. Some examples of suggested questions are:

Have people ever invited you to their church?
What did you think when they asked you?
Did you go?
How did it feel?
If you didn’t go, why not?

Leaders cannot empower others by disempowering themselves. *Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal*