



## Chapter 8

# The kind of Church It Takes



### GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

As I began to write the conclusions about the kind of church it takes, I was interrupted by a phone call from a church that had previously contacted about starting the Lay Pastors Ministry. They had decided to delay the ministry until the congregation had completed a gift and ministry-discovery adventure. "People who are to do pastoral care need to get some idea about their gifts and have sense of call," the person explained. They were absolutely right!

These church leaders, having identified pastoral care as their priority need, plan to lay the foundation for an effective and lasting ministry rather than rush to the front with a hastily-put-together Band-Aid program. Their plan allows time to incorporate all seven of the qualities delineated in the preceding chapters. These qualities are hallmarks, not only of lay pastoral care, but also of every form of effective and lasting lay ministry.

The following is a brief review of the seven qualities:

**Needs-Conscious:** Awareness of the need for pastoral care.

**Gift-Oriented:** Focusing on spiritual gifts by preaching, studying and using gift-assessment helps.

**Mobilized:** Creating a "ministry-friendly" environment for volunteer ministers by concentrating on laypeople doing ministry.

**Ministry-Balanced:** Committing to *the Great Charter* as well as *the Great Commission*.

**Egalitarian:** Entrusting the grass-roots ministry of pastoral care to laypeople will transform the spirit-level church into a one-level body of believers. The title "Minister" will now be related to gifts and call rather than office.

**Biblical:** Accepting 1 Peter 5:2, RSV ("Tend the flock"), Ephesians 4:11, 12 ("[Equip] the saints for the work of ministry," *NKJV*) and other Scriptures as words from God.

**Failure-Resistant:** Taking time to do things right to increase the probability of success.

## DEVELOPING THE SEVEN QUALITIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LAY MINISTRY

How do you go about developing those qualities? The question really is How do you change a church? We get some helpful insights from management consultant Ken Blanchard, who has been a consultant and trainer for Chevron, Lockheed, AT&T and other major corporations. Leadership Journal met with him in his offices in Escondido, California, to find out how church leaders can create lasting, effective change:

*1. Change is difficult.* "It's tough enough to start a church, but it's murder to turn one around. Do you know how long it will take to make a major change in the way your church operates? Anywhere from two to five years of concentrated effort, depending on the size and complexity of the organizations."

*2. The person at the top has to have a clear vision.* "Moses didn't go up the hill with a committee; if he had, he would never have come down. My advice to ministers: be clear about the vision." It is important to find out what the congregation wants. "But notice," Blanchard said, "this is second." The congregation usually does not have the large picture. the goal is to get vision of the congregation and the vision of the pastor to match.

*3. Be willing to work.* Blanchard quotes famed football coach, Don Shula: "I've won more games because I'm willing to roll up my sleeves and do whatever it takes to make it happen."

Blanchard continues, "Sure, it's coming up with the vision and the direction, but then the vision must be implemented: coaching, supporting, giving direction, praising, progress and redirecting."

He expands the willingness to work principle: "But vision

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alone can't it done. Too often we spend all our time on vision and none on implementation. At some point, you've got to move."

He points to Jesus as the model for this active involvement. In fact, he told Peters and Waterman, who wrote *In Search of Excellence*, "You didn't invent management by wandering around. Jesus did."

He obviously sees in clergy and other leaders a relationship between willingness to work and ego: "Managing the journey of change is servant leadership. We must get our egos out of the way and praise, redirect, reprimand—anything it takes to help people win." (Someone defined ego by using the letters to make an acronym: Edging God Out)

4. *Know where the people are.* Leaders (vocational and volunteer) cannot just announce a change and expect people to support it. Until people have their first-layer concerns answered (What is this and why? Where am I going to fit? How will it be done? What is the impact?) they are not likely to be open to the change.<sup>1</sup>

Wise leaders are beginning to believe that leadership is not something you do to people, it's something you do *with* them. Blanchard reports: "Leadership is more of a partnership; unless the followers is willing to follow, you don't have much leadership."

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The old rhyme applies: "A person convinced against his will remains unconvinced still." To affect an individual's *will*, you must know where the person is and journey with him or her from that point.

If change is to take place, a systemic view of the church is essential, i.e., seeing the church as a system. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins make this clear in their book, *The Equipping Pastor*: "Change takes place when it is not merely programmatic but *on the level of the church's systemic life and through a process consistent with its systemic life*" (italics theirs). They give their reason for this conviction: "Every church has a corporate 'feeling' that communicates to new and old members what is important and what is permitted." By corporate feeling Stevens and Collins mean culture.

To grasp Steven's and Collins's idea, we need some common understanding of the two words, *systemic* and *culture*. *Systemic* means the inner-relatedness of every part of the church, so much so that when one part changes, all other parts change. Visualizing the church as a mobile helps understand the church as a system.

*Culture* can be conceptualized as the "genetic code" of the church determining what new members are successive generations consider valuable, right and proper. In most

churches, culture is the unresearched and unrecognized dynamic that drives the church. A former colleague of mine in Cincinnati, Dr. Gary Sweeten, maintained that you if you want to find out how something in the church works, try to change it. The hue and cry will tell you.

Every church is system and has a culture. To know all you can about both informs you where you have to start in making changes. For example: If the members believe that the ordained clergy person is the only person qualified to do pastoral care, the "Moses" will need to connect with the members where they are if he or she expects to turn pastoral care ministry over to the people. The members will need to journey from where they are to the biblical truth that they, too, are be a long and difficult journey, but it is th way to let laypeople do it. To make this journey together is to help people hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

In the next chapters we will focus on the person Ken Blanchard calls "the person at the top," the vocational minister. We'll consider what kind of pastor it takes for lay ministry to happen in a church.

Note: The Lab for these eight chapters can be found in appendix B.

**Notes:**

1. Ken Blanchard, *Leadership Journal* (Spring 1996), 114-118, adapted.
2. R. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor* ( Washington, D.C. The Alban Institute, 1993), p. 45. If you desire an in-depth treatment of system and culture, I recommend this book.