

## **Every Church Leader Must Empower and Release More Leaders**

**By Bob Young**

[Based on “starter thoughts” from Rick Warren]

Every church leader must know his or her leadership style. When I first began to understand my leadership style (during my graduate studies), I was amazed at how many of my ministry experiences were explained—both victories and failures. When I learned that my leadership style explained by my “followship” style, I was even more amazed. I follow like I lead; I lead like I follow. I now know, understand, and appreciate my leadership style. I’m a big-picture, vision-casting leader. I like developing the dream—what is to be done; I like filling in the details—how to do it; I dislike doing the details. I have been blessed by a wife who is great at taking care of the details.

My leadership style is essential in a group, but it is not of much value in getting things done. I need to be surrounded by other leaders, members, and volunteers who play their own important roles according to their gifts. God does great things through his people working together, because he is both the giver of the vision and the giver of the skills that are essential for handling the details. A vision-casting leader is not better or worse than any other leader. All shapes and sizes are needed in God’s work. The key is for each of us to recognize our personal style. Then we can form a team with gifts that enhance and supplement one another. God describes the church as a body with many different parts, each having different gifts. Each part is necessary for the overall health of the body.

Bringing many different people with different gifts together is the power of the team—the power of cooperation. We do our best work and accomplish more when (instead of jockeying for position or trying to build a power base) we work together—building on the strengths of the group and helping with areas of weakness.

### **Church Leaders Must Lead**

What does this observation mean in a practical way? In Eph. 4:11-12, Paul mentions several leadership roles and makes clear God’s purpose for leaders: the responsibility of leaders is to equip (prepare, form, mentor) God’s people to do the work of ministry and build up the church as every member does its part.

Church leaders show their love for Christ through their love and care for his people. Leadership based on love gets rid of any negative feelings about being coerced into leadership. We lead willingly according to our gifts. We lead with grace, honesty and integrity, putting others’ needs ahead of our own. This kind of leadership is not controlling or bossy. This leadership style rejoices when others succeed. This is genuine administration, helping others toward their own ministries. This is the leadership of a mentor, a living example. The best measure of spiritual leadership is how many are actively involved in reaching the goal.

### **Leadership Can Be Learned**

Different leaders have different gifts. My gifts are clustered in the areas of preaching and teaching, organization, and administration. Many church leaders are frustrated because their gifts do not correspond to their responsibilities. For example, preachers are often expected to help with administrative tasks but are not gifted in that area.

The good news is that skills can be learned. Leadership can be learned and we can be more effective. Peter Drucker (*The Effective Executive*) says, “Effective executives...differ as widely as physicians, high-school teachers, or violinists.... What all these executives have in common is the practices that make effective whatever they have and whatever they are.” Drucker says that the word “practice” indicates these successful habits can be learned if they are repeated over and over. Many of

the practices Drucker identifies as leading to success at work translate to the church setting. Effective managers:

- know where their time goes
- focus on desired outcomes
- build on the strengths of others (and themselves)
- concentrate their efforts where they will have the most benefit
- are careful, decisive decision makers

### **Many Church Leaders, and Most Church Workers, are Volunteers**

Many churches struggle because they think of paid staff when there is a leadership role to fill. Often the resources are not available to hire another person. Churches are learning that it can be just as effective (or more effective) to recruit and equip gifted volunteers. When a leader helps people discover how God has enabled them to serve others, they can find the best places for them to use their gifts. The leader can delegate tasks with confidence, and they can do what God has equipped them to do.

### **Leaders MUST Learn to Delegate**

One of the best reasons to delegate comes straight out of the books on time management. No one person can be and do everything. The quickest way to burn out is to try to do everything. The high calling of church leaders is the responsibility for the spiritual health and growth of the members. Many church leaders are sidetracked from their primary calling.

Church leaders must focus on their own ministry. Delegating helps the leaders do that. Effective delegation involves:

- Breaking down major goals into smaller tasks.
- Developing clear job descriptions so people know what is expected of them.
- Matching the right person with the right task.

Delegating is more than just passing off work. The leader must understand what the task is, who is good at it, and then match them up. Delegating is about freeing and equipping people to be creative.

### **Measuring Your Success as a Leader**

The success of church leaders is reflected in a balanced, healthy church. Shepherds must discern their gifts and then select other gifted believers to help with other tasks. Every believer is a minister. Every believer is responsible to use his or her spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences to benefit God's Kingdom. The success of the leadership team is seen in whether the work is getting done, and the number of members involved in the work of ministry.