

# Developing Ministries

It is a wonderful privilege to be able to serve within the kingdom of God. It brings a sense of purpose and it positively affects the life of the local church.

The best way to develop ministries within the local church setting is to pray and challenge the people to look for opportunities to find and use their giftings, once they have discovered them. This process of discovery can occur through seminars and through honest interaction with friends and leadership. I have discovered that if a person has a particular burden for a certain ministry, it usually means that it has been placed there by the Spirit of God. Furthermore, as a person 'owns' a ministry they are more likely to endure trials and 'hang in there for the long haul'!

## Strategy

After preaching one Sunday on 'The Kingdom of God', a doctor in our congregation approached me about starting up a type of 'Weight Watchers' class where people in the church and community could encourage one another in a Christian atmosphere. Many other successful ministries have commenced within the church and community as people use their ministry gifts. Unfortunately, pastors threatened by other peoples' gifts, can stifle growth.

Another way to develop ministries are for leaders to discern the needs of the community, which will take time. Then they must share that need with others and even challenge people to become involved if they are not forthcoming. If you persevere it will be worth it in the long term.

Sometimes it is right that a ministry should close, because there is no on going need for it, or because there is no special sign of approval of God upon that work. It has been said, both rightly and sadly, that if the Holy Spirit were removed from the church, much of its activity would continue unchanged.

New ministries must receive oversight and support. When someone expresses an interest in becoming involved in ministry, I often encourage them by saying, "That's great—keep praying about it. Speak with others, and if you still sense it's right, then step in and give it a go. Keep us updated on how you're progressing, and if you need any support, we're praying for you and will encourage you along the way."

Of course, if there is a clear mismatch between the person and the ministry, I may gently redirect their enthusiasm. I also make it a point to ensure that they take the initiative in keeping me informed of their progress.

Those involved in ministry need to learn how to work effectively with others. In areas that are particularly people-focused such as leading a community outreach or running

a drop-in centre—it is important to have a management team in place. This group provides oversight, support, and accountability for the work being carried out.

## Management team

The management team should carry out the following task:

1. Record in writing, the vision and goals of the ministry which are from time to time to be reassessed and altered as necessary.
2. Meet at least monthly with the leader or more often if necessary, to pray together, discuss progress and make decisions.
3. To hold the leader *accountable* for his/her actions, which will also help prevent pride and error creeping in. Having only one person overseeing the work can deter objectivity and bring about an unhealthy emotional involvement. Seek therefore to invite several people to form a management committee.
4. Draw people onto the management committee from a wide variety of backgrounds. These people should if possible, have some hands-on experience or at least have a commitment to the work, which may prevent power struggles.

*'but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.'* Proverbs 11:14

## Fellowship

It is often useful to have a monthly get together for leaders involved in different 'people centred' ministries. From experience I have discovered that every person involved in ministry tends to feel that their type of ministry is the one most on the heart of God and is where 'the rubber really meets the road', which of course is not true. By sharing together, each worker becomes aware of the challenges, joys and difficulties other workers face. This broadens their tolerance of other ministries. It is also good for them to pray and give in a practical way to other ministries as able. These meetings are held at lunchtime, and elders are invited if it suits their schedule.

## Prayer support

For several years now we have a monthly prayer calendar where each day we pray for different people involved in ministry. This is most useful as not only does it help to communicate to the church just what people are doing, but it also helps them pray more effectively.

## New people

Encourage new Christians to become involved in ministry, but do not rush into it prematurely. Paul, for example in writing to Timothy warns that a new Christian should not be appointed to the office of eldership too soon (1 Timothy 3:6). Pride and inexperience have been the downfall of too many enthusiastic workers.

New people shifting into a church need to settle into the Fellowship before they are released into ministry, regardless of how gifted they are. Do not go against this principle unless there is a strong witness by the Holy Spirit. Time brings out a person's true spirit. Many church fellowships require that new people shifting in are not to hold any position of responsibility for at least six months. This rule is normally beneficial for all concerned.

## When people fail in ministry

Unfortunately, there are times when people fail in ministry. This normally causes great heartache initially, but when they are relieved of their ministry it often brings a sense of relief, as many have picked up already that they have not been doing well.

It is an injustice to allow enthusiastic people to carry on in ministry if they are obviously unsuited for the position. One preacher made the comment that the greatest pain he experiences is 'when he makes a mistake and his friends do not point it out to him'.

There are right and wrong ways in asking a person to stand down from doing a task (or in altering the direction in the way it is going) especially when you know it is going to cause turmoil. The following steps must be preceded with prayer for wisdom, a right attitude and the right timing.

*Firstly*, give genuine praise for some aspect of their character or work done. *Secondly*, point out the problem and the need for them to step down. If you are dealing with a paid staff member bear in mind legal requirements that go with laying off people. For example, several warnings have to be given first in some countries to meet legal requirements. Keep the elders informed. *Thirdly*, praise them again for some aspect of their character or the effort they have put into the ministry. Check up on that person at a later stage to encourage their progress. This is very important.

## Itinerate ministries

At one time I travelled throughout South America, spending most of my time in Uruguay and Argentina, holding seminars for pastors and church leaders. As there appeared to be a weakness in 'the local church and missions' and 'team ministry' in these two countries, I concentrated on these two subjects. The response to these talks was very encouraging. Surprisingly though, on returning home, I discovered that several people did not agree with the strong emphasis we have in our church on

Missions and giving, along with the emphasis on team ministry. After much prayer, love and dialogue things settled down again. I cannot help thinking of a certain very gifted Bible teacher who regularly travels around the world lecturing on leadership, while his New Zealand based church has developed a serious problem with a dearth of quality leadership and that has placed that church in a very vulnerable position. There needs to be a right balance.