What Is A Ministry Team

Excerpts from Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams, by E. Stanley Ott

A ministry team is more than a committee with a new name. Conceptually, the ministry team is somewhat more complex than the committee. Like a committee, a ministry team is committed to take action on the vision entrusted to it. But a ministry team also develops its experience of Christian fellowship as well as the discipleship of its members. A committee rarely makes these matters of deliberate concern. Ministry teams are exceptionally flexible, dynamic means of aligning people for effective ministry while providing ongoing encouragement to each person. In essence they are a combination of purpose-driven ministry and small-group life. The power of the ministry team resides in the many additional benefits to those normally experienced in a committee-based organization.

Power to Build Fellowship

God intends Christian fellowship to be one of the great benefits of participating in the Kingdom of God. Growth in fellowship occurs when the ministry team engages in corporate spiritual disciplines such as Bible study, shared meals, and prayer. People discover that they have a place to belong, others to love, and a task to accomplish - all of which are signs of true fellowship.

Power to Develop Leaders

Most congregational ministries simply deploy leaders (“Get that new couple. They'll make great high-school advisors!”) Ministry teams develop and deploy leaders. Learning to lead is every bit as complex as learning to become a mature productive adult all over again. The ministry team creates the perfect context in which people learn to lead by leading. Team members given particular tasks, whether major or minor in scope, learn to pull others along in order to accomplish their tasks and in so doing also learn to lead.

Power to Provide Continuity of Leadership

One of the biggest challenges in church life is the matter of succession in leadership. We commonly see ministries being led by just one person. The ministry team remedies this vulnerability of solo leadership in its very “team-ness.” This insulates the ministry from leadership loss when a current leader steps down. Others within the team or the team's leadership core are then ready to step in, and the team experiences continuity of leadership.

Power to Mobilize People for Ministry

The power of ministry teams rests in their success in mobilizing ordinary people for ministry. The vast majority of church members haven't come to terms with their call to ministry, their gifts for ministry, or their opportunities for ministry. The growing emphasis on the discovery and deployment of spiritual gifts might give one the impression that all ministry is gift-based. However some would suggest that all ministry is service-based. Some of the ministry will be gift-based. But sometimes we serve where we're needed, even when we have no particular passion or giftedness for the task, because at all times our ministry is rooted in a serving heart. The power of a ministry team is to encourage the development of that serving heart as well as the growth of ministry skills.

Power to Accomplish Ministry

Ministry teams do share one major dimension in common with committees: they exist to get something done. But effective ministry teams add a significant component to their ministries. Teams focus on both people and program (task). That has been called the double focus of ministry because the team has one eye focused on the program to be accomplished and the other eye focused on people with whom it is in ministry.