

Effective Ministry Practices

1. Strive for Disciplined Diligence

- Do whatever it takes to focus on mission centered priorities.
- Plan your work and work your plan.
- Invest your time well - work smart and hard.
- Invest painstaking effort, unrelenting commitment and passionate consistency.

2. Win the Daily

- The power of Daily
- The problem of Daily
- The practice of Daily
- The pay-off of Daily

3. Move the Ball Down the Field

- Know what the WIN looks like.
- Champion PROGRESS.
- Don't make EXCUSES - make things HAPPEN.
- Take risks.
- Deliver with world-class quality.

4. Keep Your Ministry RELEVANT.

- Talk to God and listen to God.
- Listen to people who are far from God.

- Work ON your ministry, not just IN it.
- Keep it SIMPLE – less is more.
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5. Take People on a JOURNEY

- Think PEOPLE not programs.
- Design ministry as a process.
- Invest in life TRANSFORMATION.
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6. Learn to be Big on service

- Napkin
- Sleeve
- Cup

7. Play TEAM BALL

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- Initiate contribution OUTSIDE your ministry area.
- Put cooperation over competition.
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8. Practice Mutual Voluntary Submission (MVS)

- MVS must be Mutual
- MVS must be Voluntary

- MVS must be Submission

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- Keep GROWING.
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- Practice empowerment .

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- Express GRATITUDE and encouragement.
- Bring LAUGHTER and a light heart to the mix.

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**Effective Ministry Practices:
#1 - Strive For Disciplined Diligence**

One of the best gifts you can give your church and the ministry you serve within is to strive for what I call Disciplined Diligence. Next to the Holy Spirit, it is the thing that makes ordinary people

extraordinary. The primary difference between good and great is disciplined diligence. There is an inward and outward nature to this:

Being disciplined deals with your inner character – do you have the right stuff? We want to be disciplined in who we are. Diligence deals with the outward focus – are you doing the right things? We must be diligent in what we do. Both of these are about a choice and a decision, not a talent. As you begin to feel pressure you will either develop into your calling and mission or drift from your calling and mission. The difference between developing and drifting is disciplined diligence.

In order to strive for disciplined diligence you must **Do whatever it takes to focus on mission centered priorities**. Inactivity a battle you have to fight, but distraction is a top tool of the enemy. Distractions keep us off-mission. There will always be more than enough things to take up your time and energy, the question is this: are you focusing on the right things? Extreme commitment to the right things is essential for you as you lead your area of ministry. It's been said of Andy Stanley that he only meets with people for 3 reasons, and his assistant helps hold that line. If people want his time and it doesn't fit into one of his 3 reasons – they don't get time with him. That is extreme commitment to stay focused on priorities.

When you understand the mission you are able to ask yourself “What is the most important and productive thing I can do?” Part of being really good is figuring out which of the little things you really need to do. You don't need to do all the little things, and when you try to you will usually find yourself exhausted but unaccomplished.

The next way to strive for disciplined diligence is to **Plan your work and work your plan**. Without a plan you will accomplish stuff, with a plan you are able to accomplish the right stuff. Planning your work means going into the day or the week knowing what things you need to tend to, and what order you need to tend to them. Planning your work isn't just for the type-A highly detailed person, we can all plan our work. It means knowing what things only you can do, what things other around you can do, and what things can be left undone. Now a plan doesn't work unless you follow it. It is pointless to have a plan and then just take things as they come. Once you have a plan for your work, you need to work that plan. Momentum of the day, other people's agendas and so many more things can take you away from your plan each day. It matters that you go into each day having a plan for what you will need to do that day.

Make sure to **invest your time well by working smart and hard**. Working smart – know how to leverage your time, gifts and energy for maximum effectiveness. When do you do your best thinking? When are you at your best for interacting with others? Is there a certain place you do your best problem solving? Anyone can work – but leaders need to work smart towards the right things. You also want to invest your time into working hard. You are your own task master – you are the person that has the ability to apply the most pressure on yourself. Are you working hard or are you just in the game. Working smart and hard is not about perfection. If our goal is perfection then we should quit now.

You work smart and hard when you aim for excellence, you put your best energy in and “leave it all on the field.” While others can provide insight for you, this is best evaluated between you and God. Only God knows if you worked your hardest or if you held something back. Invest your time well by working as smart and hard as you can. Be focused on the right things at the right time to be at your best. If it is time for you to work, then focus and give yourself fully to the task at hand. If it is time for you to rest and be with family then be fully present with them. Investing your time well doesn’t mean investing all your time into your work, but investing the right time.

Allow yourself to be given over to **painstaking effort, unrelenting commitment and passionate consistency**. When we push ourselves to the limit it can be painful, but we haven’t given it all we have until we push towards the limit. There is a grind that is unmistakable when you allow yourself to put in painstaking effort. Remember though that grind always precedes the glory. You don’t get to experience the joy of glory without the pain of grind.

Your willingness to do whatever it takes should look like unrelenting commitment. To the outsider (*and to you*) it should be obvious that you will not quit until the job is done. And as you dedicate yourself to accomplish the mission you do it with a passionate consistency. As you work you tend to the fact that the culture and mission must remain the same. It isn’t enough to just keep moving forward, you have to remain diligent in what you do (*which is about mission*) and disciplined in who you are (*which is about culture*).

If you want to know how you are doing when it comes to disciplined diligence just ask yourself, “*What am I better at today than I was a year ago?*” *What are the things you want to get better at that will require disciplined diligence? Who are people around you who lead with disciplined diligence?* When you see those people you ask to buy them coffee and listen to how they do it...because the difference between you being good in your ministry or great in your ministry is disciplined diligence.

Effective Ministry Practices: #2 - Win The Daily

The key to a life-time of successful ministry is found in winning the daily – there is a daily grind and diligence that is associated with long term success. There are 4 things you need to understand if you are going to win the daily in your ministry.

The Power of Daily – The power of daily is never seen up close, but it compounds over time for greatest impact. Running 4 miles a day might seem like a small thing, but if you do that every day that is a marathon every week.

Sometimes the power of daily isn’t something you can measure, but you can still see the impact. Vibrancy in a relationship with God is cultivated through daily prayer. Psalm 5:3 we read a reflection of David, “Each morning I bring my requests to you...” Jesus taught His

disciples to pray in light of the daily – “Give us ‘today’ our daily bread” (Matt 6:11). God has built in the natural rhythm of daily.

The confidence of a child is boosted by the daily reminder of a parent, “I love you.” Dedication to the daily separates the successful from the “also ran’s”. Daily isn’t a lot and it isn’t impressive in the moment – but over time it has a large impact. Writers such as Josh McDowell and Charles Swindoll have reflected on their ability to create large amounts of content and said, “I write a little bit, every day.” You will never change your life until you change something you do daily.

The Problem of Daily – the biggest problem with daily is that it is daily! Waiting until you feel like it is not inspiration. The power of daily doesn’t work if you wait to be inspired. When you wait on inspiration to come, you tend to become discouraged and then fall behind. It is at this point that passion dwindles, and you can allow your feelings to tell you “God has lifted His hand from you.” “Maybe God wasn’t in this to begin with.” You have to push through and move on to a better understanding of inspiration. Look for external inspiration – things like a good book or movie, a conversation, an athlete – things like that. Along with external inspiration you need to look for internal inspiration – self-awareness, hearing God’s voice, staying aware of what you are called to do.

Association is key – it matters that you connect with you right people. Intentionally invest time with people who want to grow, stretch and re-invent themselves. It matters who you hang out with and it matters what you hang out in. Winning the daily isn’t possible if you hang out and spend time in desperation. When you feel yourself slipping into desperation know that is panic setting in. At its core panic will shut down your ability to get something done. It is rooted in fear and it will inhibit your trust in God. When you don’t trust God you have no choice but to trust yourself, which brings panic! Daily helps conquer desperation because it helps prevent panic.

The Practice of Daily - The practice of daily involves many choices. One of the key choices you have to make is choosing what you cheat, and telling the truth about what you cheat. Cheating always cost you something. The practice of daily means deciding what things you can tend to and what things you need to leave untouched – because you can’t do everything. If you try to do everything you will go insane, you have to lead with the end in mind or else the daily doesn’t work.

You must lead with both competence and character – don’t be held captive to a “to-do” list. You don’t serve a daily agenda – a daily agenda serves you. Make smart choices and decide what needs to be done and then do it, and do it when it needs to be done. The disciplined person is the person who does what needs to be done when it needs to be done...who lives in the appropriateness of the moment. The extreme ascetic and the glutton have the same problem....they cannot do the right thing at the right time. The disciplined person is the free person.

Ask yourself what are the practices that you need to implement into your daily rhythm. If you are a worship leader – how often do you need to practice your instrument? If you work

with adult ministries – how many volunteers or leaders do you need to call today? Perhaps you work with student ministries – how often should you be sitting down with students? Decide ahead of time what practices are essential for you and then commit. John Maxwell has said that he does 5 things every day – swim, read, write, think & _____.

Part of putting together good daily practices is to think results, not routine – and learning to not despise routine. Remember even Superman spent most of his time as Clark Kent. You have to keep the big picture in front of you, keep the long term vision in mind. Results are tied to vision. The practice of daily is so important - your life will never change if you do not change something you do every day.

The Pay-off of Daily – There is a rule some of you have probably heard of which is called the 10,000 hour rule. The 10,000 hour rule is this – if you want to become a world class expert in anything you have to practice it for 10,000 hours. 20hrs/week over 50 weeks is 1,000hrs a year. Do that pace over 10 years and you will have your 10,000 hours of experience. The discipline in this is what produces the freedom you all want. The truth is that you can do less than you think in one year and you can do far more than you think in 5-10 years.

The impact of daily is this - ***Daily + Decades = Destiny***. What's your destiny going to be? You get to choose. When you are young you have to pay attention to the power of the daily and know your potential is beyond my power to describe. Find your great love and deep passion, don't ever "just have a job." Find the thing you are destined to do and become good at it, starting by working it today.

When you consider Winning the Daily, what is one thing you should start doing today? What is one thing you want to accomplish in your ministry over the long haul? What will that require of you today?

Effective Ministry Practices: #3 - Move the Ball Down the Field

The nature of ministry is people work, and the tension that is often felt when doing people work is that the work is never done. If you are a type-A this might drive you crazy, and if you are a type-B you might not know what I am talking about. If you want to be a part of a flourishing ministry...if you want to build a flourishing ministry than you have to learn how to **Move the Ball Down the Field**. There are two dangers in ministry when it comes to results – one danger is expecting results too quickly and pressing people beyond what they can handle. The other danger is expecting results too slowly as if movement today doesn't matter. Want to have a successful ministry career? Learn to become a person who moves the ball down the field. Here are some ways you do it:

The first key to moving the ball down the field is found in a simple question – do you **know what the WIN looks like?** Are you able to identify what it looks like to experience success in what you are doing? If you don't have a target or direction you are just wasting time and energy. Being busy isn't the mark of effectiveness...tending to the right things and moving

towards a win is the mark of effectiveness. A football coach isn't pleased with his team because they stayed busy running in the same 5 yard circle, because it isn't a win unless they score more points than the other team. Knowing that the whole game is based around score – each player knows that a WIN is only possible if they move the ball down the field towards the end zone.

Moving the ball down the field means that you learn to **Champion Progress**. Becoming a champion of progress means being a constant learner in your organization. What is working? What isn't working? Here are 3 things that will help you champion progress: first lean towards progress, not protection. Think about the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. One servant took what he was given and used it to generate more, the other operated out of protection and fear and simply made their goal to not lose what they had. Lean towards progress. Second thing to help you champion progress – if you have a choice to make always choose clear over clever. Clarity allows progress to take place. The last thing you can do to help champion progress is make things better, not just different. Anyone can make things different. Every new employee has an idea, a new way we could do something. Different isn't valuable – better is valuable. More effective is valuable. Being able to accomplish more with less time is making things better.

Anyone can come up with a way for the church to be different, use your energy to find a way to make things better.

Become a Champion of Progress in your area of ministry. Progress isn't always major leaps forward. In football it is great to have major 10-20 yard gains, but the best winning teams are consistently able to make 3-4 yard gains on almost every play. Progress.

Don't Make Excuses, make things Happen. Anyone can make excuses, and many people just make excuses. Learn to own your ministry area – if there is a problem it is yours to own. Good leaders don't make excuses, they made advancements. Leaders make things happen. When you commit yourself to making things happen you don't let obstacles slow you down. Excuses are what you use to justify a lack in performance. If you want to earn respect and credibility with others learn to own mistakes and breakdowns instead of shifting blame. Things will get in the way of moving the ball down the field. Sometimes the things that get in the way are understandable, and sometimes they are matters of circumstance that you could not avoid. It doesn't matter what the reason is for under performance or lack of delivery – the question is whether you will allow those things to be an excuse you use or a tool to develop leadership grit.

In order to move the ball down the field you have to learn to **take risks**. You don't move down the field without risk. You don't accomplish something new without risk. Risk is at the core of advancing into new territories or arenas. If you are unwilling to risk they you will never see more than is what in front of you. The ability to risk is at the very center of your ministry work. You can't share your faith without taking risk. Starting a new small group is a risk. Shutting down a ministry initiative is a risk. Moving your church from one building to another is a risk. If it is easy or it is a sure thing, it is a risk.

In any ministry effort where we seek to move the ball down the field there will be risk. The key is to risk but not be unwise. Risk pushes us beyond our ability to cover – we can't ensure the results. However risk should never push us beyond God's cover – beyond what He has promised to do. Risking beyond God's cover is unwise, but risking beyond your cover is the adventure of spiritual leadership.

When you set your mind and attitude towards moving the ball down the field, it is possible to trade standards and quality for movement. That is a trade not worth making. When you fight to move the ball down the field make sure you **deliver with world-class quality**.

No one dreams of crossing the finish line and collapsing, and no one gets excited about mediocre movement. Forward momentum is extremely important, but moving the ball down the field isn't a check-box on your to-do list. It isn't a pass/fail opportunity. You were created to offer up excellence in what you do. Don't just find a way to move things forward, make sure you do it in such a way that your effort is excellent in nature. A Fast food restaurant like McDonalds knows how to continually move the ball down the field – more burgers, more fries, more soda – that doesn't mean they are offering quality, but they are feeding people and making money. Compare that with a 5-star restaurant like Ruth Chris – where you are treated like a King or Queen – they also accomplish the task of feeding people and making money. We are serving to build God's Church, and we must decide if we are going to deliver with 5-star, world class quality or McDonald's drive-thru quality.

Effective Ministry Practices: #4 - Keep Your Ministry Relevant

Being a part of a church that continually reaches people for Christ means learning an important practice – keeping your ministry relevant. It is far too easy to lead out of where you have been.

Staying relevant in your ministry means not staying static...being relevant means constantly tending to a few questions. "What will allow us to reach the most people in this next season of ministry?" "What things have worked in the past that won't work in the future?" "Are we choosing comfort over impact and growth?" As future ministry leaders there are a few key things you want to do to stay relevant in your ministry:

The first thing to do is **Talk to God and listen to God**. You are a spiritual leader which means the credibility for your leadership authority is found in your nearness to God. Outside of that nearness you have no hope of keeping your ministry relevant. God is the author of your calling. As Andy Stanley says, "*what God originates, He orchestrates.*" The ministry work God has begun in you will be sustained by God. Having a pattern of talking to God and listening to God will transform you, and your ministry over time.

Keep this conversation with God current. What was the last thing God told you? When was it? What did you do based on what God said?

To keep your ministry relevant the next thing to tend to is **Listening to people who are far from God**. People who are far from God are a gift to you – they are the reason God has given you a role in building His Church. The best feedback you can get is from people you are trying to reach. If you are trying to reach church people you get thoughts from church people. When you are trying to reach people far from God you must make a habit of listening to people far from God. This requires you to actually have some level of relationship with people who are far from God. As a leader you model this to those you lead. If you aren't cultivating relationships with those outside the church than why would anyone far from God be interested in coming to your church? Listening to people who are far from God gives you thoughts and insights that you cannot see from your vantage point.

Keeping your ministry relevant means you take time to **Work ON your ministry, not just IN it**. There are times you need to just tend to the day in and day out of ministry. Some days or seasons require another 5 phone calls, another 5 thank you notes, and another day of message prep. Those are the ways you work in your ministry and keep it running. Keeping your ministry running is important. But if you never step back to work on your ministry, it will never change as needed. Working on your ministry means cultivating a habit of innovation and experimentation. What is the last thing you tried for the first time? When was the last time you tried something new in your ministry to see if it would make you more effective? Innovation is the way that the thriving ministry of last year becomes the sustained ministry of next year. Your ministry is never good enough. You haven't arrived and you never will...you must continue to fight to innovate in your area.

Remember to **Keep it Simple**. When it comes to striving to stay relevant you need to know that less is more. Less "stuff" allows you to innovate and reach more people. Being relevant doesn't mean adding more and more stuff so that you have something for everyone. Keeping your ministry relevant means slimming down to do the few things that will have the highest impact with those you want to reach. Remember that activity doesn't equal accomplishment. You can have a full calendar and be highly ineffective. As an employee you don't get paid to be busy, you get paid to be productive. When things are complex there is too much white noise and distraction to do anything other than keep the status quo. Keeping things simple allows head space and margin to change what you are doing for maximum effectiveness.

The last thing to tend to when it comes to Keeping Your Ministry Relevant is to make sure you **Feed the Mission, not the Machine**. One of the quickest ways a ministry becomes irrelevant is by feeding the machine. The machine is the system or processes that we put in place to support the mission. The machine is essential, but it is subordinate to the mission. Make sure that the systems you put in place fuel the mission. When you aren't intentional with this you can find that your machine serves to sustain the machine. It is too easy to make decisions based around the way the machine works, instead around the mission.

The choice we always have before us is whether we will lean into the mission by leveraging the machine, or lean into the machine by leveraging the mission. Keep Your Ministry Relevant by tending to the mission first.

**Effective Ministry Practices:
#5 - Take People on a Journey**

You have heard it said life is a journey. Journey is one of the best ways we articulate following Jesus on this earth – we talk about a *spiritual journey*. Journey is part of the way God created us to learn and grow. The prophet Jeremiah shares the words of the Lord in Jeremiah 6:16 when He says, “*Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it and you will find rest for your souls.*” Building the Kingdom of God isn’t about simply standing on high ground and giving directions, it requires us to **Take People on a Journey**.

We don’t know where people have been when they walk through the doors of our church for the first time. For those whose journey has been marked by pain and helplessness we can take them on a journey toward freedom, wholeness and hope in Christ. For others their journey has been one of fresh hope, renewed courage and strength...and we can help take them on a journey of deepening faith and Kingdom impact. Ensuring your ministry is effective at taking people on a journey means staying attentive to 4 things:

The first thing to keep in mind is to **Think PEOPLE not programs**. Your programs exist to serve the people, not the other way around. When considering the ways you will care for and invest in people make sure to think through things like demographics and diversity. Each person is different, so think of ways to attend to the uniqueness of each person while still serving the crowd. You want to find ways to speak directly to their spiritual and felt needs. Thinking people over programs means finding a way to be intentional with each person while still “holding on loosely.” People need to feel your intentionality and freedom at the same time. Create great programs, but allow flexibility within your system.

Thinking people over programs means never letting a system stand in the way of a person’s spiritual growth.

Another way you take people on a journey is to **Design ministry as a process**. Remember the words of Paul from Philippians 1:6 when he said, “*...He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*” Every part of our ministry should not only challenge and encourage people towards spiritual growth, but also clearly point to a practical “next step” they can take. There are always next steps in a person’s spiritual

journey – so the key is designing ministry so that every part feels like a river, not a dead sea. Most people naturally want to advance – so if you don't have a clear process or next step, people will fill in the blanks on their own.

You ministry will have momentum when leaders and participants know the process, and know what next step they are being invited into.

If you want to take people on a journey then you have to find ways to **Invest in Life Transformation**. You see we want to invite people into a life changing journey, not merely activity. Perhaps one of the most depressing things we could do in our ministry world is keep people busy and see it lead nowhere. True life transformation requires people to find a balance between being and doing. Every part of your church can be used to help facilitate transformation; you just have to think with the end in mind. You want to think and aim for long term growth instead of short term knowledge. Short term knowledge infuses a few key thoughts into the mind, but our goal is that people would be transformed by the renewing of their mind. Sometimes one of the best ways you can invest in life transformation is to consider the development track for each person without requiring a personal ministry return. It is great when you invest in someone and they end up investing back into your ministry – however if that return is essential for you to choose to invest in them then your ministry work is actually more about you than serving God. Invest in people in such a way that you see who God is transforming them to be. There is a German playwright who once said, *“Treat a man as he appears to be and you make him worse. But treat a man as if he already were what he potentially could be, and you make him what he should be.”* Chose to see the best in people and invest in them for life transformation.

To take people on a journey there is one more thing you need to tend to: **Let your life reflect Jesus as you lead**. We are not spiritual guides. We are not new age philosophers. We are redeemed men and women who have found hope in Jesus. If our hope in life is found in Jesus, than even more so our hope in ministry must be found in Jesus. Your life and leadership should reflect the character and grace of the One we are encouraging others to follow. Find ways to allow your ministry to not only be profession, but personal. One of the best catalysts for your ministry is your own personal devotion to Christ. The best way to ensure that your ministry is helping to take people on a journey is to ensure you are still on the journey as well.

**Effective Ministry Practices:
#6 - Learn to be Big on Service**

Wherever you end up in ministry there are two possible perspectives you will have as a part of your work. You will either feel successful or like a failure. I don't want to talk with you about whether or not these are true realities – because I don't know whether or not you will experience success or hardship in your ministry. What I do know is that you will feel one of these two extremes. Where you fall between these two perspectives has a lot to do with the way you see yourself before God. Your perspective of yourself will inform the way you lead. To help shape your perspective I want to challenge you to **Learn to be Big on Service**. Learning to be big on service helps recalibrate your perspective. It gives you a lens to view yourself, and the ministry God is doing through you.

Can you be big on service? It isn't just a question for us today - it is the question asked of every person who has ever carried spiritual authority and leadership. This is not a one-season question, this is a life-long question.

King Solomon knew the impact of this question, and he passed the test in his first season of ministry. He knew the right answer, and he knew what he wanted – and he chose to set aside what he wanted. In 1 Kings 3 God knew Solomon's heart so well that He actually just asked him, "*what do you want Solomon?*" Solomon asked for wisdom, because he wanted to be big on service. A few chapters later in 1 Kings 6 Solomon begins to build the temple of the Lord, and God promised to continue to bless him as long as he and his sons continued to serve. Solomon passed the test in his early years, but not in his later years – and that should terrify us.

In his later years Solomon deeply failed the test. We are all vulnerable to fail at this, especially when we have tasted some level of success. For Solomon he held fast to many foreign wives. He stopped paying attention to his CURRENT heart, instead relying on the memory of where he once was with God. Solomon's story helps remind us that God responds to our heart currently. God became angry with Solomon and promised to tear the Kingdom away from him. Just because your first years are right hearted doesn't mean your later years will be right hearted. The only guarantee we have is our answer to the question – Will I serve?

Can you serve? How important is Status to you? Don't try to answer this question too quickly, and don't dismiss it. No one is above wrestling with this question. The question of status has been wrestled with since Jesus walked the earth. In Matthew 20 Jesus deals with this question as it related to the disciples. Tension is introduced among the disciples as the mother of James and John goes to Jesus and makes a simple request – all she wanted was to be sure that in Jesus' Kingdom her sons could have seats of high honor at His right and left. No big deal. This creates arguments among the disciples. It would be great to think the argument was because 10 of the disciples didn't care about status and were concerned for

James and John, but that wasn't the case. They were angry because each of them desired the seats of high honor.

Jesus speaks right to the heart of this, starting in Matt 20:25 - *But Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. ²⁶ But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. ²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

"Not so with you." You see Jesus told them that the world lords leadership and levels of influence over one another, but followers of Jesus were called to live a different way. Competition for status among peers was important in their culture. Sounds a little familiar? How important is status to you? You can know the right answer to the question and still lead from the wrong answer. The question Jesus was posing to the disciples was simple - "Can you serve?"

When you see God bless your ministry in large ways, how do you answer the question - "Can I serve?" This was the last lesson Jesus taught His disciples. Understanding this lesson might be best grasped by a trip to Starbucks. How many of you like Starbucks? I love Starbucks, and I have my cup with me from my trip this morning. Now there are a few elements to my Starbucks experience when I stop in to get my coffee. First I grab some napkins while I wait for my drink. I've noticed the barista always seems to put the lid on in a certain way where the cup can leak - no clue how that happens every time, but because of it I grab napkins. Then I grab a Sleeve, because the coffee is hot, and I need the sleeve to be able to hold the cup. Finally the barista gives me the cup - and with cup, sleeve and napkins in hand I head on my way. Now why am I telling you about my cup of coffee?

When Jesus taught the disciples this last lesson, he helped them understand a few different roles of serving that can be easily understood by looking at a Starbucks cup of coffee. In Matthew 26 Jesus retreats to an olive grove to pray. Eleven of the disciples come with him to the grove, each of them still carrying the lesson from Matthew 20 - "This world flaunts its authority and leadership over others, but not so with you." The group is then divided up.

The first group is what I call the "Sit and Wait" group. They are like the napkin. He literally says to 8 of the disciples, "you sit here while I go over there to pray." Jesus left the 8 to sit and wait while the other 3 walked on with him. These 8 were asked to serve in a background place. Leaders hate to be in the background, but this is a reality. You have to

wonder if the 3 turned around and looked back at the 8 and snickered or laughed with arrogance. The napkin is the least desired job...but sometimes is the most needed.

The second group is what I call the “Watch, Pray and Stay” group. They are like the sleeve. Jesus walked further with the 3 and asked them to watch, pray and stay. This was an alongside place for them to serve. The sleeve can be separated, but it is a critical distinctive add. Nobody wants to be the sleeve when there is a cup, the only time you want to be the sleeve is when you realize there is a napkin. The sleeve finds itself with a little more lime-light, a little more access than the napkin, but it isn't the cup.

Finally we see Jesus separate himself even from the 3 – and He begins a dialog with God about carrying the Cup. The last piece of the Starbucks puzzle is the cup. Jesus asked God if He had to carry the cup. The cup is what people see and think of most, but it is still only the container. Being a cup means being the container that God fills and uses. Don't forget, once people finish the drink they throw the cup away. Carrying the cup requires death to our human nature and ambitions. Learn to test your ambitions, because He is testing them. The disciples wanted to be on the right and left of Jesus – not because they wanted to experience sacrifice, but because they wanted significance.

So here are some questions for you. **Can you be a Napkin?** When we are not feeling fulfilled, we tend to think that somebody is leading poorly – but maybe that is just what it feels like to be a napkin. When you are on the bench and you know you have ability, it is a tough place to stay fully engaged. When you are waiting for people to use you to clean up a mess, it is difficult to stay fully engaged. One of the toughest roles in football is being the backup quarterback. The backup has to constantly stay as sharp as possible, ready to be in at any given second – but their main role is to ride the bench. How you handle your ego when it is your role to be a napkin – that will in great part define you. The temptation is to lose intensity. The temptation of “the 8” is to choose to be insignificant because you feel insignificant.

Can you be a Sleeve? The risk here is having a deep sense of what you are going to get, but not what it is going to cost. The freedom given to Peter in being included in the “3” is what made Peter famous for his “fall.” A sleeve has closeness but has to remain separate. Sleeves protect and insulate. When you are a sleeve long enough you can forget that you are a sleeve and not the cup. The idea of coming alongside like a sleeve is biblically ideal but experientially difficult. The sleeve has such a hard job, because it is called to be helpful but not central.

Can you be a Cup? The temptation is this, “can you let this cup pass from me?” Can you go to the cross? Your public ministry power will never outperform your private prayer garden.

As a quick side note – the answer to these questions really come when the pressure is on. Don’t bother trying to answer the question in this room. Peter failed and Jesus re-instated him by asking him 3 times – “Can you serve?” Your ministry role – is it about serving or about lording? Does something need to die in you? Nothing can bring about more disunity among a church staff than secret ambitions. When you hear about shifts on staff, or peers being elevated do you instantly go into a mindset of ranking people? Lording positions and influence is our natural response and it is poison to the soul.

There are 3 places we are asked to go:

To sit and wait – the place where we feel marginalized.

To watch and pray – the place where we would rather do something more significant, we don’t feel marginalized but also feel like we aren’t leading where we could.

To Drink the Cup – the place where you are over your head, paying a price to serve greater than anyone knows.

Are you allowing your leadership to be defined by lording or by serving? Can you serve?

Effective Ministry Practices: #7 - Play Team Ball

ILL: Give an illustration of a good or bad team experience.

Many people love sports. Some of you have played sports most of your life. But even if you are not an athlete or into sports, chances are you have been and will be a part of a team. Church is a team sport. In fact, life is a team sport. You will be on serving teams. You will be on staff teams. Your family is like a team. You will experience team through out your life. Some of those teams will be great and you will experience great success. Other team experiences maybe not so great. But here is one important truth: of all the teams you will be a part of, they will all have one thing in common: You. You will add or subtract value for every team in which you are a part. With that in mind, it’s important to learn to play team ball.

Optional Group or Individual Exercise: Team Versus Talent.

(Notes: This could end up being a fun and spirited exercise. Let people think through and prepare a 1 or 2 minute presentation as to what they would choose Team or Talent. There are many great sports examples of no name teams that won a championship and also other teams with the "star" that won a championship. While there may be no clear cut "right" answer, one this is clear, "A Team" makes life better.)

Ask: Which is the most important? Team or Talent.

You get to Coach one of two teams: (You must **pick one** and you must explain why: You will present this brief teaching to the group.)

'A' Talent with 'B' Team

'B' Talent with 'A' Team

You must be able to win with people to win as a team. There is no clear answer, but we are responsible to answer it everyday.

Whatever talent you "A" or "B" talent, "Team" will always make you better. Teams can take you places that you could never go alone. That's how the body of Christ is designed. BUT..."Team" should never reduce personal sweat. Others aren't responsible to carry your load. So you are responsible to grow as a "team player." Here are 5 keys to being a great team player.

1. Invest in the lives of your TEAMMATES. One of the best investments you can make in your teammates is **ENCOURAGEMENT**. Encouragement means: to inspire with hope, or confidence; to embolden; cheer; promote; advance; strengthen. That feels like a great teammate doesn't it? So grow in your ability to encourage your teammates.

Encouragement is the physical and emotional fuel that enables people to reach farther, hold longer and climb higher than previously thought possible. Encouragement brings out the greatness in people they have always hoped was within them. Perhaps there is no greater investment you can make in your teammates than helping bring out the greatness that is within them. Encouragement is being a "lifter" on your team. Every team wants and needs people like that on their team.

2. Contribute OUTSIDE of your ministry area. Simple put: add value to the people at teams around you.

Galatians 6:1-10 is almost a ministry manual for teams.

1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive

themselves. 4 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, 5 for each one should carry their own load. 6 Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor. 7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

This points to the core of a successful ministry team: being concerned not only with your success, but the success of others. Many ministries are plagued by politics and selfishness. The death of a team is when someone secretly hopes for the failure of someone else so that there would be personal gain. Personal gain at the expense of team failure is never a good option. Ultimately, it will destroy a staff culture. One of the best ways to combat this internal temptation is through contributing outside your ministry area and contribute to the success of others.

3. **Put COOPERATION over COMPETITION.** This is part “B” to contributing outside of your ministry area. While healthy competition is good and can add fuel and passion to your work, knowing who or what the competition is remains the key factor. As a church ministry, our competition isn’t other staff members or even other churches. God doesn’t use other people or churches as a benchmark to measure our success and we shouldn’t either. Who wants to be on a team with a person who is constantly measuring their success against you? Teams rise when they value cooperation over competition. And when the team rises, the people on the team rise. Teams fail when an unhealthy competitive spirit takes over. When a team falls, the people on the team fall also. Ultimately, we are called to reach lost people. That is a task too great to go at it alone. We are better together and can accomplish more with each other than we can alone.
4. **Honor TRUST.** Trust is gained through authenticity. Trust is a product of connection. We connect with people through knowing their story. Through people’s story, we gain insight into their heart. You have to know the people you are in the game with. People will not trust you if they don’t connect with you. People won’t connect with you if they don’t feel they know your heart.
5. **Speak the TRUTH in love.** You can see how all of these steps build upon each other. This is so important. Many teams fail because they have “truth tellers” who haven’t earned the right to speak the truth. Relationships blow up when people tell the truth without the relational equity to have it received in a healthy way. A teammate who has invested, added value, honored trust has more freedom to speak the truth than a teammate who hasn’t. Some people say, I’m telling you the truth because I love you. But they haven’t shown mature love through their actions. You can’t short change mature love. It is built over time and it is proven through action.

Mature teams can speak the truth to each other because an altruistic spirit has been built over time and trust has been garnered through experience. This is the ultimate sign of maturity in a team. This takes truth telling from something that is received as a personal offense to something that makes a person and a team better.

**Effective Ministry Practices:
#8 - Practice Mutual Voluntary Submission (MVS)**

The term Mutual Voluntary Submission is a term that is taken out of Ephesians 5:21-33.

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

This passage speaks to households and marriage. Verse 21 says to submit to one another out of reverence to Christ. This is a deep biblical concept and core to making family work.

This same concept is core to making team and ministry work. Ultimately, a mature staff knows and understands how to live out Mutual Voluntary Submission. Let’s start by breaking down the phrase by looking at each word.

Mutual Voluntary Submission must be MUTUAL. Mutual means that both parties agree. It is something they have in common. There is an agreement that both parties are in

collaboration with. There is a shared or common objective that pursued. It could be simplified to both parties agreeing with what is important. For example, in marriage, both parties agree that this relationship takes priority over every other relationship. When that is agreed upon, that dictates the behavior. On a church staff, we mutually agree to a vision or process that we will follow. That mutual agreement then directs our behaviors.

Mutual Voluntary Submission must be VOLUNTARY. In a marriage relationship, no one is making the other stick to the marriage commitment. Love is voluntary. People choose to be in love and choose to be married. In a ministry organization, we also make similar choices. We choose to be a part of a ministry. We choose to align with organizational priorities, structures and staff.

Question? What about if the leader above you is incompetent or not as sharp as you are? Can you voluntarily submit?

Here are a couple of quick thoughts just in case you feel you are in this position.

1. First, it's not for you to decide if the leader above you or along side of you is incompetent, that's for their leader to decide. By being a part of the organization (voluntarily), you are submitting to their authority.
2. Maybe God has you in that position for a reason. Maybe God is refining some things in you during this season. And the reason you are not rising, or someone else is ahead of you is because there is still work to be done in you. Sometimes God puts a less talented leader over a more talented leader to check your submission, ego, etc

Mutual Voluntary Submission must be SUBMISSIVE. Ultimately, for MVS to work, you need to be willing to submit to one another. The whole thing crumbles when one party chooses to get the upper hand.

The healthiest of ministry teams and staff function with a high level of Mutual Voluntary Submission.

What kills Mutual Voluntary Submission?

1. **Protection**- When a staff member is more concerned about their title, their rights or their opinion.
2. Not carrying your **share** of the responsibility. ILL: We've all seen a marriage where one party has put the majority of the responsibility on the other. Ministry teams also break down because of this. A great staff will carry someone for a season, but not a career.
3. Seeking your interests **first** - getting your way. Nothing kills a team faster than always having to get your way.
4. **Critical** spirit - the opposite of encouragement. it's OK to see holes or problems if you are working together to solve. But a critical spirit will kill a team. MVS is about helping the other succeed, even when it costs you something to make that happen.

5. Not **growing** individually. For MVS to succeed, both parties need to be committed to growth. An uneven growth trajectory will break down the relationship. One will eventually get left behind. By not growing, the “agreement” is changed and one party is no longer holding up their end of the “mutual agreement.”
6. Misalignment in **vision/purpose**. Every church has a vision and a culture. Not every ministry organization’s vision or culture is for every person. This is one of the deadliest factors to MVS. When you join an organization, you are agreeing to the vision and culture. You are not there to change the vision or culture. If you cannot voluntarily submit to that culture, then you shouldn’t be a part of that culture.

Effective Ministry Practices: #9 - Work Yourself Out of a Job

Work YOURSELF OUT OF A JOB.

Big dreams and vision cannot be accomplished alone. So many people desire to do something great but rarely accomplish their dreams because they fail to raise up develop others. Not only can you do something greater with others that you can do alone, but there is also great satisfaction and joy in helping **others go farther, reach higher and hold on longer** than they thought possible because you invested in them.

Ultimately, working yourself out of a job needs to come from an internal disposition that every blessing you have, every skill, talent, position or responsibility you have is the result of God’s favor and the people who have poured into you.

Therefore there is no skill, talent, blessing, position or responsibility that you have that you wouldn’t gladly give to someone else. Deep down you must believe that there is no great calling on your life that to give away all that has been given to you. That is the heart of working yourself out of a job and developing people. You can love to accomplish. You can love success. But someone who can work themselves out of a job gains just as much, if not more joy, from seeing others realize their dreams.

Someone who can work themselves out of a job in a healthy way, will always have another job, another hill to climb. So what are the keys to working yourself out of a job?

1. Keep yourself GROWING. **Illustration: Hot Air Balloon. You have to continually reheat the air or the balloon is going down! Leadership is the same way. You have to continually reheat, refuel your leadership.**

The most important person a leader will grow is himself/herself. Growth doesn’t usually happen by accident it happens through being intentional. One of the most critical tools that a leader can implement in their lives is a personal growth plan. This involves three key steps:

Identify Areas of Growth. Ask yourself, where do I need to grow as a leader and a person? It can be something like: I want to grow my capacity. Or it can be, I want to grow in my ability to win in relationships. Or I want to grow in my spiritual authority. Every leader, whether new or experienced has area in which they can grow. The first step is to identify an area. (Caution: choose one or two each quarter or year, don't try and grow everything all at once!)

Develop a strategy for growth. Once you pick an area, start developing the plan to grow that area. For example if you want to grow your ability to win with people you may choose to study a book like 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey, or Winning with People by John C. Maxwell. . One by one start implementing the principles into your daily interactions. The mistake that many people make is making the book the goal. The book isn't the goal. Becoming better at winning with people is the goal. The book is the tool to help you get better. Reading a book should never be a personal development goal, it is only the tool. What you are trying to develop in you is the goal.

2. Think APPRENTICE. Once you are on a growth track, it is very natural to start thinking apprentice. It's important to note that your growth comes first. If you are not growing you are tempted to think of an apprentice as someone who can save you from your mess! When you are growing, you are thinking of an apprentice as someone you can pour into and raise up. Apprentices are the key to a growing organization. An organization is never stronger than its bench. A growing organization has a never ending need for new leaders to be raised up and empowered.

Thinking apprentice is as simple as: always take someone with you.

Scripture speaks of this in Deut. 6:4-9

*⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.^[a] ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.(Conversion and Calling) ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when **you sit** at home and when **you walk** along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. Deut. 6:4-9*

Question: What do you do when walking with someone? Great and simple tool:

- **I do, you watch** – I'm going to take you along with me, I'm going to demonstrate how something is done or how something is lived out. (Insert Personal Illustration)
- **I do, you help** – The principle is simply this: I take the lead and you contribute. I want to give you opportunities to contribute and practice. (Personal Illustration)

- **You do, I help** – We switch it, You take the lead, I support, I help.
 - **You do, I watch** – This is the great joy of a leader! (**Personal Illustration**) Obviously, this is just a simple illustration, but there is no greater joy than watching an apprentice step up to lead.
3. Develop LEADERS. Once you gain an apprentice, it's time to develop them. This is one of the most important and difficult skills to learn as a leader. One of the things that makes this difficult is because it involves people! It's been said that leadership would be easy if it weren't for people. People require investment. People cost energy. People are rarely on "our" timetable. There are a couple of keys in developing people.

The first is, there is a difference between equipping and developing. That distinction is the difference between raising up leaders or raising up caretakers, raising up owners or raising up employees.

Simply put: Equipping is giving people the skill to accomplish a task. Developing is growing the person. Developing is infinitely more nuanced and complex.

ILLUSTRATION: Two people were walking down town one evening. They happened upon an Icecream Shop. As they approached the door to open it, they found it to be locked. They saw the shop hours posted in the door indicating that the shop closes at 9:00PM. They looked at their watches seeing that it was 8:55. Seeing an employee behind the counter they knocked on the door. The employee came to the door and said, "We are closed." The men make the case that it was not 9:00PM yet. The employee said, "I've already shut things down and closed out the register." "So we are not getting ice-cream?" the men said. "No," responded the employee. One man looked at the employee and said, "You are not the owner are you?" "No," said the employee and he closed the door and walked back into the shop.

We all know that a good owner would have handled things differently. The owner understands the need to grow a business and how treating customers matters. The employee understood the mechanics of closing out a register and cleaning up a shop, but not the reason for the business or how to make it successful. In other words, he was equipped to serve ice cream, but not developed to run a business.

Developing people involves helping them understand and internalize the why behind what they do. It's beyond just skill and involves changing their personhood. When you do this, you have raised someone who can not only have the skills to do your job, but has the leadership intuition to win at your job.

One important key in developing people is to learn **simplicity and consistency**. You need to practice simplicity and consistency. If you don't make the process simple, you won't be consistent, and if you are not consistent, you will not realize the results you want. It takes wisdom to make it simple and discipline to remain consistent. Great leaders take the complex and make it simple. Disciplined leaders do it consistently. So what do you do?

One simple and great strategy is to get a book and read it together. You get a chance to teach how to think as you walk through the book. Read a chapter a week together (or a chapter a month).

Then ask two simple questions:

- What did you learn?
- What are you going to do?

The final step in working yourself out of a job is to **Practice EMPOWERMENT**. Many leaders fail in this area because they fail to let go and let others lead. Sometimes this comes from insecurity within the leader and sometimes this comes from an internal desire to be in control. Both of those must be arrested to fully empower others to lead.

Here are three principles in successful empowerment:

Belief. As a leader, your belief in those you are empowering transforms their leadership. Your belief in them is **bigger** than their belief in themselves - you believe in them **more** than they believe in themselves. You believe in them **before** they believe in themselves. They believe in themselves **because** you believed in them first. As a leader, your words and belief carry more weight than you may ever realize. You are giving them a deposit – a transformation gift – from your heart to theirs when you deposit your belief in them.

Second, Look out for their best interest – deep down you want **more** for them than **from** them.

Finally, **Pray** for them. God can do more for their development than you can. His favor and anointing will take you well beyond your talents and abilities. Praying for God's favor, praying for God's insights/discernment. What I know is that the people who are developing me are praying for me. That means everything to me. The people you develop, pray for them by name, each and every one of them. And when you pray for them, not only does God do something in them that you cannot, it does something in you.

Effective Ministry Practices: #10 - Make it Fun

At 12Stone, we have a saying, "We take God seriously, but we don't take ourselves seriously." Our mission is serious, but how we do it, is with a smile. We don't have to, we get to. It's a subtle but monumental difference. People want to be around people who love what they do and have fun doing it! That is why "Make it FUN" is a core ministry practice.

Atmosphere matters. Every planet has an atmosphere. Some atmospheres are conducive to life, and others are inhospitable. Just like every plant as an atmosphere, to do organizations. Organizational atmospheres are built by leaders and every leader has a

personal atmosphere. As a leader you have an atmosphere around you and it is created by you. You may not even realize it, but the people around you do. The people around you instinctively know whether this atmosphere is life giving or inhospitable. A leader who has created a toxic atmosphere, will eventually create an organization that lacks life.

Choose **JOY** even when under **PRESSURE**. Every leader experiences pressure. If there is no pressure, you probably aren't leading. Pressure is a reality of leadership that is driven to take ground. There is internal pressure (things inside a leader that drive them) and the external pressure (the drive of the organization for taking ground) that a leader has to deal with regularly. One hallmark of a great leader is to choose joy under pressure. This starts with an attitude of "Get to" versus "Have to." In ministry, it's so important to internalize this core principle. We get to do ministry. We get to be used by God to make an eternal impact. In the midst of all the pressures and complexities we face, is the internal knowledge that ministry is a privilege that God allows me to do. I can't believe that I get to do this! If you don't have that internal joy, then ministry may not be for you. When you choose joy under pressure, your team senses it and catches it. Joy is contagious.

Caution: Another key to the importance of choosing joy under pressure is that a leader cannot allow pressure to spill out on to those he/she is leading. Your teams don't need to carry your pressure. Many times, when there is a toxic environment, it is because a leader has transferred their pressure to those they lead. Never transfer your pressure to people who can't and shouldn't carry it.

Express **GRATITUDE** and encouragement. Great leaders have the ability to find the good and build on it. When you find the good and build on it, momentum is gained. What I find to be true is that you tend to grow the things you focus on. It's true in leading organizations and it's true in leading people. There is a great temptation in leaders to focus on arresting problems rather than multiplying successes.

There is an old saying, "You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar." There is truth to this statement! There is no doubt that every organization has faults. Just as every person does. But what I find to be true is that when the majority of the energy is spent on multiplying strengths, rather than stamping out weaknesses, organizational and personal momentum is gained. And one byproduct of this is that the weaknesses shrink.

One sure fire way to gain momentum is to be grow gratitude and become great at encouragement. Gratitude and encouragement are fuel to a joyful and productive atmosphere.

Difference between a "Pep Talk" and Encouragement

Pep Talk: General "you can do it"

Encouragement: Specific, purposeful, personal.

Pep Talk: Can be manipulative. It is for what I want. As a leader, a sacred trust is given to you and you are not to "flatter". The bible is clear about that also "Proverbs 29:5 (NIV)

Whoever flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet."

Encouragement: Altruistic in nature, for the growth of the other person. It is for their gain, not yours.

Pep Talk: Short term, get the win, "rah-rah."

Encouragement: Builds for the future.

When encouraging, sacrifice personal agenda. Ask yourself, "Why am I encouraging this person?"

An Encouraging Leader

- Inspires hope and progress.
- Intentionally looks for the good.
- Builds upon successes.

Take a moment to answer these questions:

- As a leader, how do you keep yourself encouraged?
- Who encourages you? How do they encourage you?

Bring **LAUGHTER** and a light heart to the mix.

This isn't about being the class clown. This isn't being an immature jokester. This is about being a leader who can free his/her team up to lead with joy. You may have experienced what it is like to be in a family or an organization where there is tension. Where people feel like they are walking on egg shells. Great leaders have an ability to release that tension that results in the team being freed up to lead on the edge and risk.

Illustration: Joe Montana. He possessed an almost mystical calmness in the midst of chaos, especially with the game on the line in the fourth quarter. While others saw turmoil and danger after the snap, Montana saw order and opportunity. He was Joe Cool, the unflappable king of the comeback. In the 1989 Super Bowl against the Cincinnati Bengals. The San Francisco 49ers were down by three points with 3:20 left in the fourth quarter. With the game on the line the tension was mounting. Montana spotted -- no, not an open receiver -- but a personality. "There, in the stands, standing near the exit ramp," Montana said to tackle Harris Barton. "Isn't that John Candy?" The atmosphere in the huddle experienced a dramatic shift -- tension was released. And then he led the 49ers 92 yards, throwing for the winning touchdown with 34 seconds left.

The Final thought on Making it Fun: To build a team that people want to be a part of, be a person that people want to be around. Your team atmosphere starts with you. Ask yourself the tough question: Am I a person that people want to be around? Is the team I'm leading a team that people want to be a part of?

On a scale of 1 to 10 how would I rank my "Make it Fun" quotient?

- Do I consistently choose joy under pressure? _____(score)
- Do I consistently express gratitude and encouragement? _____(score)
- Do I consistently bring laughter and a light heart to the mix? ____ (score).

If you want to go a little deeper, ask the people around you these questions.