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Living and Sharing the Gospel

GC2 equipper

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Dear servant-leader:

Here in Ohio (I live near Canton), fall is in the air. 2008 is near. And now is a good time to gather with leaders in your congregation to make plans. As you do, please keep in mind two imperatives:



Ted Johnston

1. Plan with prayer

There is no substitute for prayerfully seeking God's plans for us. In my personal Bible study (which I share by email with subscribers to *Sermon Series*), I'm currently studying the book of James. The half-brother of Jesus says a lot about the foolishness and arrogance of Christians who make plans without considering God's will (see James 4:13-17). So make plans, but seek first and always to discover and pursue God's perfect will and wisdom for your life, your team and your congregation.

2. Plan with purpose

If we're not careful, the mission of a congregation or ministry team becomes administering programs. But programs are not the mission—they are servants of the mission. And the mission—our calling—is to participate actively and skillfully in Jesus' love (in accordance with his Great Commandment to love) and in Jesus' life (in accordance with his Great Commission to make disciples).

Planning involves multiple issues. One is money—so be sure to prepare a budget for 2008 (see the February, 2007 GC2 equipper for tips). As you do, budget with purpose so that financial resources are used to advance GC2 ministry, rather than merely to perpetuate programs.

We also encourage you to include in your 2008 plans a *ministry tune-up* that will turn work groups into ministry teams (see page 2). And we encourage you to consider launching some new mission-focused ministries (see page 3).

May your plans for 2008 reflect fully God's perfect wisdom and will.

In his service,
Ted Johnston, Generations Ministries director

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Q: How can we prepare our ministries for 2008?

A: Consider conducting a ministry tune-up

Each congregation has multiple ministry tasks to accomplish: setting up the meeting hall, ushering, receiving and processing offerings, providing worship and food service, etc. These are essential and all bless the congregation. But often the individuals that come together to accomplish these tasks operate as *work groups*. They miss out on the opportunity to operate as true *ministry teams*. We recommend making changes to remedy this deficit.



In *Becoming a Healthy Team* (Baker, 2005) Stephen Macchia contrasts work groups and ministry teams:

Work groups:

- Have a strong, clearly focused leader (who delegates work tasks)
- Individual accountability (for accomplishing the tasks assigned)
- Focus on individual work tasks/products
- Meetings are efficient, dealing only with the tasks to be done

Ministry teams:

- Have shared leadership roles (building ministers, not merely workers)
- Individual and mutual accountability
- Focus on shared purpose (mission) and team-building
- Collective work products (“this is our ministry together”)
- Meetings are open-ended discussions with active problem-solving

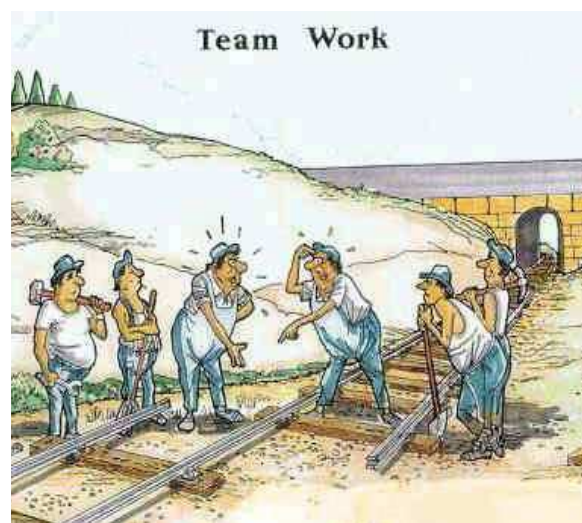


Work group members typically go elsewhere for nurture and learning. But what if you turned your work group into a ministry team that not only works together, but learns and grows together in *heart* (character and calling), *head* (ministry knowledge) and *hands* (ministry skill). For example, a work group that prepares food might become a food ministry team that grows together and reaches out through table fellowship.

In similar fashion, you might consider turning some small groups (particularly ones with mature believers) into ministry teams. Small groups often focus on learning and caring, but what if some became ministry teams that nurture, learn and reach out together in ministry? This change might save time (fewer meetings?) and re-focus small group life to emphasize growth in and through shared ministry.

We encourage you to learn more about team-based ministry by reading Macchia’s book. Also consider inviting the CAD ministry developer in your region to conduct a “Building Ministry Teams” seminar.

For information on scheduling ministry development seminars see www.wcg.org/MinDev/events.htm. Team-based ministry is also a key element in Servants Passage, which is conducted by WCG Generations Ministries (see <http://fly2.ws/dgcj3o2>).



Q: Any advice on launching new ministries?

A: Provide guidance and boundaries.

In 2008 you may want to launch some new ministries. As you do, consider the advice given by Rick Warren in the July/Aug 2007 *REV! magazine*. He offers guidance and boundaries reflected in four rules adapted here to a small church context.

1. New ministries must have leaders

The rule here is “no ministry without a ministry leader.” Too often we launch a ministry because it sounds good or there is a pressing need, but there is no gifted, passionate and appropriately gifted ministry leader. “*Houston, we have a problem!*” It’s always best to start by multiplying *leaders*; then work through them to multiply *ministries*.

2. New ministries must budget through the church

Have a unified budget for the whole congregation which then funds all the congregation’s individual ministries. This approach avoids individual ministries with individual (distinct/separate) budgets competing (dueling) for finances, fund-raising opportunities, etc.

3. New ministries must reflect your values

There are many types of ministry, but any one must fully reflect and adhere to the shared values of the whole congregation. This unity keeps all ministries connected to a common heart—the one gospel of Jesus. Want a ministry that takes things in another direction? Not here, please.

4. New ministries must fit your mission & strategy

All ministries must fit within the established mission and strategy of the congregation. This ensures that all ministries are headed in the same direction, utilizing similar approaches. In this way the congregation has one mission pursued through similar strategies utilizing multiple, harmonious parts. Think of it as one song of multiple verses sung in complementary harmonies. Beautiful!

For assistance in applying these rules, we recommend the book *Ministry Nuts & Bolts* by Aubrey Malphurs. The CAD Ministry Development Team (MDT) offers seminars that address core values discovery, mission & strategy formulation, and new leader identification & training. For these and other *WCG Next* resources, see the MDT website at <http://www.wcg.org/mindev/>.

