



# Building a Team

LEADERS & STAFF



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

## The Church with New Leadership:

## Building a Team

| Contents                                  | PAGE |
|---|------|
| <b>Leader's Guide</b> .....               | 2    |
| <b>Interview:</b>                         |      |
| BUILD A BETTER TEAM                       |      |
| <i>interview with Larry Osborne</i> ..... | 3    |
| <b>Assessments:</b>                       |      |
| DEFINING UNITY                            |      |
| <i>by Wayne Cordeiro</i> .....            | 5    |
| TURNING COMMITTEES INTO COMMUNITIES       |      |
| <i>by Roberta Hestenes</i> .....          | 6    |
| RECRUITING TEAM PLAYERS                   |      |
| <i>by Larry W. Osborne</i> .....          | 7    |
| QUALITIES OF A WINNING TEAM               |      |
| <i>by Greg Ogden</i> .....                | 8    |
| <b>Case Studies:</b>                      |      |
| STRENGTH TO STRENGTH                      |      |
| <i>by Jock Ficken</i> .....               | 9    |
| BUILDING CAMARADERIE                      |      |
| <i>by Robert J. Morgan</i> .....          | 10   |
| <b>Devotionals:</b>                       |      |
| THE BASIS FOR TEAM SPIRIT                 |      |
| <i>by Craig Brian Larson</i> .....        | 11   |
| WHAT MAKES A STRONG PLAYER                |      |
| <i>by Craig Brian Larson</i> .....        | 12   |
| <b>How-To Articles:</b>                   |      |
| TEAMWORK GROUND RULES                     |      |
| <i>by Stephen A. Bly</i> .....            | 13   |
| DECISIONS BY CONSENSUS                    |      |
| <i>by David L. Goetz</i> .....            | 14   |
| THE MIXED-GENDER TEAM                     |      |
| <i>by Sarah Sumner</i> .....              | 15   |
| <b>Further Resources</b> .....            | 17   |

## BUILDING A TEAM

# Leader's Guide

*How to use "Building a Team" by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS in your regularly scheduled meetings.*

At BuildingChurchLeaders.com, we recognize that there is no "one size fits all" approach to church leadership training. Every church—and every team—is unique, with its own set of strengths and challenges that stand between where you are and where you want to be. That is why we have created Training Tracks—to help each church get from where you are today to where you can be tomorrow.

This resource, "Building a Team," is part of *The Church with New Leadership* Training Track—Level One. When you have completed this training, move on through the other downloads in level one, and then on to levels two and three, which also incorporate multiple types of training content to dig deeper into the specific opportunities and challenges that deal with *The Church with New Leadership*.

**1. Select a learning tool.** This download includes ten articles on the theme of building a strong, healthy leadership team.

**2. Select a handout.** You could select one of the four assessments in this theme: "Defining Unity" (p. 5), "Turning Committees into Communities" (p. 6), "Recruiting Team Players" (p. 7), or "Qualities of a Winning Team" (p. 8). From these options, select the one that best fits what you want to accomplish.

**3. Photocopy the handout.** Photocopy as many copies as you need—you do not need to ask for permission to photocopy any material from Building Church Leaders (as long as you are using the material in a church or educational setting and are not charging for it).

**4. Prepare for the discussion.** We recommend you read the Scripture passages and identify key discussion questions. How will you apply the principles to specific decisions your church is making?

**5. Lead the discussion.** Each handout can be read within 5 minutes. After you have allowed time for reading, begin the discussion by asking one of the provided questions. Be ready to move the discussion to specific issues your church is facing.

Each Building Church Leaders handout can be discussed in 15 or 20 minutes. Your board, committee, or team will still have plenty of time to discuss its agenda.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at [www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com](http://www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com).

To contact the editors:

E-mail [BCL@christianitytoday.com](mailto:BCL@christianitytoday.com)

Mail BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS, Christianity Today  
465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188

**BUILDING A TEAM****Build a Better Team**

*What to keep in mind when building a team.*

Romans 12:9–10; 1 Corinthians 12:12–31

*We all want a healthy leadership team, but where do you start in building one? We asked Larry Osborne, pastor of North Coast Church in Vista, California, a regular contributor to Leadership Journal, and author of The Unity Factor, a book about creating healthy elder boards.*

**What made you write a book about church boards?**

My interest in a healthy church leadership team came out of experiences I had growing up. I watched my dad as a deacon in a church experience long and frustrating nights and look forward to the day that he got off the board. Something didn't seem right with that picture. Then, when I came to North Coast Church, a small church about a year-and-a-half old, I assumed that everybody was ready to charge the hill. Instead, I found real people with real hurts, and I made the mistake of not focusing on meeting their needs, but saying, "Come on, let's go meet the needs of the world out there." We only grew by one person the first three years. That was a difficult time for me, and it dawned on me that we were never going to be healthier than our leadership team. So I switched my focus to the inner group God had given me. That started with our elder board.

**What exactly did you do?**

We shifted where and when we met. I got involved with deciding who would be on the board, and, most important, I began to train them. I realized that no one trains leaders for the task of leading the church. We take our church leaders and give them more theology. Often they're some of our best people theologically and spiritually anyway, and what they need to know is how to lead the church—just like a Sunday school teacher needs to understand the differences between age groups and the various dynamics involved in teaching.

**What do you teach them?**

I expose them to things I learned in seminary and in conferences and journals for pastors. I teach them everything from church growth principles to group dynamics. We talk philosophy of ministry. My goal was to help them to think like pastors think, with the focus on what it means to lead a volunteer organization. Most people tend to lead the church like a business. The church is not a trucking company. The church is completely different.

**When building an elder board, what do you look for?**

First, we make sure potential elders don't have glaring weaknesses as described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. We look for the biblical qualifications. Second, we look for a fit with our philosophy of ministry. Just because someone is spiritually mature and attends our church doesn't mean he or she has a right to completely change the direction of our church. A lot of churches fail to consider that when selecting church leaders. Third, we look for team fit. We ask, "What does our leadership team need right now?" That changes. It's like a sports team. You can't win a championship with five Shaqs. Somebody's got to bring the ball up the court.

**How can a leadership group work as a team?**

First, make sure your group is the right size—I suggest somewhere between five and 12. If you have too many people, there's no way to keep the lines of communication flowing. Frankly, it's the slightly-too-large board that often gets the time-bomb member—because the board is trying to fill that last slot or two. Second, spend time together. The more time we spend together, the more we like and understand one another. Too many boards gather, quickly pray, do business, and go home. I look for ways to have some play, socialization, time together. Third, create shared experiences. That's what training does. We get a common lingo, a common background that helps us—not necessarily to agree, but to understand our disagreements better.

**What is the purpose of a board? What should members see as their function?**

## BUILDING A TEAM

That changes as the church changes. In a smaller church, the purpose is usually helping a pastor get the job done. In a larger church it's helping a pastor make and communicate good decisions. In the largest churches, a board's primary function is to be the brakes of the organization, the accountability, people who can stop anything. The board is also wise counsel, because a larger church is staff-led, so the board is more wise counsel than hands-on leaders. They also serve as a crisis team in waiting.

### What do you do when your team isn't functioning like one?

Pray. All the leadership understanding and insight in the world can't make up for making sure the Lord's hand is guiding you in what to do. Also, if the relationships are really a struggle, bring in an outside consultant—one that both parties feel comfortable with. When people are not communicating well, just talking more doesn't usually get anywhere.

### How can you keep a board healthy?

Remember that you are a unit—whether you're the pastor or a board member. I'm a strong leader, but when my board says no, it's no.

—© 2001 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

### Discuss

1. How does our team attend to the needs of those on the team? How could we do this better?
2. What is our team's ideal size? How will we know if it is too small? Too large?
3. How does 1 Corinthians 12 speak to the way we should approach board relationships?

## BUILDING A TEAM

### Defining Unity

*Keep the vision before you at all times.*

Philippians 2:2

*Every team strives for unity—but what does unity actually look like in a team context? How will you know when it has been achieved? Before you begin your journey together, ensure that everyone on the team has the same goal in mind.*

Unity needs to be defined at the outset so that it is not confused with conformity. Unity focuses a collective strength toward a common goal; conformity focuses on reducing problems with one another.

I have found that unity—true unity—does not always lend itself to calm seas. When we are compelled toward a certain calling, we will encourage, sharpen, and even prod each other. Yet even when we become uncomfortable, unity is still in motion.

One of the main obstacles to unity is failing to identify what we are all about. Without a clear, concise vision that is understood by everyone, unity is compromised. And let me hasten to add: there is one thing worse than a ministry without vision. It is a ministry with too many visions! Those various visions will be seeds of dissent in your ministry.

Keep the vision of what God has asked you to accomplish before you at all times. Identify it, write it, tell stories about it, and celebrate when you accomplish it. Post it on the walls and in your messages: "This is who we are and this is what we have been assigned by God to accomplish as a team." This is the greatest corrective mechanism to keep your team unified on the same God-given assignment. This brings alignment rather than comparison. It brings us back to *what's* right instead of *who's* right.

—WAYNE CORDEIRO is senior pastor of New Hope Christian Fellowship in Honolulu, Hawaii; © 2010 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

### Discuss

1. Read Philippians 2:2. What does it mean to “have the same love”? How does this shape team unity?
2. What is our team’s vision? How can we ensure that this vision remains central to everything we do?
3. If unity of vision brings us back to *what's* right instead of *who's* right, how can it help us resolve conflict when it arises?

## BUILDING A TEAM

## Turning Committees into Communities

*Keys to becoming mission-focused.*

1 John 4:7–8; John 17:22–23

*Committees traditionally fall short of being true mission-focused communities in a number of areas:*

**1. Commitment.** For the average committee member, commitment means “I come to meetings and respond to anything I’m supposed to vote on. If something doesn’t happen, it isn’t my fault.”

In addition, the traditional time commitment is usually inadequate. Most committees assume a handful of people meeting once a month can bring renewal to worship or Christian education or discipleship. In most instances that wouldn’t provide even minimal maintenance.

**2. Frequency.** A committee usually meets according to a set calendar. A mission-focused community, on the other hand, meets as often as is necessary to get the task done.

**3. Calling.** “Please tell people,” my banker friends plead, “that bankers don’t necessarily want to serve on the finance committee.”

Traditional nominating committees would have put Saul, the tentmaker from Tarsus, on the maintenance committee. People like Saul will cheerfully do this work, but they need a way to discover other gifts.

Mission communities, on the other hand, form in response to real needs and are staffed by people whose gifts and calling determine their roles.

**4. Responsibility.** Traditional committees often separate authority from responsibility, and this is deadly. Committee members end up with a low sense of responsibility for their decisions, while those who do the work often lack authority needed to make responsible decisions.

Mission-focused communities, on the other hand, tend to keep responsibility and authority closer together.

**5. Uninvited guests.** There are always invited guests at a conventional committee meeting: our brains and our seats. We are supposed to bring ideas and information and sit as long as the meeting runs.

The uninvited guests are our emotions, family problems, and personal concerns. Like little gremlins, they sneak in and mess up a meeting by discharging frustrations in speeches on topics totally unrelated to what is really bothering us.

In a community, there are no uninvited guests. The whole person is invited. We take time to catch up with each other, pray for needs, and then go on to business.

—ROBERTA HESTENES is teaching pastor at Community Presbyterian Church in Danville, California; adapted from our sister publication *Leadership Journal*, © 2004 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit [www.LeadershipJournal.net](http://www.LeadershipJournal.net).

### Discuss

1. How does a mission-focused community create a sense of teamwork?
2. In 1 John 4, the writer urges us to love one another. How does a team with a mission do that and still be productive? What does it mean to “invite the whole person?”
3. Should our team meet more frequently to become more productive? What tasks need more time to address?

## BUILDING A TEAM

## Recruiting Team Players

*Questions to preempt unnecessary conflict.*

Titus 1:6–9; 1 Peter 5

*A contentious or divisive team member can destroy established unity or any attempts to build it. Here are three questions to ask before recruits make the team:*

**1. What is the team's primary purpose?** Is the primary purpose of a church board representation or leadership? Our answer significantly affects our potential for unity.

Many churches have opted for the representative model. But in a board of representatives, the emphasis on representing various interest groups makes it difficult to justify keeping anyone off the board. From a representative perspective, any church member, no matter how divisive, has a right to lead.

I've become a strong advocate of a leadership-oriented board. Rather than figure out what everybody wants them to do, the members of a leadership board have only one focus: finding the best course of action and following it. When faced with a difficult decision, they ask first not "How will people react?" but "What does God want us to do?"

**2. What are our minimum qualifications?** In many churches, anyone who faithfully supports the church and works hard eventually finds himself or herself rewarded with a seat on the board. But passages such as Acts 6, 1 Timothy, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5 make it clear there are spiritual qualifications, and they don't stop at being born again. They go way beyond to issues of character. That's not so much a matter of what a person knows as who he or she is.

As important as spiritual maturity is, though, to build a harmonious and effective leadership team there are other qualifications to look for:

- ♦ Is this person in basic agreement with our current philosophy of ministry?
- ♦ Will this person fit the leadership team we've already assembled?

**3. Who should guard the gate?** Every church has gatekeepers, the folks who nominate. Unfortunately, even churches that are careful when choosing a governing board can be casual when deciding who will control the initial selection.

The nominating committee may be the most important committee in our church, because it serves like the headwaters of a river. If there's pollution upstream, it will eventually defile everything downstream.

A pollution-free river demands a good working relationship between the pastor and the nominating board.

—LARRY W. OSBORNE is pastor of North Coast Church in Vista, California; © 2006, updated 2012 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

### Discuss

1. What qualifies someone to serve on our high-level boards or committees? Are our standards in line with Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5?
2. How do we find the best people for our team, given that many already seem too busy?
3. What training do we give new board members? Does it include a section on the purpose of the board?



## BUILDING A TEAM

## Qualities of a Winning Team

*6 characteristics of servant leaders.*

Matthew 20:26; John 13:3–5

*Jesus instructed his followers to walk away from the prevailing Gentile and Jewish models of leadership where dominance (“lording it over”), coercion, titles, and public recognition were the goals. “Not so with you,” Jesus exclaimed (Matt. 20:26). When servant leadership is embodied in the church, certain characteristics will be present. Servant leaders:*

**1. Feel secure.** Only when we accept our worth before God can we freely attend to the needs of others and empower them to their full potential. In John 13:3–5, we read, “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he . . . poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet. . .”

Jesus was at liberty to wash the grime from the disciples’ feet because he knew who he was before the Father.

**2. Support each other.** Servant leaders enable others to develop their spiritual gifts, and they publicly recognize the growth and contribution of others. As a result, the congregation functions as a body where every person is valued.

**3. Servant leaders don’t need credit for their ideas.** The old lament applies here: “How much good could be accomplished for the kingdom of God if it mattered not who gets the credit?” Servant leaders glory in the growth of the kingdom of God.

**4. Value relationships.** They are high on relationships, and low on control and coercion. People are motivated by genuine care and “heart connection” rather than by fear and judgment.

**5. Shun status.** Realizing all are equal before Christ, they avoid titles that support hierarchical pecking orders and opt instead for functional language that describes what a person does.

**6. Base their authority on character.** Moral authority arises from a person’s integrity and consistency before Christ. Therefore, true leaders give followers an attractive model they will want to emulate.

—GREG OGDEN is a former pastor and author of *Discipleship Essentials* (InterVarsity Press, 2007); © 2006, updated 2012 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

### Discuss

1. How does servant leadership enhance teamwork?
2. In John 13:3, Jesus reveals his confidence in who he was. How can our confidence as adopted children of God help us achieve our mission?
3. How could our team better maximize your spiritual gifts?

## BUILDING A TEAM

## Strength to Strength

*Adding personnel to round out your team.*

Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 3:8–11

**The Case** Understaffed for years, Community Church lacked effective programs and trained volunteers. Many attenders were inactive. The pastor tried his best to cover the bases but couldn't launch new ministry initiatives without adequate staffing or trained personnel.

In a church council meeting, the chairperson raised the idea of calling a second pastor. One senior council member responded, "Every time we've had two pastors, we've had trouble. The whole church is worried we'll make the same mistake again."

Another said, "Maybe we should leave it alone and not create any new problems for ourselves."

Still another replied, "But if we do nothing, we won't solve our problems. How are we ever going to build a ministry team for this church to grow if we can't take the next step?"

**What Would You Do?**

- ♦ If you were on the council at Community Church, responsible for leading the church, what would you do?
- ♦ What steps should be taken before making any decision?

### What Happened

The leaders took several steps:

First, they determined they needed to move from a single pastor to a team of at least two staff members. Everyone agreed that to do nothing was not an option.

Second, they surveyed the congregation to determine how the members perceived the strengths and weaknesses of the present ministry.

Third, they asked the pastor to identify his strengths and growth areas. He was also asked what type of staff person he would like to add.

Fourth, they talked to the pastors and lay leaders of other churches in their denomination that had recently established a team approach to ministry and inquired, "If you were doing this all over again, what would you do differently?"

Finally, the council recommended the congregation hire a lay professional to join the team. The strengths of this person would complement those of the pastor. To counter the congregation's fear that more staff meant conflict, the leaders outlined the new team member's responsibilities in a job description, clarifying the new person would be accountable to the pastor.

—JOCK FICKEN is a former pastor and vice president of Large Church Ministry for Capital Funding Services; © 2000, updated 2012 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

- Discuss**
1. What is the next step in our team building process? Do we need to add staff? Do we need to put a volunteer leadership training program in place?
  2. What is one way we can improve the quality of relationships in our ministry team?

## Building Camaraderie

*Time together refreshes and motivates.*

2 Timothy 1:16; Colossians 3:12–17

**The Case** Our problem was too many wombs, too few rooms. An army of kids had graduated from the nursery and toddler ministries and swept into our early childhood areas like locusts. The workers were overextended, absentees, and prospects weren't being tracked, and children had occasionally slipped out the door to roam the halls, creating a security risk. The preschool volunteers became increasingly tense and irritable. Regular meetings were consumed with problem-solving and fire-extinguishing. Everyone was too busy to bond, and team spirit was quickly evaporating.

**What Would You Do?**

- ♦ If you were in charge of the preschool ministry, what would you do?
- ♦ How can you build camaraderie among workers without taking additional time from their already overextended schedule?

**What Happened** We did the obvious—increased our efforts to recruit more workers and feverishly sought a better plan of space utilization. In the meantime we treated our workers to a weekend getaway, largely subsidized by the church. A friend offered his large, lakeside home at no cost. We recruited substitute Sunday staff, weekend babysitters, and cooks from outside the children's ministry.

The date was set far in advance, allowing most to attend. On Friday and Saturday nights, a guest speaker provided inspirational messages about the incredible potential of ministering to children. She reminded us that large numbers of children represented a blessing from God.

On Saturday morning, our children's minister described one trouble spot in our programming, and the group brainstormed solutions, coming up with a simple action plan. Just articulating a plan to solve one problem gave the group a sense of progress. The rest of the time was spent swimming, skiing, and relaxing. The following Sunday, a sense of family pervaded the workers as they resumed their tasks.

—ROBERT J. MORGAN is pastor of The Donelson Fellowship in Nashville, Tennessee; © 2000, updated 2012 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

**Discuss**

1. Why is it important to get ministry groups “off campus” occasionally?
2. Which groups in our church could use such a getaway?
3. How could such a getaway be creatively financed?

## The Basis for Team Spirit

*It begins with how we feel about God.*

Matthew 10:40–42

**Read** *“He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward” (Matt. 10:40–42).*

**Comprehend** In chapter 10 of Matthew, Jesus sends his disciples out to various towns for ministry and gives them marching orders. Jesus knew their job would not always be pleasant. Although many would welcome their ministry, many others would reject the disciples, refusing them housing, refusing the message of Jesus, refusing prayer. Jesus sums up his briefing by telling of the blessing that would come to those who welcomed them for what they were—genuine servants of God. In short, those who welcomed a servant of God because he was a servant of God would somehow share in that servant’s reward.

The principle still holds true today. Jesus still sends workers, and the question stands: how do we respond to those he sends? Do we work well with others who truly serve God?

In the church teamwork does not develop merely because leaders and workers have a lot in common. Team spirit comes about because for the Lord’s sake we choose deliberately to welcome the ministries of others led by Christ. We don’t reject someone’s ministry merely because we don’t hit it off personally.

This holds for how people treat their pastor and for how church leaders treat each other (and those who do not have official positions but clearly have gifts and callings from God). To welcome and encourage one another is to receive God’s work.

The attitude that builds teamwork is “If God has given someone as a gift to this church, then I will support his or her ministry.”

The surprising point of Jesus’ words: How we treat other believers, especially leaders and those deeply devoted to God, is a reflection of how we feel about God.

The inspiring promise: In some way we share in the rewards of those whom we receive because we do it for the Lord’s sake. If we receive a pastor or deacon or church “saint,” somehow their rewards splash over into our lives. Now that is serious motivation for getting along!

—CRAIG BRIAN LARSON is editor of [PreachingToday.com](http://PreachingToday.com), a sister publication of [BuildingChurchLeaders.com](http://BuildingChurchLeaders.com); © 2000 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

- Discuss**
1. How can we work through disagreements without rejecting a God-called leader?
  2. In practical terms, what does it mean to “receive” another person or leader? What does it not mean?
  3. How can we “give a cup of cold water” to others on the church team?

## What Makes a Strong Player

*The interests of Jesus must prevail.*

Philippians 2:19–22

**Read** *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel (Phil. 2:19–22).*

**Comprehend** In the middle of his letter to the Philippians, Paul breaks away momentarily from teaching and talks logistics. He is going to send Timothy, one of his closest ministry associates, to Philippi, and the purpose is apparently to assess the situation at the church and carry news back to Paul. Likely Paul would then follow up with another teaching letter if necessary. Paul commends Timothy to the Philippians as a man whom he respects and trusts to the core.

What made Timothy the kind of man Paul wanted—even needed—to work with?

Timothy's main qualification was not his personality or talents. In Paul's letters to Timothy, we see a portrait of a man often timid and insecure. What made Timothy special was his main interest in life—above all he sought the interests of Jesus Christ. He wanted to see people come to faith and be trained as followers of Christ. He wanted to see the church strong and productive.

Any organization that pursues a lofty cause is labor-intensive. Any coach will say you can't mold a winning team if the players are more concerned about their other interests than they are in victory.

The interests of Jesus Christ are the ultimate issues in life: the truth about right and wrong, how our sins are forgiven, how we know and please God, who goes to heaven or hell, how we come together to advance God's purposes of justice and righteousness in an evil world, how we heal the hurting and feed the hungry, how we gather to sound forth God's praises. These priorities should squeeze other things out of our schedules, not the other way around.

A person will never be a strong church player whose primary interest is making money, being entertained, enjoying leisure. These things have their legitimate place—but definitely not first place. The ultimate team player is the person deeply devoted to the work of the Lord.

—CRAIG BRIAN LARSON is editor of PreachingToday.com, a sister publication of BuildingChurchLeaders.com; © 2000 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

- Discuss**
1. Trying to balance godly obligations with other needs of life always involves a certain tension. When have you felt that tension?
  2. What signs suggest that a legitimate interest, such as work or a hobby, may be crippling us as servants for the Lord?
  3. What biblical principles should guide our choices about where we spend time?

## BUILDING A TEAM

## Teamwork Ground Rules

*10 keys to an effective ministry.*

2 Timothy 2:14–15; 3:16–17

*Teamwork can be greatly enhanced by a few simple ground rules:*

- 1. We give prominence to what Scripture deems important.** We ask ourselves, “How often does the Bible deal with this?” Minor problems need solutions, too, but not at the cost of major confrontations.
- 2. We spend an hour each month in prayer for our staff and board.** A person who seeks the Lord on behalf of church leaders will have their attention when he or she wants to recommend change.
- 3. Having our say is more important than having our way.** Family members need the opportunity to express their views. That doesn’t mean we jump every time someone hollers. But we do listen.
- 4. We withhold financial support only when the Lord stops blessing.** Some say, “Keeping my offering is my only form of protest!” But that forfeits any platform from which to speak.
- 5. While on boards, we stay connected with the nitty-gritty of church life.** Once we’ve been elected, we try not to remove ourselves from the creative tension of ministry with people. This helps our decisions lean toward the practical rather than the speculative.
- 6. A majority vote is a strong indication of God’s will.** If the board has been called by the Lord to serve, then logic presumes he will express his voice through each of the members. The minority may still be right, but the timing may be wrong.
- 7. Never keep silent in a meeting on an issue that won’t be kept silent at home.** A problem develops when opinions expressed clearly outside the meeting never get voiced within.
- 8. Every dissenting vote symbolizes a possible word of caution from the Lord.** No sincere church leader wants a rubber-stamp committee. The objective should be well-reasoned, enthusiastic unanimity.
- 9. Love one another, reject ideas.** Occasional social events with the entire board and spouses, where no business is discussed, have proven to be a healthy exercise.
- 10. Spiritual authority will not be used as a club.** A vote against a spiritual leader does not necessarily infer a lack of spiritual commitment or maturity.

—STEPHEN A. BLY; © 2000 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

### Discuss

1. How does our church encourage people to express their views on critical issues?
2. What are our unspoken rules as a church? How can we be more intentional about what we value?
3. What are the prominent Scriptural issues that we need to make important in our church?

## BUILDING A TEAM

## Decisions by Consensus

*Discerning God's will in meetings.*

James 4:7–10; Romans 8:14–17

*Spiritual discernment is listening for God's will. It's done through consensus, which simply means that in a church board or committee, an important test of God's leading is spiritual unity, a sense of peace after a prayerful and thorough discussion of a decision.*

*How to do that while still getting things done?*

**1. Choose a sensitive guide.** In many ways, church meetings governed by spiritual discernment look similar to those run by Robert's Rules of Order. But there is a qualitative difference, which rests on the shoulders of the person leading the meeting—the chairperson.

Quakers call this person the “clerk,” the person responsible to interpret the spirit of the meeting, moving along the agenda while not controlling or pushing it, someone who guides, not steers, the meeting. The chairperson (or “spiritual guide”) tries to determine a collective thumbs up or thumbs down on the item for discussion.

**2. Handle disagreement with discretion.** When the chairperson attempts to wrap up a discussion with, “I sense the group is saying we should go ahead,” the board is given the opportunity to register its disagreement on one of four levels:

- ♦ *Level 1:* “I am a bit uncomfortable going ahead with this proposal.” This communicates that the way the spiritual guide phrased the conclusion of the group's overall feeling isn't quite right for that person.
- ♦ *Level 2:* “I disagree, but I do not wish to stand in the way.” By speaking up, the speaker has put the board on notice about his or her concern. But the proposal hasn't been derailed.
- ♦ *Level 3:* “Please put me down as opposed.” This slows down the train, stimulating discussion about his or her concern. Other board members may pick up on the objection and let it shape other responses. The meeting is free to proceed, but the comment makes the group cautious, though it shouldn't stand in the way of final action.
- ♦ *Level 4:* “I am unable to unite with (or affirm) the proposal.” There is clearly a lack of consensus. The normal procedure is to delay action until a later meeting.

Only when someone officially puts the board on notice (Level 4) does the proposal in its present form lurch off its tracks. After a while, boards learn how to disagree with each other, and good spiritual guides gently hold the reins on discussions.

—DAVID L. GOETZ is a former editor of *Leadership Journal* and author of *Death by Suburb* (HarperCollins, 2006); © 2006 Christianity Today/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

### Discuss

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of making decisions by consensus?
2. In Romans 8, Paul describes how the Holy Spirit resides in believers. How does the Holy Spirit enable us to hear God's voice?
3. How do we balance the need to listen to people who dissent with the need to move ahead and give strong leadership?

## BUILDING A TEAM

# The Mixed Gender Team

*We are called to unity in the body and on our ministry teams.*

1 Corinthians 12:25

To be a team requires at least two things: unity in purpose and commitment to a group dynamic. In other words, it doesn't mean *team* if individuals merely work on the same staff as independent contractors who oversee separate domains.

We know, as followers of Christ, that biblically we are all members of one body. We are not to be isolated or in competition with each other. On the contrary, the apostle Paul plainly says that "there should be no division" in the body (1 Cor. 12:25). Instead there should be a striking unity in the body and on our ministry teams.

Regardless of one's view of the role of women in ministry, virtually all Christians agree that ministry teams can be staffed with both males and females. Most of us agree that it's God's plan for men and women to serve him together corporately.

## Show Some Respect

Disrespect of women runs deep. If that were not the case, then why does it appear that the ultimate jeer against manhood is to call a man a woman? And why is it so laughable for men to think of having women role models?

Recently I asked a group of pastors to name the women in Scripture whom they pray to emulate. They laughed.

Following that, I said, "If women in Scripture, including the woman whom Jesus said should be remembered for anointing him, are not upheld as role models, then how can women today be lifted up as role models in the church? How can women today be taken seriously when they speak?"

With regard to church ministry teams, what does it mean for male ministers to pay respect to females? Here's a short list of suggestions:

1. *Give women leaders the benefit of the doubt.* Trust that they're on board with the church's mission statement. Trust that God has called them to be members of the ministry team.
2. *Coach the women.* Invest in the women on staff by providing opportunities for them to develop their giftedness.
3. *Talk up, not down, to women.* Ask two or three trusted women to draw it to your attention if you ever unintentionally sound patronizing.
4. *Seek women's input.* Take it seriously without being defensive or dismissive.
5. *Give women credit.* Acknowledge female team members for their ideas and contributions.

## Love Your Brother—or Sister

1 John 4:18 says, "Perfect love casts out fear." If men and women will decide to put on an attitude of true love, we'll no longer feel so threatened by one another.

To love means to believe in one another. It means for men to champion women and help them advance the Kingdom as much as they can. Likewise, it means for women to trust and respect the men instead of giving up on them.

On this point, the church lacks vision for this kind of church unity. One of the great blessings of my life is that I am very close to my brother. He and I even chose to live together in our twenties. In those younger years,



## BUILDING A TEAM

both of us struggled against sexual temptation. But we never had that struggle with each other. We couldn't have that struggle because we were siblings, and that made it a nonissue.

I believe it's possible for Christian men and women to learn to regard each other as brothers and sisters. Siblings aren't afraid of each other's sexuality unless terrible violations are made. The same should be true of the church.

Christians shouldn't be afraid of each other's sexuality. Rather, we should be protective of one another. But how are we going to cultivate a sibling mentality?

I believe the answer is for church leaders to pray and cast vision. Pastors can pray for God to help them paint a picture and model it in the staff and ministry teams, of brotherly-sisterly love in Christ.

—SARAH SUMNER is Dean of A.W. Tozer Theological Seminary in Redding, California; adapted from our sister publication *Leadership Journal*, © 2006 Christianity Today. For more articles like this, visit [www.LeadershipJournal.net](http://www.LeadershipJournal.net).

### Discuss

1. What are the differences in the ways men and women communicate? What kinds of communicators are our meetings structured to facilitate? How can we proactively seek and value the opinions of the women on our team?
2. How can we cultivate a sibling mentality on our team?
3. What are some examples of Biblical women we could pray to emulate? How often do we look to examples of Godly women leaders in the Bible?

## BUILDING A TEAM

### Further Exploration

*Resources for building a strong, healthy team.*

 **BuildingChurchLeaders.com**: Leadership training resources from Christianity Today.

#### ***The Church with New Leadership Training Track***

- Level One:*
- Building the Team
  - Building a Team
  - Cultivating Team Unity
  - Making Teams Work
  - Cultivating a Positive Church Culture
- Level Two:*
- What We Value
  - Core Values
  - Setting Goals and Measuring Results
  - Redefining Success
  - Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Level Three:*
- How to Prevent Ministry Burnout
  - How to Last as a Leader
  - Motivating Leaders
  - Spiritual Disciplines for Busy Church Leaders
  - When You Feel Like Quitting

 **LeadershipJournal.net**: This website offers practical advice and articles for church leaders.

**The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable** *by Patrick Lencioni*. Lencioni reveals the five dysfunctions that go to the very heart of why teams—even the best ones—often struggle. He outlines a powerful model and actionable steps that can be used to overcome these common hurdles and build a cohesive, effective team. (John Wiley & Sons, 2002; ISBN 9780787960759)

**Leading from Your Strengths: Building Close-Knit Ministry Teams** *by John Trent, Ph.D.* Learn to understand, accommodate, and empower each unique temperament—and watch your ministry take off! (B& H Publishing, 2004; ISBN 9780805430615).

**Pursuing God's Will Together** *by Ruth Haley Barton*. This step-by-step guidance, personal reflection questions and community practices will help your leadership team become a community for discernment. (InterVarsity Press, 2012; ISBN 9780830835669)

**Sticky Teams** *by Larry Osborne*. Drawing on his sometimes harrowing experience with church administrators, Osborne shares practical wisdom for developing and maintaining a unified team. Discover how to overcome roadblocks to harmony, what to do when a member isn't working out, guide a congregation through controversial changes, and more. (Zondervan, 2010; ISBN 9780310324645).