



Building Strong, Local Churches Through Team Ministry

By Nick Sisco

**A great commitment to a great commandment and
the great commission will grow a great church!**

(Purpose Driven Church, Rick Warren, p. 102)

**The foundation of your church will determine both its size and strength.
One can never build larger than the foundation can handle.**

Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matthew 28:19-20

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The Great Commandment was given by Jesus in response to a question. One day, Jesus was asked to identify the most important command. He responded by giving the essence of the entire Old Testament. Jesus said, "All the Law and all the Prophets can be condensed into two tasks:

1. Love God with all your heart
2. Love your neighbor as yourself." (Warren, p. 102)

In some of Christ's last words to His disciples, Jesus gave the Great Commission and assigned three more tasks:

3. Go make disciples
4. baptize them
5. teach them to obey everything he had taught.

It was never God's intention for one man to carry the church. If we try to lead a church alone the strain and pressure can become too much and over time we will be pulled apart, losing our vision and ability to perform.

That's why Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 states, **Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. ¹⁰For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. ¹¹Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? ¹²And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.**

When you drive down our Ghanaian roads you will often see a billboard promoting our NHIL. The picture that they have chosen really strengthens their advertisement.



- ✓ There is strength in numbers.
- ✓ There is strength in unity (Psalm 133:1; Ephesians 4:3, 13).
- ✓ A developed leader can accomplish a lot. But a developed team can accomplish more!
- ✓ The secret to building a healthy church is to develop a healthy team.
- ✓ Jesus Christ impacted the world as a result of a healthy team.

A healthy team does not mean you always agree on everything. In fact, the opposite is true. A team that agrees on everything is not a healthy team.

A healthy team...

1. Understands the importance of shared values.
 - Identify the values of each team member.
 - Values are the beliefs that drive our behavior. They are the cornerstones of church's culture.

If you have someone on your team that does not have the same value system it will cost you a lot:

Emotional energy
Time
Low morale
Declining performance
Missed opportunities

- Some shared values should be:
 - Faithfulness: proven members of your congregation.
 - Clear understanding and application of Acts 2:38.
 - Living a separated life above reproach.
 - They must be prayerful and careful with the souls placed in their charge.

- 2. Understands the necessity of placing people in positions according to their talents or gifting.
 - ✓ The wrong person in the wrong place = REGRESSION
 - ✓ The wrong person in the right place = FRUSTRATION
 - ✓ The right person in the wrong place = CONFUSION
 - ✓ The right person in the right place = PROGRESSION
 - ✓ The right people in the right places = MULTIPLICATION
(Teamwork makes the Dream Work, John C. Maxwell, p. 82)

- 3. Understands the value of outlining the role of each member on the team.
 - Job descriptions allow you to measure performance and encourage team unity.

- 4. Understands that their roles support each other and do not compete with one another.
 - “We have not come to compete with one another. We have come to complete one another.” Bill McCartney

- 5. Understands that it is their responsibility to develop and maintain unity.
 - Act ethically (Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.)
 - “You cannot prove character after you have begun your ministry. You must prove yourself before you begin ministry.” (Anonymous)

- 6. Understands the need to grow consistently in their area of knowledge and performance.
 - When we stop learning we stop leading.

7. Understands the principle: iron sharpens iron and are given the freedom to express their opinions.
- “Teamwork gives you the best opportunity to turn vision into reality.”
(Teamwork makes the Dream Work, John C. Maxwell, p. 20)

Team ministry is the result of team development. An effective team develops on purpose. It does not develop by accident.

Jesus understood this and developed a nucleus or a core group. It is interesting to note the Bible says in John 2:24 that Jesus would not commit Himself to the crowds. Why? He clearly understood the effects of team building. He knew the importance of building a team and purposefully developed one.

4 Step process to developing a team:

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|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. The team is chosen/inherited | JESUS chose His team (Luke 6:12-13) |
| 2. The team is equipped | CHRIST equipped them (Luke 6:20; Matthew 5-7) |
| 3. The team is empowered | JESUS empowers them (Luke 9:1-2) |
| 4. The team performs. | The TEAM performs (Book of Acts) |

PROCESS #1

Luke 6:12-13

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. ¹³And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them HE CHOSE TWELVE, whom also he named apostles.

PROCESS #2

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Luke 6:20, “And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.”

Matthew 5:2-3, “And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, ³Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Verse 2 - And he opened his mouth. Frequent in the Old Testament; e.g. Job 3:1. A **Hebraism, indicating that the words spoken are not the utterance of chance, but of set will and purpose.**

And taught them. The talk was spoken, not simply to the multitudes which would be considered a chance audience, but with primary and special reference to those who had already made some advance in relation to him – namely the disciples.

The following may serve as a brief summary:

1. The ideal character of his disciples (Matt 5:3-10), which must be allowed to appear (5:11-16).
2. The relation that they ought to hold towards the religion of the day, of which the Law was the accepted standard (Matt 5:17-6:18).
3. General principles regarding -
 - (1) Their relation to wealth. They must remember that only the single eye receives the light (Matt 6:19-31).
 - (2) Their relation to men. They must remember the dangers of differentiating others. They must treat them as they would themselves be treated (Matt 7:1-12).

(adapted from The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft)

PROCESS #3

Luke 9:1-2, "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and GAVE THEM POWER AND AUTHORITY over all devils, and to cure diseases. ²And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick."

We cannot commit ourselves to every church member but we can commit ourselves to leaders who in turn commit themselves to the people they are responsible for.

It was through the team Christ committed Himself to, which was later lead by His Spirit, that all Jerusalem was filled with His doctrine. Asia heard the Word of the Lord and the church exists today because Jesus Christ believed in team ministry! Apostolic ministry cannot be done through one person. Strong local churches are built through TEAM MINISTRY.

Through your teaching and training the team becomes an extension of who you are. And through your team your community, city, and country can be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ!

I mentioned earlier that the foundation of your church will determine both its size and strength.

Just as the strength of a church is determined by its foundation, so the overall effectiveness of your team is determined by your leadership. And your leadership is determined by your source of strength, inspiration and instruction. Who are you teamed up with? Who are you personally connected with?

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus gives an invitation, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

- I would like to apply these verses to the leader who desires to learn from Christ.

YOKE

A bar or frame of wood by which two animals, especially oxen, are joined at the necks or heads for

1. working together
2. drawing a load or
3. pulling a plow

(from The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright (c) 1988.)

- A yoke brought a pair of oxen together so they could work efficiently.
- The yoke was used as a symbol of serving someone else's purposes or the burden of heavy responsibility, duty (1 Kings 12:4-14; Jeremiah 27:8-12; Acts 15:10).
- In New Testament times the phrase “take the yoke” of someone was used by the Jewish rabbis to mean, "Become the pupil of a certain teacher."
- Jesus has given a gentle invitation: **Come to me and I will give you rest—all of you who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke. ²⁹Wear my yoke—for it fits perfectly—and let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you shall find rest for your souls; for I give you only light burdens.** (Matthew 11:28-29 TLB)

(from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Story of how some farmers train a new ox to plough a field properly.

- The field is the world (Matthew 13:38).
- The first person we must connect with is Jesus. Yoke up with Christ. Become a student of Christ. Allow Him to be your foundation – form a solid partnership with Christ and from that relationship we can develop an effective team. The results will be apostolic! The results will be lasting! The results will be pleasing to God!

One man said to be efficient means to do things right. To be effective means to do the right things.

I want to be effective! I want to build a strong local church through team ministry. What are some guidelines to follow?

Building a strong local church through team effort begins with the Pastor. It all starts with the leader and his relationship with Christ. It is followed by the leader's willingness to equip and empower the team.

How much is he willing to invest in others? Good leaders invest in themselves great leaders also invest in others. This is the defining point in developing effective teams: Developing yourself and developing the team.

“One man can be a crucial ingredient on a team, but one man cannot make a team.”
(Basketball superstar, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar)

Understanding that a healthy team, an effective team does not develop by accident, it develops on purpose.

We have a great commission. We have been given a great commandment. Let us keep a great commitment so we can grow a great church! It is all about building strong, local churches through team