

# BUILDING A TEAM

## Introduction

I wholeheartedly believe that building teams is an integral part of successful ministry.

Any seasoned church leader will tell you that many ministries begin well, but only a few continue well over a longer period of time. So many promising ministries/churches begin well and perhaps flourish, some growing exponentially, only to die slowly over a long period of time.

One major reason for this I believe, is that the importance of building successful teams is drastically under-emphasised in many churches. Frequently a ministry is built around the gifting/ability and personality of the founding leader and unfortunately if that person leaves (for various reasons) the ministry begins to decline.

This paper's aim is to provide the reader with some practical Biblical advice which will hopefully enable them to see their ministry be fruitful not just for months, or even years, but for generations.

## What is a team?

Essentially, a team is a group of people who have come together, forming a deeper relationship for a common purpose.

## Building a team is essential in ministry because...

### 1. **Jesus built a team.**

We hear much preaching about being Christ-like. The Bible instructs us to follow in Jesus footsteps, and we tend to emphasise Jesus' ministry of healing/deliverance, shepherding, teaching and evangelism. We forget that Jesus placed huge importance on building a team! Very soon after the commencement of his earthly ministry, Jesus sought to establish His 'team' of disciples. Jesus didn't just stop with the twelve. His team-building ministry is continuing even now in His Body, and we all have a part to play.

The Church would never have been established if Jesus neglected to build His team.

### 2. **Building a team forces us to grow as leaders.**

It's one thing to have leadership qualities and successfully lead a group, it's another thing altogether to build and expand a team. Having leadership qualities is essential to successful ministry but leadership qualities alone won't build a lasting work... investing a significant proportion of time into building and nurturing your team will.

Once the leader begins to build a team he will begin to face the issues which are normal to team ministry such as personality clashes, relational conflict, and administration difficulties, among others. These challenges will only serve to grow and expand the leader, therefore making him more effective in God's hands.

Unfortunately many leaders don't see (or won't see) the need to build and grow a team, simply because it is easier not to.

- It is easier not to have our leadership abilities stretched and expanded.
- It is easier to lead alone.
- It is easier to lead from a distance.
- It is easier not to deal with team ministry challenges.
- It is easier not to be honest and vulnerable.

- It is easier not to be accountable.

It may be easier, but the consequences of having no team is a limping ministry at best, and at worst, the death of that ministry, and almost always the burnout of the leader.

### 3. Building a team greatly reduces the risk of burnout.

The Bible makes it crystal clear that building a team stops ministry exhaustion and mental/physical breakdown.

*<sup>13</sup>The next day, Moses took his seat to hear the people's disputes against each other. They waited before him from morning till evening.*

*<sup>14</sup>When Moses' father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he asked, "What are you really accomplishing here? Why are you trying to do all this alone while everyone stands around you from morning till evening?"*

*<sup>15</sup>Moses replied, "Because the people come to me to get a ruling from God.<sup>16</sup>When a dispute arises, they come to me, and I am the one who settles the case between the quarreling parties. I inform the people of God's decrees and give them his instructions."*

*<sup>17</sup>"This is not good!" Moses' father-in-law exclaimed. <sup>18</sup>"You're going to wear yourself out—and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself. <sup>19</sup>Now listen to me, and let me give you a word of advice, and may God be with you. You should continue to be the people's representative before God, bringing their disputes to him. <sup>20</sup>Teach them God's decrees, and give them his instructions. Show them how to conduct their lives. <sup>21</sup>But select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as leaders over groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. <sup>22</sup>They should always be available to solve the people's common disputes, but have them bring the major cases to you. Let the leaders decide the smaller matters themselves. They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you. <sup>23</sup>If you follow this advice, and if God commands you to do so, then you will be able to endure the pressures, and all these people will go home in peace."*

*<sup>24</sup>Moses listened to his father-in-law's advice and followed his suggestions. <sup>25</sup>He chose capable men from all over Israel and appointed them as leaders over the people. He put them in charge of groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. <sup>26</sup>These men were always available to solve the people's common disputes. They brought the major cases to Moses, but they took care of the smaller matters themselves. **Exodus 18:15-26 (NLT)***

### 4. Building a team builds others.

*<sup>11</sup>Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup>Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. **Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT)***

As leaders in ministry we are called not just for works of service, but first and foremost to equip the saints for works of service! Building a team is not only essential for our own ministry success, but it is essential for the ministry success of those we lead! We are doing a disservice to the Body of Christ if we don't provide ample opportunity for our flocks to grow in their callings and ministries.

## Building your team

### 1. Receiving purpose or God given purpose.

*"Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run."*

**Habakkuk 2:2 (NASB)**

As leaders, we need to serve and assist the leadership that God has appointed over us. But just assisting them is not enough... we need to catch the vision and become passionate about what God has called them to. But just catching their vision is not enough... we need to own their vision, making it our own, their vision oozing from our ministries. Then as God sees that we have been faithful in the small, He may very well give you His vision for your ministry. Many promising ministers simply won't serve another's ministry and instead circumnavigate the process of servant-hearted leadership, to their demise.

### 2. Have a plan from the start.

Have a long-term vision for your ministry. People won't commit to serving a cause/ministry that has no forward-planning. Just because a ministry is small, doesn't mean that you don't need to have a big vision and build a team!

### 3. Ooze the vision.

Vision is caught not taught. If the ministry vision doesn't excite us, then how can we expect others to be excited about it?

### 4. Lead by example.

As leaders, people will look to us for their example. Planting and building a ministry is very hard work, but as the team is formed, the workload is spread and the burden is lightened.

### 5. Have clearly defined expectations and standards.

Team members must know from the outset what is expected of them. Provide a concise and easy to understand job description to each team member, which explains what their responsibilities are, what's expected of them, who they are accountable to, and a clearly defined code of conduct.

### 6. Pray, seek and find.

One major reason why teams never get built is that we expect people to magically appear and volunteer their service. It didn't happen for Jesus, and it rarely happens to us. Jesus actively sought out His team. He hand-picked them, not necessarily because of their leadership qualities either but because He saw the purpose of God and the potential in their lives.

*<sup>18</sup>One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living.*

*<sup>19</sup>Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" <sup>20</sup>And they left their nets at once and followed him.*

*<sup>21</sup>A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. <sup>22</sup>They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind. **Matthew 4:18-22 (NLT)***

We must pray that God would reveal to us the leaders He wants in our team. We must search for leaders just as Jesus did. And we must ask them, just as Jesus did.

### 7. Make the need, the mission.

So often ministers call for team volunteers because there is a great 'need' to have workers. People do not simply want to fill a need, they want to be a part of a mission! When the need is rightly portrayed as an exciting opportunity to be a part of the mission (and Great Commission) people will go out of their way to willingly serve that ministry.

### 8. Appreciate and train.

There are two greatly underestimated aspects about building ministry teams... appreciation and training.

- If you show your people you appreciate them, they will attempt their best for you.

Every human being on the face of the planet needs to feel appreciated, to be esteemed, to be valued. Of course one must ultimately receive these things from God, but as ministers, reflecting the attributes of the Father-heart of God to the best of our ability. We must appreciate our teams, and communicate our appreciation verbally and practically. If we neglect such a vital service, our team members will serve out of duty alone, eventually becoming too bitter to continue.

- If you provide training, people will be equipped to do their best for you.

Once again, using Jesus' earthly ministry as our example. Jesus was constantly providing three-fold training for His disciples: He gave verbal instruction. He demonstrated the verbal instruction practically. He gave opportunity for the disciples to do likewise.

It has been said that a teacher is only successful when his student can successfully teach others what he has been taught. Are we striving for that within our ministries?

### 9. Give authority with accountability.

Genuinely believe in your team. If you don't trust them, they will feel it. Give your team the permission to succeed and to fail.

Authority and accountability go hand in hand. More authority should be released to your team members when they demonstrate willing accountability.

### 10. Pray for your team.

*23"As for me, I will certainly not sin against the LORD by ending my prayers for you. And I will continue to teach you what is good and right. 1 Samuel 12:23 (NLT)*

Samuel carried the burden as Saul's overseer to pray for him, even when Saul had rejected God. We would do well to imitate Samuel and not neglect praying for our team members.

### 11. Aim to make yourself redundant.

John Maxwell, an acclaimed author and teacher of Christian leadership principles suggests that if someone can do the job 80% as well as you can... hand the task over. If we as leaders don't grab hold of this principle, we will not be able to hold the weight as the ministry grows. Perhaps a reason why we don't release more is that we are insecure that others may succeed and be favoured more than us?

In reality, although we actively strive to make ourselves redundant, God seems to grow the ministry parallel to our handing more portions of it over, so our workload and responsibility never really declines. God enlarges our capacity to carry the weight and responsibility.

*21"The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!' Matthew 25:21 (NLT)*

## Maintaining your team

*5But the LORD came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building.6"Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! Genesis 11:5-6 (NLT)*

The account of the Tower of Babel demonstrates the potential power of having a unified team... that nothing is impossible.

It is all well and good to have a team, having a unified team is another matter. One of Satan's most effective strategies is to cause division and bring collapse from the inside out. Therefore it is vital that as leaders of teams we must strive to maintain team unity. The following are some steps to having a healthy, unified team:

#### 1. Meet frequently.

If possible and if it is not too straining on your team's time, meet regularly for prayer, ministry discussion and training.

#### 2. Meet socially.

Many ministry leaders only gather with their teams at specified meetings and to discuss ministry. We must realise that Jesus lived with His disciples for three years. They would have fellowshiped at length informally and recreationally. In fact, many things about the character and personality of your team members cannot be learnt at church while 'doing' ministry.

#### 3. Welcome team transparency.

Many team members feel like they cannot be transparent around their leader and each other. At the outset of building your team, welcome team transparency. If the members cannot talk openly about issues, they will talk behind closed doors with each other.

#### 4. Resolve team conflict promptly.

Team members in conflict greatly hinders the blessing that unity brings and can potentially be the undoing of the ministry. In my experience, if the previous three steps are in place, any conflict that arises between team members is resolved promptly and greater unity follows.

## Conclusion

*<sup>14</sup>Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. <sup>15</sup>He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.*

*<sup>16</sup>The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. <sup>17</sup>The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. <sup>18</sup>But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money.*

*<sup>19</sup>After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. <sup>20</sup>The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.'*

*<sup>21</sup>The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'*

*<sup>22</sup>The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.'*

*<sup>23</sup>The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!' **Matthew 25:14-23 (NLT)***

We are all familiar with the Parable of the talents. I would like to propose a new spin on the story. Imagine if the bags of gold represented our ministry teams? How diligent would we be to invest in them if that were the case?

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