

Relational Ministry

Main Point: I believe that a relational ministry will always be the most effective ministry.

Relational ministry means building your ministry through shared experiences. These experiences can be traumatic ones, hilarious ones, important ones or every day ones. The key is that you go through it with someone else and a friendship is built. I have come into contact with a lot of people that I have shared similar interests with, but the people I am closest to are the ones who I have experienced life with. Why is it that family is usually so loyal? Even if family doesn't share the same hobbies, you have shared a whole lot of time together. It's kinda like in the movies, and the guy and girl meet for the first time but by the end of the movie they are already in love. Had they not spent time together stopping the evil menace from destroying the world, they really wouldn't have much to talk about.

I know that it is really nice to have a new sound system and video slide shows, but what is it that will keep people coming back and growing in Christ? For a long time the unspoken attitude of many ministries is that if you have the greatest setup to awe people then they will come back for the entertainment and maybe get something out of it in passing. The problem with that is that the human soul doesn't long for technology and cinema, it longs for human interaction. If I were stuck on a desert island with a 60-inch LCD HDTV with digital cable, Tivo, an unlimited Netflix account and 10,000 watt 5.1 Dolby Surround Sound, I would love the entertainment for a while, but eventually long for someone to share it with.

The church will never be able to keep up with business in the area of mind-blowing entertainment. Hollywood can throw \$300 million into a movie and I don't want to know a church who would do the same for a video presentation for Sunday morning. Regardless of the deep pockets of the movie industry, they are seeing sagging profits. What the church has over Hollywood is the ability to reach people in smaller settings. Movie quotes get old after a short time, but the reminiscing on the time when Bill's pant fell off will never get old.

Notice I said that relational ministry is the most effective not the most successful. I think this is obvious looking at megachurches. Nothing against megachurches because many pull it off right, but the money thrown into the production brings people in for the entertainment but where is the spiritual growth coming from? No man can completely absorb every pastor's sermon every week and then change his life accordingly. I would love to see a survey asking people where they have most been spurred into spiritual growth. Would it be the things that the pastor says from the front or would it be due to the interaction with a small group Bible study?

So how does a ministry become more relational? One of the biggest keys is more people in leadership. Leadership doesn't have to mean paid positions, but can mean volunteers who will lead. One person cannot provide relational ministry to 100 people. But one person can be effective with ten people and even more so with five. Get solid volunteers before buying anything at Best Buy.

Another step towards becoming more relational is to take the focus off of Sunday morning service. Make the core ministry your small group Bible study and the Sunday morning service as supplemental to that. This could mean that your Sunday service expounds on small group topics or that it points new people towards your small group ministry.

Take trips with people in your ministry. Getting you out of the usual environment and really learning about those people speeds up the bonding process. This will overflow to the rest in the group when you

return. Encourage the relationships within the group. Sometimes people only come due to their relationship to the leader, but try and build the friendships between members of the group as well. Regardless of age, the leader will almost always have a leading role in the relationship with group members, whereas the members can have more of a relationship as peers.

I am not proposing a flashback to the 17th century-type of ministry with no lights and no mp3s. I am saying that the ministry that's primary purpose is to entertain, will see less life-change than the ministry that builds a relationship.