

MOVING THE SHIP

Total Member Involvement | Session 6
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BACK TO BASICS

Just as Vince Lombardi re-educated his football players, church members need to get back to basics.

Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

Acts of the Apostles, p. 9 "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory."

WHAT DOES "INVOLVEMENT" MEAN?

Words, while supposed to be tools for communication, often become tools for obfuscation (obfuscate: verb meaning to "render obscure, unclear, or unintelligible.") There are language fads, even in the church.

1990s-2000s we heard a lot about "seekers," wanted things to always be done on "purpose," repeatedly pointed out the dangers of "cheap grace," and enlisted the help of "prayer warriors." Today, instead of church services we have "worship gatherings," instead of sharing our faith we desire to "engage the culture," and we can somehow turn almost any noun or verb into an adjective or adverb by simply adding "al" to the end of it—we don't have intent or an intention, we merely want to be "intentional," or "missional," or "incarnational," or "transformational," etc.

The list could go on to include a thousand other such linguistic abominations that either don't say anything or say something everybody's already good with in a way that sounds novel: I would not be surprised at all if some church now refers to a church business meeting as "a gathering to engage in intentionally missional dialogue" (By the way, there's usually an inverse relationship between how innovative something sounds and how innovative something is.)

We must stop this trend of using obscure language to hide clear meaning. This is true in with "Total Member Involvement." If we're not careful, we can repeat the phrase without understanding the basic concept. What is "involvement" and what does it mean to be "involved" in church?

INVOLVEMENT AND THE ECONOMY OF INFLUENCE

Involvement in your local church is not necessarily holding an office or running a ministry. Involvement is the gradual accumulation and judicious expending of personal influence. The primary way to build personal influence is consistent attendance.

Hebrews 10:24, 25 *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Things church members should attend: Sabbath School, church service, potluck, prayer meeting, socials, outreach activities, business and board meetings, etc. Show up on time. Be prepared. Contribute to the discussion. By all means, bring a dish!¹

¹ Important note: the primary ways to lose personal influence are 1. talking big but never following through and 2. whining.

Influence is like pocket change: you pick it up slowly over time and spend it judiciously. Some practical ways to build influence in your local church include...

- ✓ Make friends with other influential people.
 - These are not necessarily the wealthy or the bossy.
 - The genuinely influential people are those who show up and accomplish things. Often they are quiet and unassuming, but they're the ones who really run the church.
- ✓ Do something well.
 - Accept nominating committee positions or even just small duties you volunteer yourself to do.
 - Do more with that responsibility than ever before. (see **Ecclesiastes 9:10**; **1 Timothy 4:12**)
- ✓ Give Bible studies
 - Do not merely distribute literature, but actually lead someone through Scripture.
 - This personal labor will give a deepen your own spiritual experience, inspire your church family, and give your voice credibility in church matters.
 - **Christian Service, p. 121** When churches are revived, it is because some individual seeks earnestly for the blessing of God. He hungers and thirsts after God, and asks in faith, and receives accordingly. He goes to work in earnest, feeling his great dependence upon the Lord, and souls are aroused to seek for a like blessing, and a season of refreshing falls on the hearts of men. The extensive work will not be neglected. The larger plans will be laid at the right time; but personal, individual effort and interest for your friends and neighbors, will accomplish much more than can be estimated. It is for the want of this kind of labor that souls for whom Christ died are perishing.
- ✓ Start a ministry with a simple, specific objective and give it a name.

Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 6, p. 266 Every church is in need of the controlling power of the Holy Spirit, and now is the time to pray for it. But in all God's work for man He plans that man shall co-operate with Him. To this end the Lord calls upon the church to have a higher piety, a more just sense of duty, a clearer realization of their obligations to their Creator. He calls upon them to be a pure, sanctified, working people. And the Christian help work is one means of bringing this about, for the Holy Spirit communicates with all who are doing God's service.

To those who have been engaged in this work I would say: Continue to work with tact and ability. Arouse your associates to work under some name whereby they may be organized to co-operate in harmonious action. Get the young men and women in the churches to work. Combine medical missionary work with the proclamation of the third angel's message. Make regular, organized efforts to lift the church members out of the dead level in which they have been for years... See if the breath of life will not then come into our churches. A new element needs to be brought into the work. God's people must realize their great need and peril, and take up the work that lies nearest them.

IMPROVEMENT REQUIRES INVOLVEMENT

The story of Nehemiah is a powerful lesson for lay ministry today (see **Nehemiah 2:11-18**). Walk around the walls of your Jerusalem, quietly observing your church's physical plant and programming.

- ✓ Look at the church foyer: does it have a clear focus and flow? What's going on with things like bulletin boards, tables, literature racks, plastic plants, etc.?
- ✓ Inventory your church's personal ministry materials, noting where they are kept and how they are made available to members and visitors. Are there closets that are essentially geologic columns of evangelism materials? Is there a centrally-located resource desk for storage and distribution of materials?
- ✓ Scan the bulletin to see what changes might be helpful in communicating church activities and ministries more clearly. Take note of whether church programming is active and appealing or cold and formal.

These are just a few of the many, many ways you can begin to move the ship of your church toward becoming a training center church. If some adjustments can be made somewhere, don't just offer your sensible suggestions, offer your sacrificial service. Keep in mind that improvement requires involvement. Start today!