

4 Practices I Relearned about Church Growth

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A few years ago I heard a young man play at an open mic. As he ended one of those incredibly fun and lively songs where every one's hands are clapping and feet are stomping, he said "thanks that was my first time."

I had the chance to chat it up with him afterwards and said to him "There's no way that was your first time." He admitted that it wasn't and what he said next had a profound impact on me. He said "I always tell myself, this time is the first time. That way I don't get caught up in the routine of what I do

and have an experience filled with wonder and awe."

So many things in our lives often become routine. Yeah brushing your teeth and driving to work come to mind when thinking about the "R" word, but what about our ministry?

Recently, myself and 36 other people completed a five week continuing education course facilitated by Lead With Impact and the Unification Theological Seminary called "Growing Your Church." This series helped us see the potentials in ministry which often become just habitual habits.

Thanks to Dr. Demetrius Carolina (our teacher,) we got to take another look at these areas of ministry and come up with a 5 year plan. Here are 4 ministry practices we relearned on Church Growth.

Know your community. I'm not just talking about the people that go to your church or meet at your home. What are the needs of the people who also call your town home? Does your neighborhood have a specific culture? Is your population made up of people with white hair or young parents chasing around their kids. The answers to these questions will help you and your church better serve and minister the people you call neighbors.

Invest in your team. "It is not just about having faith and leaving it up to God and the Holy Spirit, good organization and teamwork are essential to a good ministry too."

Guess what? We don't have to be the best at everything in our ministry. Our most valuable assets to building a healthy community is the ministry team. Being able to identify individuals' strengths and empowering them with support and vision goes a long way, but also remember the saying "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." We want our teams to be SHARP so prioritize fun with them. Don't just show up on Sunday to facilitate service. Have a BBQ, play sports, go to a high ropes course, or go to a concert together. I guarantee the bonds made and the fun you have will transfer into your ministry.

I've heard many stories about Rev. Moon and how he led his team. He would invest into his team constantly through talking to them... for sometimes up to 24 hours! But he always made sure Fun happened too. Maybe it was on a fishing boat, hiking up a mountain, or just singing songs together. He understood this principle to his core and made it an almost daily practice.

Take Stock! Looking at your resources with “First Time” eyes helps you appreciate and utilize what God has given you to a higher level. I guess that applies to all aspects of life. Some friends ask me “ Jaga you’ve been married for 12 years, does your marriage ever get stale?” And I say, “No, we’re still in honeymoon stage.”

Take inventory of resources like your building, the park across the street, that old school bus that no longer runs, or your financial resources. Whatever it is can be renewed, reinvested, or sold so the funds can go back into other resources.

Recently the Columbus Ohio Family Church invested some serious finances into their church building. It looked like a tannish orange block building from the 70’s. Today it has vibrant and contemporary conference rooms, meeting areas, a café and kitchen, a new chapel and so much more. The building is used more today than ever before all because they decided to step out in faith and transform it into something beautiful.

Stick to your vision. “This course has given me a stronger faith in the power of perseverance, commitment, and team work around a shared vision and mission plan”

Your ministry will inevitably come across many opportunities, suggestions, and proposals of what to do. Being able to decipher what supports your vision and what doesn’t is a valuable skill to develop. It’s better to do a few things really well then to mediocrely pursue dozens of initiatives.

Well there you have it. Spend a week with your team on each of these four areas and see what you can build upon.