

Set the Right Example

Encourage Others

When people let you know that they appreciate you, are thinking about you, have missed seeing you, just finished talking about you or were planning to visit you, how does that make you feel? If you're like most people, these statements bring positive thoughts to your mind. As a pastor or ministry leader, please encourage other people so that they can have some of these feelings expressed. When an individual is encouraged, they are more apt to encourage others when they need it. Everyone appreciates getting encouragement whether they are young or old, male or female, black or white, red or yellow. Throughout the Bible, the apostle Paul encouraged the saints to do what the Lord wanted them to do. Sometimes they had not followed what He had taught them, and they needed a reminder in his letter of encouragement.

When a ministry leader encourages a believer, it can impact that person in a variety of ways:

1. Making the believer want to persevere
2. Making the believer desire to improve
3. Making the believer want to encourage others
4. Giving the believer hope for the future
5. Giving the believer a purpose for their life
6. Presenting an example of what Jesus did
7. Helping the believer to want to give more to the church

Perseverance is a word that most of us don't have a good feeling

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about. It brings to mind times of difficulty, challenge, and sometimes, disappointment as well. These are times we all go through at different points in our lives, and this is when it feels good to hear encouraging words from those who care about us. When we hear encouraging words we can usually withstand the turmoil. On the other hand, when we do not receive encouragement we can be spiritually damaged, permanently. Help prevent your members from being scarred by their church, and encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ.

When people talk about making improvements/changes in their lives, they usually have a specific motivation to do so. We can impact people's lives when we provide encouragement that helps people to change. If we can help people to be more devoted to Christ or to succeed in a ministry they are involved in, we are helping not only them, but the people they will come in contact with. People who are encouraged by someone else often will do the same for others. As Christians, we are supposed to edify each other so that we are all better prepared to do the work God wants us to do. Make it a habit to encourage; it can lead to an endless cycle of similar behavior.

Encouragement leads people to have greater hope that things will get better. Without hope people cannot truly be successful, both in their personal and spiritual lives. Hope can be the catalyst for new ideas, new careers, new relationships, and so much more. I am married to my soul mate, Cassandra, due to the encouragement that a good friend of my wife gave to her. Without that encouragement we might never have met.

Closely associated with hope is purpose, since many who are lacking in hope feel this way because they do not feel they have a purpose. "The Purpose Driven Life" by Pastor Rick Warren is a book that provides encouragement to believers to help them determine what the Lord wants them to do in their lives. When we can help someone figure out their purpose, we are truly blessing them.

A few years back an acronym became popular; WWJD (What Would Jesus Do). One of the things Jesus did was to provide encouragement to all sorts of people. Why do you think He did this? Jesus walked this earth, and saw the struggles that humans faced. He could identify with the problems they faced, such as prejudice, discrimination,

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illness, racism, sexism, favoritism, legalism, unfairness, and dishonesty to name a few. It is difficult to deal with these without an encourager in your midst. Displaying encouragement is something the Lord would be pleased to see you do. Put a smile on God's face; encourage.

Finally, here is something that should put a smile on the pastor's face along with the trustees and other church leaders. When members are encouraged, they are more apt to give, not only in the short term, but in the long term as well. By this I mean that they may increase their normal contributions in the short term. Additionally, others may impact the life of your church by leaving a portion of their estate to the church upon their death.

People like to know that others care about them. You never know how much a kind word, a discussion, a visit, a brief note, a birthday card or some much needed friendship can influence someone who is not used to thoughtful gestures.

Study the Word

In setting the right example for the believers, the ministry leaders must be committed to regular study of God's Word. The Bible is not a book that is only to be used by the pastor. I hope your pastor continues to read the Bible regardless of how long they have been the pastor, since everyone can grow in their knowledge of, and application of the Bible. When the members follow the pastor's example of Bible study it helps the pastor to stay sharp so they can be better prepared to teach others what the Lord says. We can learn from each other, but if we don't use the Bible as our resource, we can open ourselves up to the risk of being misled. In Acts 17: 10-12 Paul talked about the Bereans; they were people who studied the scriptures in order to verify that what Paul was teaching was actually true. We should follow the practice of the Bereans when we hear a pastor or other leader talk about the Word of God.

The study of God's Word will help your members see that the Bible has the answers for life's challenges. When people see that the Bible can help people have more fulfilling lives, they will see the benefit of reading it. Having a regular Bible study life does not mean that we will have easier lives, but it will help us to better manage the problems we encounter. As we see that our lives are changed by studying God's Word,

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we often become more confident that the Bible is the resource we need to use. This gives members the impetus to share with their circle of friends, how knowing the Word has helped them. Studying God's Word is also a requirement for effective Christian leadership. As Paul wrote in 2 Timothy, "Study to show yourself approved as a person that understands the Word of God." Obey the advice in the Bible, and study God's Word; it will change your life.

Serve Outside of the Church

Many church members believe that people who don't know the Lord should find us rather than for us to go out and reach them. This type of thinking needs to be changed or else your church will not grow, and you will miss out on reaching so many for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This attitude can also present a problem when the church is serving the community, but has the expectation that people should know what we are doing since we have been doing it for so long. In order to be seen as a serving church, your church needs to do more service outside of the church walls. Increase your visibility or your church may become invisible.

If you are a pastor or ministry leader get to work outside of your church. This will inspire your other members to get involved. The service needs to match the church's mission and the spiritual gifts of the participants. Without this unity your ministry is less likely to be successful. For instance, if you get involved in evangelism, you have to have a heart for the lost and you should be comfortable talking to strangers. Serving outside of the church will help people who may never set foot inside your church to see its work in action.

We should not think that service is for the members, but not the leaders. In most cases the members take their cue from what they see the church leaders do. There are so many opportunities for service that can give your church greater exposure. Examples are:

- Mentoring children
- Visiting those in prisons/hospitals
- Adopting a school

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- Working in an afterschool program
- Food shopping for those who are ill
- Volunteering at nonprofits
- Cleaning parks/playgrounds
- Teaching financial empowerment skills
- Giving out gospel tracts
- Attending senior citizen centers/events

The Lord has told us to go and make disciples of all nations. We cannot neglect the command of our Lord just because it takes us out of our comfort zone. The Lord has expressed a spirit of humility and service. As the Lord shared with His disciples, we are to be servants; we are not to believe we are above others because we may have a title or higher position. Let's show a servant mentality, and inspire others to join us in the ministry of service that God has called us to.

Live the Great Commission

What difference can applying the Great Commission make to your church? By taking this command seriously, the church can be blessed in the following ways:

- The command can be a part of what is expected of a member
- The church will be able to grow
- There will be more members who are properly trained
- The variety of ministries developed should increase
- The gospel can be spread outside of the church's community
- God will be honored by your obedience

If the Great Commission becomes a part of the life of your members they will not only go out and spread the Word, but new members would be expected to do the same. This would be a very good thing; new members often watch what the seasoned members do. If they see them working they'll work, and if they don't see them working they won't work. The church would be able to grow due to a greater emphasis on introducing people to the Lord. When people are trained to be

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disciples, the message that they share will be based on correct teaching. This will enable new disciples to know their message is true, which can lead to greater confidence in sharing. With more members available, new ministries can be initiated. As the disciples in the New Testament went to different places to share the gospel, people who know the gospel can do the same today.

Finally, God wants us to be obedient. Just like a parent wants their child to follow their instructions, God wants us to follow His instructions. When people respond to God with an obedient spirit, the Lord is more apt to shower them with His blessings. Let God shower you with blessings, and share these blessings with others.