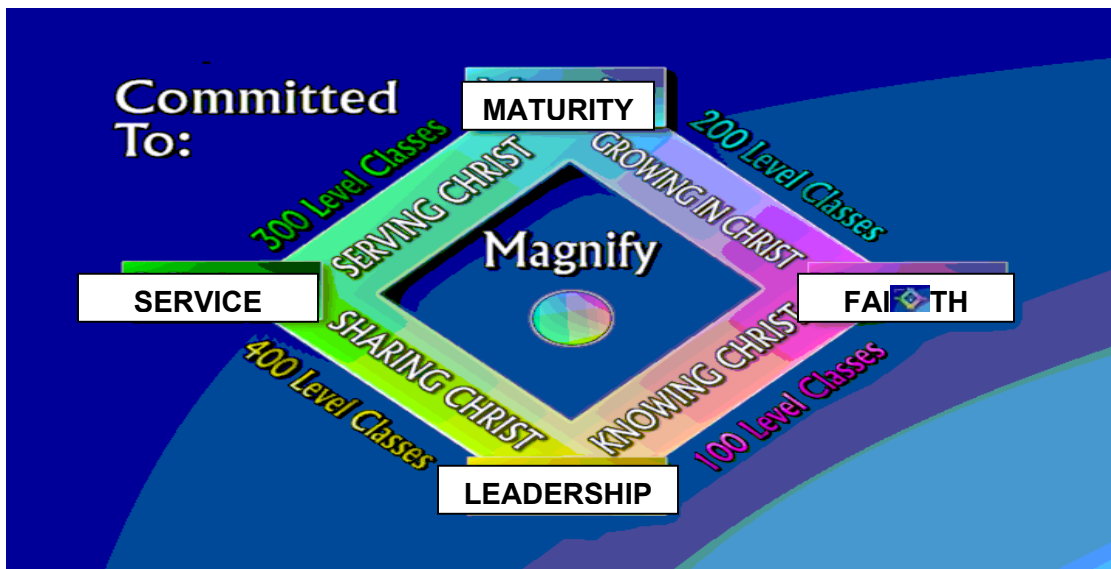


# How Do You Develop Members Into Ministers?

"The vision for maturity must be very clear: to bring glory to God by presenting Jesus Christ with as many Christ-like disciples as we possibly can before he returns!"

George Gallup once took a survey and discovered that only ten percent of American church members are active in any kind of personal ministry. He also discovered that forty percent of all members have expressed an interest in having a ministry. They would like to be involved in ministry but they have never been asked or they don't know how.

People must be given a simple process that they can follow which will lead them to deeper commitment and greater service for Christ. They need a track on which they can move forward. Get them into the ballgame!



By using the baseball diamond as a visual illustration of where people are in their spiritual progress, everyone can know how far they've come and how far they have to go. Do you remember Abbott and Costello's famous routine "Who's on First?" Many churches have no idea. A church who employs this knows exactly who's on first, on second, on third, and who has made it home. The baseball diamond can be used as an analogy for growth because it is universally understood in America. People can easily understand how we want them to mature by assigning a milestone of spiritual growth to each base. Explain to members that the church's goal is to help them move around the bases of life. We want each member to score! We also explain that you don't get credit for runners left on base at the end of the inning! For that reason, a church leader teaches each of the bases: membership, maturity, ministry, and missions and they help the runners make it safely to the next base.

At first base, the Foundations of faith (100) are taught; at second base, we teach the Foundations of Maturity (201) which features spiritual discipline; at third base, we teach Foundations of Service (301) encouraging people how to identify their need for ministry,

and when they hit home plate they complete Foundations of Leadership (401), and we get members involved in missions.

This entire structure is designed to nurture a healthy church. Many churches make the common mistake of emphasizing Bible knowledge to the exclusion of teaching the practical application of that knowledge. For instance, church members are made to feel guilty for a weak prayer life but no one takes the time to explain how to make a prayer list, how to praise God's character by using His names, and how to intercede for others.

Exhortation without explanation leads to frustration. Whenever we exhort people to do something we are responsible to explain exactly how to do it. If you want a healthy church, then you must become a healthy pastor who teaches the necessary skills for Christian living and ministry. Remember that skill, not dedication, is the key to effectiveness at anything. "If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed but skill will bring success." (Eccl. 10:10)

Here are five questions you need to ask about your Christian education program:

1. Are people learning the content and meaning of the Bible?
2. Are people seeing themselves, life, and other people more clearly from God's perspective?
3. Are people's values becoming more aligned with God's values?
4. Are people becoming more skilled in serving God?
5. Are people becoming more like Christ?

If you convince people of the importance of scoring and you coach them at each base, it's much easier to get people to home plate. Likewise, if you lead people to commit to growing spiritually, teach them some basic habits, and give them guidance as they progress around the bases, you can expect to see them grow. Don't put a pitcher in the outfield. One of the most common excuses people give for not getting involved in ministry is, "I just don't have any abilities to offer." Nothing could be further from the truth. Many national studies have proven that the average person possesses from five hundred to seven hundred skills! The real problem is two-fold. First, people need some process of skill identification. Most people are using abilities they are unaware they have. Second, they need a process to help them match their abilities with the right ministry!

There are people in your church with all kinds of abilities that are not being put to use: recruiting, researching, writing, landscaping, interviewing, promoting, decorating, planning, entertaining, repairing, drawing, and even feeding. These abilities should not be wasted. "There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord." (1 Cor. 12:5) Your placement process should focus on empowering people, not filling positions.

Remember, ministry is about people, not programs. The most valuable asset people can give to your church is their time. Since people have less discretionary time, we'd better make sure we use their time in the best way when they offer it. If a member comes to me and says, "I have four hours a week to give to my church in ministry," the last thing I'd do would be to put him on some committee. I want him involved in ministry, not attending meetings.