Design Your Ministry for Results

Small group ministry struggling to meet the objectives *you've set*? Ending the ministry year and falling short of the goals that have been set *for you*? Although there are a number of possible explanations, the most likely reason is that your ministry isn't actually designed to accomplish the goals and objectives you'd like to reach. If you want that to change, you need to design your ministry for results.

An Important Disclaimer: I realize that God *makes things grow*. And you should, too. This is not about that. This is about our role in designing the ministry for results (and we do play a part).

Design your ministry for results. Sounds more complicated than it really is. Here's what I mean.

First, *understand* the direct link between your results and your ministry design. Don't miss the fact that design and outcome are absolutely related. Can't find enough leaders? Don't blame the culture or the times. In the same way a field of corn *only*grows according to a farmer's goals and objectives *when* the conditions are right (rainfall, sunshine, rich soil, temperature, etc.), your ministry will only grow when environmental conditions are right.

Second, carefully analyze each of the environmental elements that affect small group ministry. Here are a few of the most important elements:

- **Choice**: If there are multiple options for the next step, don't be surprised when unconnected people are indecisive. Research has shown that there is a negative impact to too many choices. Watch Sheena Iyengar's TED talk on choice overload for more on this topic. **Prescription**: Start a "stop doing list" and make a commitment to purposeful abandonment. "To call abandonment an opportunity may come as a surprise. Yet planned, purposeful abandonment of the old and of the unrewarding is a prerequisite pursuit of the new and highly promising. Above all, abandonment is the key to innovation–both because it frees the necessary resources and because it stimulates the search for the new that will replace the old" (p. 33, Inside Drucker's Brain).
- **Priorities and emphasis**: If your culture is designed to promote every option equally, don't be surprised when your most connected people are confused and overcommitted and your least connected people are unresponsive. Fuzzy priorities delay action. **Prescription**: Choose which option gets promoted. Demand intentionality.
- **Expectations**: We're living in a time that would be completely foreign to our great grandparents. Schedules. Cost-of-living. Mobility. Extracurricular activities for children. If you're waiting for unconnected people to make the first move, adjusting their way of life to fit yours…you'll be waiting a long time. **Prescription**: Make it possible for a baby step in the right direction as a first move. Remember, when youthink steps not programs you'll design easy, obvious and strategic.

Third, make the changes you know must be made. Once you understand the design issues that are determining your results, begin implementing. Don' t underestimate the tendency to search for a problem-free solution. How should you implement change? Fast? Slow? All at once? Over time? Your culture and history will determine that. The key is to move forward.

Read more from Mark here.