Eight Reasons You Are Wasting Your Resources

Most churches keep their members so busy they don't have time to do ministry.

Indeed, I spoke to a lay elder of a church recently who told me he simply did not have time to get to know his neighbors because he was so busy in his church.

Something is not right with this picture.

In an earlier post, I talked about how our churches can become more intentional about doing real ministry instead of busy work. But in this article, I address *how* churches became so busy. Perhaps understanding the origins of dysfunctional busyness will help churches avoid this problem in the future.

1. **Activities became synonymous with ministry.** I am familiar with a missions support group in a church. It includes over 30 people, representing over 20 percent of the weekly worship attendance. The group is very active with fellowships, meetings, and speaker events. But the missions support group has never supported missions, nor have they ever been involved in missions. But they sure are busy.
2. **Programs and ministries are added regularly, but few or none are ever deleted.** This reality is glaringly obvious at a church in the Southeast with an average attendance of 60. The church has 15 committees and nearly 30 different programs and ministries throughout the year. They almost have one ministry or program for every member. They add some activity every year, but they never delete the dead or useless activities.
3. **Programs and ministries become sacred cows.** They were once the pet project of a particular member or a group of members, alive or deceased. The thought of eliminating the non-functional ministry started by Sister Harriett or Brother Frank 35 years ago is deemed blasphemous.
4. **The alignment question is not asked on the front end.** Even a good ministry may not be the best use of time for a church. In one church, the membership voted to initiate a ministry because one person had become a believer through the ministry in another church over a two-year period. But the church members never considered if there might be other ministries that could be more effective and better aligned with the direction of the church.
5. **Silo behavior among the different ministries of the church.** A worship ministry in the church began a new ministry that required extensive volunteer help. But the leaders never considered they were hurting other ministries in the church. Members don't have unlimited time; they have to make choices.
6. **Lack of an evaluation process.** Most churches have an annual budgetary process. That is an ideal time to ask tough questions about existing ministries and programs. Very few church leaders take that opportunity.
7. **Ministry becomes facility-centered.** In other words, if it's not happening in the church facilities, it's not "real" ministry. As a consequence, we keep our members too busy to do ministry outside the walls of the church.

8. **Lack of courageous leadership.** It takes courage for a leader to look at the busyness of a church and say “no” or “enough.” Some leaders would rather not rock the boat and, as a consequence, lead a church toward mediocrity and malaise.

We are wasting too much time, energy, and money in our churches. Often we are doing more things and becoming less effective. It’s time for busy churches to become simple churches.

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