

Why Having the Right People is Better Than Simply Having More People

You spend a lot of your time trying to grow your ministry.

When it comes to the mission of the church, it seems almost unthinkable to reach fewer people. Eternity hangs in the balance. And every person represents a potentially transformed life.

The desire to grow is also part of human nature...isn't it?

In any organization, none of us really want to reach fewer people or have less impact. And yet sometimes, one of the best things you can do to become even more effective at accomplishing your mission is to invite people to leave.

It might kill you to entertain the thought of people leaving (it still kills a part of me).

But hang on.

I believe you'll be a better leader and your organization will be more effective if you can embrace this truth.

But I realize it's completely counterintuitive.

That Feeling in the Pit of Your Stomach...

Like you, it bothers me every time someone leaves.

When I first started in ministry, it hurt so much every time someone left. I felt like I had let them down, like I left the church down, like I had failed. I also felt as though if I had been a better leader, I would have been able to keep them.

For a season it hurt so much I pretended I didn't care any more. But I did. I do. I realize some of this is irrational and much of it might be unhealthy, but it hurts when someone goes. However, if you let it fester, you'll begin to live in fear all the time. In fact, you can end up with people-pleasing as your main goal. You will lead in a way that you hope is going to prevent the greatest number of people from leaving.

That's a terrible strategy.

The moment you begin to focus more on who you want to keep rather than who you want to reach, you put the mission in danger.

7 Reasons You Should Invite (Some) People to Leave Your Church

I think the lessons I've learned from my little blog experiment and 19 years of leadership have

taught me some things about allowing people to leave your church or your organization. None of this (I hope) is motivated by ego or a closed leadership style. It's just that too many people in the church—and in many organizations—are afraid to lead. And it costs everybody.

So here are 7 reasons you should invite some people to leave your church:

1. Unaligned people cost you something.

People who don't care about your church or organization cost you something. *Energy. Time. Frustration. Malaise. A lack of momentum.* People who are not aligned with your mission and vision always cost something. Why pay? Why not make room for more people who *are* aligned?

2. Having the right people is better than simply having people

Having more people is not better than having the right people. [As this Inc. article shows](#), the financial costs of hiring the wrong person can be astounding. Before you have more people, you need the right people. The right people are people capable of taking on leadership, who are aligned around a common mission, vision, strategy and values, and who have the character to withstand the tests of leadership. Get these people in place, and amazing things happen.

3. Some people will find a better fit elsewhere.

Releasing people doesn't have to be a sea of nastiness. In fact if it is, you're doing it wrong. Think of it this way: if someone isn't passionate about your organization's purpose, they will actually be better off somewhere else. I tell people that all the time. We are not a church for everybody. THE church is for everyone. But your church isn't. You're one part of a much bigger body. You alone will not reach your entire city. We need each other as church leaders. You'll be serving people by letting them find a better fit, and finding like minded people will help you accomplish your mission more effectively. Seriously, some people will honestly *thrive* in a different environment than yours. Why not celebrate that? Let them go. You don't own the Kingdom.

If you [struggle with this idea that the church isn't for everyone, I wrote this post for you.](#)

4. Disengaged people can be disengaged elsewhere.

Here's the reality. Not everyone is ready to engage. If you've got disengaged people, let them be disengaged elsewhere. They can **not** serve, **not** give, and **not** invite friends at some other church. They don't have to take up space in yours. Particularly in a growing church where space is at a premium (as it often is at our church), we can't really afford to long term people who are not going to engage in the mission. I have all the time in the world for new people who are taking the time to explore faith. I have less time for 'mature' Christians who won't roll up their sleeves and engage the mission (while we're at it, [we should rethink our definition of maturity](#)).

5. A Few Aligned People Can Change the World.

I used to say we could do more with 300 aligned people than with 3000 unaligned people. Then one year, in a tough season for us as a church plant, we shrank down to almost 300 adults – far smaller than what we were two years earlier. We became so focused on our mission and particular strategy—and pursued it in a portable setting without all the trappings of other churches—that many people left. It was a tough tough season. But as [I outlined in this post](#), those who stayed got aligned. Our mission became focused. Now, a few years later, we're bigger than at any time in our history and most of our growth is coming from previously unchurched people. People are passionate about our mission. When you're tempted to simply do whatever it takes to keep people, remember that a few aligned people can change the world. Jesus did it with 12.

6. Those who stay will feel honored and relieved.

You've got great people at your church. You really do. When you clarify your focus and lead, great people generally follow. I'm assuming here that you have a God-given vision that's affirmed by some capable and wise people around you. But many people will thank you for cutting through the ambiguity and double-mindedness and leading. When you cut unaligned people loose, the aligned will always thank you.

7. You'll be blown away by how enthusiastic some of your people really are.

Over time, if your vision and direction are solid, you will see enthusiasm grow. People will get *passionate* about your mission. You will be amazed at how much synergy there is a group of people moving forward together. When the voices of the critics go silent (because they leave), you will finally hear the voice of enthusiasm. I realize few people talk about this in the church. And I realize it's controversial.

What are you learning?

What keeps you from releasing people?

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