Seven Practices of Effective Ministry
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Overview: The seven practices are designed to provide a template that will help you determine which programs to start, what to stop, and how to improve what’s working. When implemented properly, these practices will energize every facet of your ministry. So what are these seven practices? (10-11)

1. **Clarify the Win.** When all is said and done, what is it that we want to look back on and celebrate?

2. **Think Steps, Not Programs.** Your programs should take people somewhere, not simply fill up their time. Ask yourself, “Where do we want our people to be? What do we want them to become? Is our programming designed to take them there?

3. **Narrow The Focus.** Focus is the key to achieving excellence and making an impact. Each ministry environment should be designed to do no more than one or two things well.

4. **Teach More For Less.** The less you say, the more you will communicate. Learn to say only what you need to say to the people who need to hear it.

5. **Listen To Outsiders.** The needs and interests of insiders have a tendency to determine the agenda for the organization. Focus your efforts on those you’re trying to reach, rather than those you’re trying to keep.

6. **Replace Yourself.** One day someone else will be doing what you are doing. Embrace the inevitable and prepare now for the future.

7. **Work On It.** To maintain your relevance, your sanity, and your effectiveness, you must carve out time in your schedule to step back and evaluate what you are doing and how you are doing it.

**Key Components/Truths in the Story**

- Before circumstances can change, the leader(s) might have to change. (28)

- You need to know when you’re getting ahead, and your people need to know when to cheer. If you give people a clear goal, then most of the time they’ll work like dogs to get there. But if the goal is unclear, they’re forced to guess or, worse, decide for themselves what a win really is. (33)
• You have to decide where a win happens best for you. Is it your Sunday morning service or somewhere else? Once you know where it is, then you have to take the necessary steps to get there. (35)

• Contrast these statements: Programs lead to life change versus programs can just become a way of life. (36)

• The tendency in business, or in church work for that matter, is to mistake activity for progress. We think that just because people are busy and doing a lot of stuff that we are being successful. The fact of the matter is, if all that activity isn’t taking you where you want to go, then it’s just wasted time. (36)

• Narrow the focus. By that I mean you shouldn’t try to do everything; you should do a few things well. (39)

• Pitchers don’t need to hit well; they need to pitch well. Every step you create needs to do what it does best and nothing more. Focus allows you to pursue excellence, to zero in on the target. Narrowing the focus seems so limiting, but when you think about it, it really frees you up to do more. You just do one thing really well. (40-41)

• Consider this thought: “I went to church my entire childhood, and do you know what I learned? Not a thing. I know I heard a lot of things about God, but I don’t remember one of them. How good do you have to be to teach a child one thing? The problem wasn’t that they couldn’t teach me one thing. The problem was they tried to teach me everything.” (44)

• The first four practices are all about making changes to the organization. The last three require a personal change for the leader, and sometimes, that’s a little more difficult. (49)

• Listen to people outside of the church for answers, not questions. (49)

• One of the primary reasons that you have to listen to outsiders is this: if you don’t, you will be driven by the complaints and demands of the insiders. The question you have to answer is, “What can you learn from the people you’re trying to reach?” If you watch them and listen to them, they’ll tell you what they think and want. Then you have to figure out how to use that information. (51)

• If you want your church to stand the test of time, then you have to be replaced. In order to replace yourself, you have to see the good of the organization as more important than your own. You have to be able to resist the natural reaction to protect yourself and your position. Great leadership needs to be developed through a system of apprenticing replacements and duplication. It is a process—a process of mentoring and teaching another to do what you do and to do it well. While the other practices will take care of quality, this practice insures that you
will maintain quality over the long haul. You avoid burnout and help prevent people from becoming entrenched. (53-56)

- If a leader spends all of his time working in the system, then how is he going to know when the system is the problem? It’s more than just measuring [success]. It’s carving out blocks of time to evaluate what you’ve measured to see what is working and what’s not. (58)

- The ultimate goal which we are seeking in this study is to rediscover a passion for ministry that has been suffocated under a load of complexity. (60)

- Churches are notorious for creating competing systems, wherein unclear direction and conflicting information threaten to cause a breakdown and paralyze the ministry. Instead of replacing old systems, we tend to just download and add whatever is new to what already exists. Soon our capacity becomes fragmented and we find ourselves confronted with the signs of ineffectiveness: some ministries seem routine and irrelevant; the teaching feels too academic; calendars are saturated with mediocre programs; staff members pull in opposite directions; volunteers lack motivation; departments viciously compete for resources; and it becomes harder and harder to figure out if we are really being successful. (65)

- The 7 Practices For Effective Ministry are not church growth principles, but they definitely make an impact on how we grow. (66)
  - They are not the same as our mission, but they are strategic in helping us accomplish our mission
  - They are not the same as our values, but they determine how we apply our core values.
  - They are not theological principles, but they compliment our passion to teach truth with relevance.
  - They are not the only practices, but they have become some of the most critical practices you can employ.
Practice #1: Clarifying the Win

*Define what is important at every level of the organization*

- Everyone wants to be a part of a winning team. But the reverse is also true: people tend to stop showing up when an organization is not winning. (69)

- Most churches do not have a reliable system for defining and measuring what success looks like at every level of the organization. Instead they post some general statistics that give them a vague sense of progress or failure as a church, and they go through the motions of continuing to do ministry the way they always have, productive or not. Thus it is possible for a church to become very efficient at doing ministry ineffectively. (70-71)

- Clarifying the win simply means communicating to your team what is really important and what really matters. (71)

- Practicing this principle means that you are intentional about defining a win so that you don’t accidentally communicate the wrong win or keep your team guessing what is really important. (72)

- When you don’t clarify the win…
  - As long as the “win” is unclear, you force your team to guess what a win looks like. Without clear direction, they are forced to chart their own course or follow whoever seems to have the best plan at the moment. (72)
  - If the win is unclear, you may force those in leadership roles to define winning in their own terms. (73)

- The advantages of clarifying the win…
  - When you clarify the win, you help your team stay on the same page. [When you don’t stay on the same page, misalignment is often the result.] Misalignment usually happens gradually. And if it goes unchecked, it can wreak havoc on an organization. Misalignment is sometimes just a natural result of growth. People start showing up and they join your church with pictures of what they think the church should look like. Effective leaders constantly hold up clear pictures of what the church is supposed to be, so that everyone understands what it is not supposed to be. (75-76)
  - When you clarify the win, you can manage your resources more effectively. (76)
  - When you clarify the win, it creates the potential for positive momentum. (76)
• Four steps to clarifying the win…

  o Sum up the win in a simple phrase. When you formally state the win and put it in front of the entire team, it becomes a lens through which you can view everything you do. Learn to ask the question, “What do we want people to walk away and do?” (77-79)

  o Keep the win as specific as possible. Don’t confuse defining what a win looks like with establishing a mission statement. A mission statement is like a compass – it may be helpful to keep an organization moving in the right direction, but it does not necessarily ensure effectiveness. When you clarify the win, it is like marking a specific destination on a map – it’s easy to know when you win because you arrive at your desired destination. Ron Blue made this statement: “You can’t manage what you can’t measure.” (80)

  o Restate the win frequently and creatively. Good leaders develop the habit of reminding everyone – and each other – what’s really important. Communication is a key to winning. Good teams communicate during every play of the game, so everybody knows what they must do at any given time. If you want your leaders to buy into it, you have to keep finding creative ways to clarify the win. There are a number of ways to do that: creative boards; strategic questions asked at every meeting; creative videos; announcements and promotions; taglines. (80-82)

  o Meet to clarify the win at every level. The principle of clarification will only help you to become more effective if the practice is carried through to every level where practical ministry is happening. (83)

• A church really does need a scoreboard. When you establish “clarify the win” as a practice in your organization, you position everyone on your team to keep moving in the same direction. You provide a tool to measure and, therefore, manage what you do. When people know what a win looks like, they are much more likely to win. And when they start winning, chances are they will keep winning, because leaders like to win, and they will attract others who want to join a winning team. (84)

Points of Application

1. What was your last “win” within your area of responsibility? How do you know it was a win? How do you define a win?

2. We know what our mission and core values are. How do we particularize that to define a win within our areas of responsibility?
3. How would your adherents (those active in your area of responsibility) define a win? Is their perception of the win for them what you actually believe (and hopefully teach) what a win is?

4. Look at your area of responsibility. Stepping away from your active involvement long enough to evaluate how things really are, answer this question: are we winning? Now, define what the win really is.
Practice #2: Think Steps, Not Programs

Before your start anything, make sure it takes you where you want to go

- It doesn’t matter how hard you hit the ball if it doesn’t go where you need it to go. (87)

- Churches have a reputation for doing ministry without an end in mind. The question they should be asking is not Are we hitting the ball? But rather are we getting on base? Are we going the right direction? Are we getting closer to home plate? (88)

- There is a definite distinction to be made between a step and a program:
  - A program is a system of services, opportunities, or projects, usually designed to meet a social need. When you “think programs,” your inclination tends to be to create something in order to meet specific needs that have surfaced in your attendee base or target group. (89)
  - When you “think steps” there is a fundamental difference in your perspective. Now the primary goal is not to meet someone’s need, but rather to help someone get where they need to go. A step is a series of actions that systematically take a person somewhere. (89)
  - When you think programs you start by asking, “What is the need?” The first question is logically followed by a second question: “How are we going to meet that need?” The result is program-oriented ministry – it is designed to meet a need. When you think steps you start by asking, “Where do we want people to be?” That question is followed by a second, more strategic question: “How are we going to get them there?” The result is a ministry that works as a step – it has been created to lead someone somewhere. (89)

- When you start thinking steps, you begin thinking specifically about how to help people move to the next stage in their spiritual growth. (90)

- Churches have a tendency to hold so many studies or classes they end up holding hands with their adults too long. If classes don’t keep people moving, if the classes are not viewed as steps, they can actually work against helping people grow spiritually. (90)

- When you think steps, not programs, you will also discover ways to help people grow in their relationships. Discipleship happens most naturally in the context of meaningful relationships. (91)

- Categorizing your environment: Foyer, Living Room, Kitchen Table (92-93):
• Foyer typically describes a larger environment, like a worship service, where we are sensitive to the needs of those who may be visiting for the first time. This is the entry point for the unchurched, and it is where people get their first impression of the church. The relational goal of the Foyer Environment is to make sure that people walk away and feel like guests.

• The Living Room is an environment where a number of people can network and meet one another. These environments are used to host area fellowships and special events for target groups and positioned as catalysts for relationships. The goal is for people to walk away and feel like they are friends with someone. We also want their priorities to change and for these people to begin making decisions that keep them moving toward a right relationship with God and to consider participating with Christians in a small group context.

• The Kitchen Table is the most intimate of environments. It is primarily what we call our small groups, or Community Group experience. This is where people should be comfortable enough to have meaningful conversations about their life and faith. Community Group is where people should begin to feel like they are family. This environment is an optimal place for a person’s faith to grow.

• So how do we create a step? For a step to be effective, it has to be easy, obvious, and strategic (94-95):

  o Every step should be easy. In order for someone to be able to take the next step, it can’t be too much of a jump.

  o Every step has to be obvious. People need to understand where they now are and where they need to go next. In order to make the next step obvious, leaders need to consistently explain what’s important and what’s next.

  o Every step must be strategic. As long as we want to lead to people to a specific destination, then it is important that each step continues to move them in a clear direction toward where we want them to go.

• A note of caution: It’s too easy for an organization to develop programs that lead people in another direction or allow them to get stuck. We call that “sideways energy.” It’s the result of creating less than strategic steps that actually compete with other, more critical steps. (95)

• There are several organizational advantages to thinking steps, not programs. Here are just a few (96):
o You encourage your teams to depend on each other.

o You discourage individuals from becoming territorial.

o You erase the hard lines that exist between departments.

o You uncover anything that is not working.

o You become more intentional about simplifying what you do.

o You position leaders to constantly think in terms of the big picture.

• A program is usually disconnected from other programs and can easily become an island unto itself. A step, on the other hand, is usually connected to an interdependent relationship to the other environments within the organization. By its very nature, a step’s success is tied to the organization’s success. (96)

**Points of Application**

1. Where is the ultimate destination in your organization for adults to experience life change? What about students? Children?

2. Create a “road map” outlining the steps that lead someone new to this destination.

3. Are there any steps that need to be eliminated because they don’t take people where you want them to go?

4. What steps may need to be created to help people get to the desired destination more effectively?

5. Are there steps that take people where you want them to go but have not been clearly communicated?
Practice #3: Narrow the Focus
Do fewer things in order to make a greater impact

• Recognize the power of uncompromising personal focus. (99)

• The sobering truth is that many of us weaken our potential by investing too much time in the areas of our lives where we have the least potential. It seems logical. Even justifiable. After all, shouldn’t we work hard at improving the areas in which we are weakest? Think about it, does it make sense for an ace relief pitcher to spend more time working on his batting? (100)

• If you really want to make a lasting impact, then you need to eliminate what you do well for the sake of what you can potentially do best. “Devoting a little of yourself to everything means committing a great deal of yourself to nothing.” (100)

• [When someone is committed to being uncompromising in their attempt to narrow the focus of their life, even when] everything else around him is growing out of control, screaming for attention, he somehow manages to stay focused on what is key for himself and their organization. (100)

• Your potential to make an impact with your life is directly related to your willingness to narrow your focus. (101)

• What is true for individuals is also true for organizations: There is a natural tendency to drift toward complexity. A lot of churches are simply doing too much. Instead of being strong somewhere, they are weak everywhere. Ministry becomes diluted because it is flowing in too many different directions. Years of adding and never subtracting have created layers of programs that all feel necessary. It’s always dangerous to confuse activity with results. Churches are notorious for sacrificing long-term growth for short-term progress. So much of what they do divides their resources and their focus, thus creating a barrier to real growth. They fail to understand something counterintuitive about growth: You have to do less if you want to grow more. (101-102)

• Some churches have bought into a ministry “menu” philosophy. [This is the concept of the “one-stop shop – create as many entry points as possible so that you could “reach” as many people as possible. The results are large, complex organizations that are difficult to maintain because of the immensity of their structure and programming.] (102)

• Churches feel constant pressure to provide programs on the basis of needs. The need-focused approach is an attempt to satisfy those inside the church. [It is key to remember that] you don’t meet needs simply because they exist. If you fuel the “neediness” in your congregation, you will possibly create an inward-focused church that can potentially selfimplode. (102-103)
• **Individuals have been allowed to build their identity around a program, not a mission.** When individuals tie their identity to a program they’ve created, they lose the objectivity that is necessary to evaluate its effectiveness. Programs need to change; a mission can last a lifetime. When leaders give their heart to a mission, they hold whatever they create with open hands. Why? Because the value of a program is linked to how well it helps to accomplish the mission. And a good leader is always more passionate about the mission than about the program. (104)

• **Church leaders fear the fallout of eliminating certain programs.** When a leader fears the consequences of eliminating a program more than the long-term effects of keeping a program, the result can be costly. When a leader lacks the courage to make necessary changes, the future potential of the entire organization is put on hold. (104-105)

• Narrowing your focus means you must **resist complexity and pursue simplicity.** (105)

• We cannot afford to implement competing systems that could make our organizations unhealthy. (105)

• Narrowing your focus means you **choose what potentially works best over what is presently working.** It may sound strange, but the best way to help a program work better may actually be to kill another program that is working. Jesus highlights this principle in John 15. Although He is not referring specifically to an organization, the principle is the same. He says, “My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.” Everyone understands that concept. If something isn’t working, get rid of it. It’s the next phrase that could revolutionize your ministry: “…while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.” Pruning something that is alive – cutting off something that is fruitful so another part can be more fruitful – is painful but necessary if you want to become more fruitful. (106)

• Good programs can actually get in the way of other programs becoming excellent. (106)

• The program with the potential to work the best – that is, the program that will bear the greatest fruit – should be your priority. (106)

• Do your specific environments exist to promote your church? Or does your church exist to create specific environments? The answer is critical. **Narrowing your focus means creating environments as distinctive brands.** You must decide what image you want to become primary in the minds of the target audience you are trying to reach. (107-108)

• The truth is that church by nature is a very general concept. And most people are not looking for a church; otherwise, churches would be full of visitors every week.
What people are looking for is something that is relevant to their marriage, their family, their personal lives. What they are looking for is something that works for them as individuals. And that is something specific, not general. (108)

- Trying to change someone’s opinion about the church in general is a hard sell. What you can do, however, is change the image of your church by creating environments that are attractive and helpful for someone’s season of life. When your priority is creating environments instead of marketing your church, you will make a greater impact on what your community things about your church. (109)

- If you hope to start making an environment a distinctive brand you must do two things:
  - Identify a primary target group
  - Design each environment to do one thing (109)

- Presumably you have limited resources and talent, so you need to first decide who you have the best potential to reach. Here’s a news flash: You will never reach everybody, so don’t try. Notice we did not say, “Don’t care about everybody.” We’re just saying it’s better not to try to be all things to all people. If you try to be everything to everybody, you may dilute your potential to reach anybody. (109)

- You need to figure out who you are good at reaching and go for it. (109)

- Every environment should be designed to do one thing. That doesn’t mean it can’t do anything else; it just means that each environment should have a narrow focus. (110)

- Try to attach one word or a short phrase to every environment to “brand” its distinctiveness in the minds of your leaders (i.e. Inside Out, Rush Hour, Starting Point, etc.) (110)

- When you create distinct brands, you let people know what to expect, and you help leaders to meet their expectations. (111)

- Narrowing your focus means developing a team of specialists who may not do everything well, but are experts in the areas assigned to them. (112)

- [Specialists] learn how to field their zone of responsibility. (112)

- When you narrow the focus, everyone tends to become an expert at what they do. (113)

- The goal of any organization should be to develop a team of people who are experts in their area of work. (113)
• Experts tend to implement strategies that are much more effective, so churches that breed specialists have a clear advantage over churches that are full of generalists. (113)

• When you apply the principle of “narrow the focus” to your environments, you will discover a number of advantages almost immediately. (113-114)
  
  o The more you focus each environment, the greater the relevance. [Target accuracy]
  o The more you focus each environment, the better the connection. [Relational strength]
  o The more you focus each environment, the higher the quality. [Excellence comes when you stop doing too much]
  o The more you focus each environment, the stronger the impact. [Focus breeds specificity which yields results]

• It’s important to understand how “narrow the focus” is different from the other practices we have discussed thus far. “Clarify the win” means evaluating and defining what is really working. It is an important practice to familiarize everyone with what success looks and feels like. “Think steps, not programs” is about identifying and implementing programs which actually function as steps that move people in a strategic direction. “Narrow the focus,” on the other hand, is about deciding to do less in order to be more effective. (114-115)

• Some churches are so loaded down with unnecessary baggage, they can’t make the turn fast enough to keep up with a changing culture. They are getting behind because they’re loaded down with stuff that is just not as important as they think it is. Today’s church needs wise and courageous leaders who will simplify their activity and refocus their mission. (115)

• WHENEVER A CHURCH DECIDES TO NARROW ITS FOCUS, IT SHOULD BE IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR CALLING TO LEAD PEOPLE TO FOLLOW CHRIST. (116)

Points of Application

1. Identify any programs in your organization that are providing the same step. Which one has the greatest potential to become more effective if you eliminate the other?

2. Is there an effective program that you should eliminate because it is preventing a more important program from becoming more effective?

3. Are there activities or programs that have become barriers to excellence in your organization?
4. Create a “not-to-do” list outlining programs your organization shouldn’t do. In other words, decide now what you will never do.

5. Try to attach a word or short phrase to each of your environments to “brand” its distinctiveness in the minds of your leaders.

6. Assign each person on your team to describe, in one sentence each, every other team member’s primary contribution to the organization. Share and discuss each list.
Practice #4: Teach Less for More
Say only what you need to say to the people who need to hear it

- As we try to absorb more and more facts in this information age, we may, in fact, find we are able to know and achieve less. (120)

- A good coach focuses on the fundamentals of the game…and they don’t waste time on anything that really doesn’t help you improve your game. (120)

- Let’s face it. You don’t learn something until you really need to know it. And the greater the need, the higher the interest and the potential to actually learn. (121)

- Most people don’t learn just so they can know more; they learn when they need to know something. So communicators and teachers have a critical responsibility: they must make sure they know what people really need to learn. And in some situations, they need to spend time making sure people understand why they need to learn something. It’s the only way a teacher can expect any student to learn. (121)

- When we say, “Teach less for more,” we mean that you should rethink what and how you communicate to your team. If “narrow the focus” suggests that you make a stronger impact when you do less, “teach less for more” implies that you can drastically improve how much people learn if you teach less. That doesn’t mean that you say fewer words, but rather, that you narrow the scope of what you teach to cover less information. The things you choose to teach should be limited to those things that your people most need to hear – in other words, the core principles most appropriate to your target audience. These are what we refer to as the “irreducible minimums” of learning. (121-122)

- When it comes to information, all knowledge is not equal. There are facts that would be nice to know, and then there is information that is really interesting. But much more important, there’s a body of knowledge that is critical for certain individuals in your organization to understand. (122)

- You have to teach with the end in mind. “Teach less for more” answers the question “What do you want people to become?” When you filter everything you teach through this lens, it becomes much easier to decide what you should say, as well as what you should not say. When you teach with the end in mind, you are forced to prioritize what you teach. (123-124)

- The “Teach Less for More” practice is based on three premises (124-125):
  - All Scripture is equally inspired.
  - All Scripture is not equally important.
  - All Scripture is not equally applicable.
• The goal of “teach less for more” is to identify and package a handful of must-know, can’t be without, age-appropriate principles for each target group. You need to streamline your curriculum. You should never compromise the stories or principles that reinforce the essentials of faith. Scripture that helps someone understand salvation, grace, faith, and other critical aspects of the gospel should definitely be a priority. The key is taking the time to decide beforehand what the big issues are for each group and then establishing them as your irreducible minimums. (125-126)

• Luke 2:52 is a short, simple passage but it answers the question “What do I want my children (or those I teach) to become? (127)

• To teach less for more involves a four step process (129-133)
  o Decide what you are going to say – what is important for our people to learn
  o Decide to say one thing at a time – the “teach less for more concept” not only means we prioritize the core information we try to teach, but that we also say less each time we meet. Too much information may, in fact, have a canceling effect…with every additional idea you introduce, you diminish the effectiveness of the prior ideas you have already presented. Focus on just one truth or principle and you enhance the potential of every listener to “get it.”
  o Decide how you are going to say it – communication is really about engaging the mind and heart of the listener, and so it is important to appeal to a variety of learning styles.
  o Say it over and over again – what is worth remembering is worth repeating.

• There are a number of reasons churches find it difficult to establish “teach less for more” as a practice in their organizations (133-136):
  o It’s easier to teach more for less that it is to teach less for more.
  o The context of ministry tends to be more demanding than the content – everything about your environment should reinforce the content.
  o They have bought into a myth about “going deep.” Too many churches have been turned into classrooms. Some leaders have been programmed to teach that way, while others think they are going deeper, when in reality their lessons are going over someone’s head. When you teach less for more, it doesn’t mean you water down your message, it just means you focus.
  o They worry about not having enough to say – the object of communication is not to cover a lot of material but, rather, to make sure people learn.
  o They fear they will leave something out – the temptation is to explain everything about a subject so that no one misunderstands. In your attempt to explain everything, your audience may not understand anything.
o What they teach is predetermined by entities outside their ministry. Once you have defined the irreducible minimums of your ministry, you must decide what resources best fit with what you are trying to say. Don’t let someone else sell you something they want you to say.

- They are confused about the difference between information and application. People who live in the real world have a way of seeing through empty clichés and superficial principles. People are not going to listen to you if you’re teaching something they really don’t need. Instead, ask yourself, “Is it helpful?” If it isn’t helpful, then it isn’t relevant.

**Points of Application**

1. Identify a handful of must-know, can’t be without, age-appropriate principles (irreducible minimums) for each target group in your church.

2. State your irreducible minimums in a creative way that your leaders and volunteers can remember.

3. Practice crafting in a memorable way the “bottom line” you hoped to communicate in a recent message or lesson.

4. Evaluate a recent worship service and identify which elements (e.g., music, drama, announcements) did not complement the focus of the message. Remember, the goal is for everything to reinforce the bottom line. If you were approaching the same service this Sunday, what could you change to effectively teach less for more?

5. Brainstorm some new tools or creative elements you can use to enhance your productions or environments.
Practice #5: Listen to Outsiders

Focus on who you’re trying to reach, not who you’re trying to keep

• Insider Thinking: It’s easy for the needs or interest of insiders to ultimately drive the priorities of any organization. It’s just the natural tendency of any group to become insider-focused. If you are surrounded long enough by people who think like you think, you will become more and more certain that’s the best way to think. Over time, you find yourself inclined to completely disregard the concerned voices of those positioned on the outside. (140)

• Some of us have been in church for so long we’ve forgotten what it’s like to never attend. We have believed what we believe for so long, we don’t know how an unbeliever thinks anymore. And when the average person shows up at a church for the first time, too often he or she feels like the customer who walks onto a new car lot. In many cases the person leaves feeling suspicious, pressured, and even manipulated. (142)

• If a large portion of the population is not going to church and the majority of churches are not full, that means there’s a lot of room in the churches that exist for people who are not going. And yet most churches now being built are patterned after churches that already exist. (143)

• Read or study any report about church attendance in America. They all suggest the same thing. Each generation is more skeptical and less likely to attend. Most experts believe that 70 percent of college students who have grown up in church will drop out when they go to college. Attendance is declining and those on the outside seem to have a growing indifference toward what the church has to offer. Millions of outsiders see what the church does as being irrelevant, and yet most churches continue to do business as usual. (143)

• Jesus said He came “to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). He commanded his followers to go into all the world and “make disciples” of those who were not followers (Matthew 28:19). One day Jesus pushed the concept to a radical extreme when he told the story about a shepherd who had a hundred sheep – He suggested that it was appropriate to abandon the ninety-nine that were safe in order to find the one that was lost. (143-144)

• There is a massive potential audience being sacrificed because many churches are desperately trying to keep a handful of traditional customers satisfied. (144)

• You should lead your church to invest in outsiders strategically. You should strive to find the delicate balance between facilitating the growth of believers and reaching those who are unchurched. But don’t make the mistake of piling up excuses and saddling your ministry with an insider mindset that paralyzes your potential to reach outsiders. Too many churches are hiding behind what is
convenient and comfortable while an entire generation is being left in the dark. (145)

- “What would be something that if it ceased to be true about us a church would make us want to quit and go work somewhere else?” (145)

- [Think of] the phrase “invest and invite” as a way to challenge every leader and attendee to make outsiders their priority. (146)

- When an insider invests in someone outside the church, something changes. The heart follows the investment, and the result is an authentic relationship between an insider and an outsider. (146)

- [The authors of the book suggest that] the “invest and invite” strategy has radically changed our approach to evangelism…when both sides of the “invest and invite” principle are practiced fervently, then everyone does what everyone does best. Believers become passionate about sharing their faith with friends, and staff members devote themselves to crafting environments where unchurched friends will feel welcomed and cared for. (146-147)

- The “invest and invite” strategy inspires everyone to listen more attentively to what an outsider hears. (149)

- When enough people show up with friends on a consistent basis, everyone in your church will be forced to listen through an entirely different filter. Everything your church does will be evaluated by a much more critical standard. We have discovered that inviting outsiders effectively keeps us aware and sensitive to how they think and what they need…It puts healthy pressure on us to consider carefully how we program and communicate. That doesn’t mean we water down the truth of what we teach, but we are keenly aware of how we say what we say. (150)

- When attendees and volunteers are accustomed to having unchurched or unbelievers in attendance, they cannot help but recognize the significance of how they act and serve…To put it another way, our insiders have decided that the needs of outsiders are more important than their own. When that happens the “listen to outsiders” practice has become an integral part of your culture. (150-151)

- Years ago, Tony Campolo wrote a book with the intriguing title We Have Met the Enemy and They are Partly Right. In it, Campolo implied that Christians could learn a lot from organizations that are not Christian. It makes sense that if we are targeting a certain age group or demographic we need to study the experts in our culture that have proven most effective at reaching that group. (i.e. Children’s ministries keep an eye on Disney, Nickelodeon, the Cartoon Network, etc.; while student ministries learn from MTV and the WB.) (151)
• Many of us have been inside so long, we have become deaf to what outsiders say their real needs are. If you are deaf long enough, it affects the way you speak. (151)

• What if we spent every week getting ready for a host of outsiders who could possibly show up? When you listen to outsiders, it forces you to change the way you do church. (154)

Points of Application

1. List the environments outside of your organization where you regularly interact with unchurched people.

2. In what areas should your organization carefully guard against the tendency of catering to the insiders?

3. Which environments in your organization have been specifically designed with outsiders in mind?

4. Who are the “outside” experts reaching your target audience?
Practice #6: Replace Yourself  
*Learn to hand off what you do*

- *No matter who you are, how famous or powerful, one day somebody will replace you.* (157)

- The fact is, you have only one of two choices:
  - You can desperately hold on to your job until someone inevitably replaces you.
  - You can prepare someone to do what you do and strategically replace yourself.

  The first option give you limited input in what happens in the future of your organization; the second allows you to leverage your influence with the next generation of who will one day lead your organization. When you attempt to hold on, you encourage your organization to be built around a personality; when you strategically replace yourself, you allow your organization to be driven by vision. Learning to effectively hand off leadership to the next generation is vital to the longevity of any organization, especially the church. (158)

- True discipleship is about serving and being involved. Our students are not just hearing about distant ideas; they are part of a revolution. Our high school program is now scheduled for Sunday afternoons so teens can serve in the morning programs. Every week, students at North Point go to work changing diapers, aiding teachers, leading worship music, and serving families. They change lives, and in doing so, they are changed. (159)

- [Note] the concept of “leadership lids.” On organization will have a difficult time rising higher than the lid of its leader. (160)

- Organizations also have “leadership walls” that prevent others form achieving their potential. Whereas a leadership lid can stunt your personal growth as a leader and may indirectly affect the rest of your organization, a leadership wall can directly stunt the growth of those on your team and, ultimately, create a leadership gap in your organization. Lids stop leaders from growing up, but walls keep leaders out. (160)

- If you fail to develop a strategy to replace yourself, you will…
  - Force talented individuals to remain in the wings
  - Cause potential leaders to exit the organization
  - Stifle needed insight from valuable team members
  - Hinder your ability to recruit volunteers
  - Limit the growth of your programs and ministries. (160)
Here are a few examples of how different leader’s attributes can actually build leadership walls that hinder the development of future leaders:

- The entrepreneurial leader specializes in taking risks and pioneering new territory, yet may see others’ fresh ideas as threatening or in competition with his own.
- The nurturing leader is patient and encouraging, but may lack the zeal to confront someone in areas that really need change.
- The charismatic leader can inspire the masses to follow a dream, yet may become jealous and defensive when the time comes for people to follow a new leader.
- The innovative leader uses creativity to produce something relevant and original, but tends to get possessive when another artist tries to improve on what has been created.
- The managing leader is excellent at coordinating staff and developing systems, yet may stubbornly resist those who question the process or want to experiment with doing things in a different way.
- The high-performance leader can juggle an incredible workload and still be extremely productive, but his failure to delegate does not allow anyone else to really own a piece of the vision.

Replacing yourself begins with a shift in your thinking as a leader. (161)

- Instead of asking the question, “What keeps me from growing as a leader?” you should spend more time asking, “What keeps those around me from growing as leaders?” (162)

- Replacing yourself means that you are willing to hand someone else a significant piece of what you do. You are then responsible to help this person own it and succeed at it…the practice of “replacing yourself” is critical to the longevity of any organization, but if you want the practice to become a habit in your church, you must recognize and reward it when it happens. Then every leader at every level needs to start celebrating it whenever they see leaders making other leaders successful. (162)

- Some churches but into the myth that it is the responsibility of a few staff to do most of the recruiting. When you embrace that mindset you immediately limit the number of volunteers you can scout and train. But if you can successfully inspire your existing volunteers to replace themselves, volunteerism has the opportunity to grow exponentially. The grassroots goal is to make sure that every volunteer makes it their mission to recruit another volunteer. (163)

- [Here is a key point to making this concept a reality!] We would walk into meetings with a handful of volunteers and start handing out index cards. We would ask everyone to write down the name of two or three friends who could do
what they do. Then we would challenge them to recruit at least one. At the next meeting everyone would give a report. (164)

- The most effective way to train people is to model what needs to be done by apprenticing…[but] you are not responsible for knowing everything there is to know about an area of ministry. But you are responsible for handing off what you do know. You don’t have to be an incredibly talented player to coach someone how to become better at playing the game. (164-165)

- You should not let what you don’t know keep you from apprenticing someone. Your responsibility is to teach what you do know. And if you develop a heart to coach, you can help people grow and improve their skills. (165)

- The following are steps to making a successful hand-off:
  - Break it down – teaching someone to replace you begins by having a clear understanding of exactly what it is you are trying to hand off…If you are going to apprentice someone to do what you do, then you need to know what it is you do. Because if you can’t explain or define what you do, then it will be hard to get someone else to do it. Each function must be broken down into clear and doable steps and possibly even scripted. Chances are if it is not written down, then it had probably not been effectively broken down.
  - Hand it off – when replacing yourself, you are giving something away that you have owned. You are equipping someone to do something that you have done, pushing them into a role that you have played. Assuming you are human, you will likely experience a jumble of emotions during the hand-off. And if the ball is dropped, you will tend to want to pick it back up quickly. But remember, you are training someone else to carry the ball. Don’t try to be the hero who recovers the fumble and carries it across the goal line himself. You’re there to coach and model. Everyone learns best from mistakes, so allow others to learn from theirs. Your job is to help push someone else across the goal line for the score. People who embrace the “replace yourself” principle see others around them as partners, not competition.
  - Let it go – it will be hard, but necessary. Sooner or later, you will have to let go, so start practicing now. God gives us various opportunities throughout our life to learn this lesson…our understanding of the bigger picture gives us the wisdom to let go and transition to whatever’s next…It’s easier to let go of what doesn’t belong to you anyway. When you are focused on the scope of God’s kingdom, you realize there is something more important than your personal dream or agenda. (166-169)
Points of Application

1. Identify the leaders in your organization. What is your plan for replacing these leaders?

2. Who are you personally investing in to do your job after you’re gone?

3. Which reproducible systems are now in place in your organization that will make it easy to transfer responsibilities to others?

4. Which of the leadership types listen on page 161 do you most identify with? Do you also identify with the potential weaknesses listed for this type of leader?

5. Which of the unhealthy personal tendencies listen on page 161 can your team identify with?
Practice #7: Work On It
Take time to evaluate your work – and to celebrate your wins

• Self-evaluation is not a new concept. The book of Genesis records that God set aside a time for evaluating His own work. At the end of six long days of creating, Scripture tells us that before He rested, He evaluated…The point is, no matter how good the system, a consistent time of evaluation can produce tremendous benefits. We call this creating margin. Margin does not happen accidently, and it doesn’t happen automatically. Margin has to be pursued. (173-174)

• For most of us, our margin is what’s left over after we’ve finished doing everything we have to do. It’s an afterthought. But for margin to be effective, it has to be an integral part of our overall plan. At the outset, you have to schedule consistent times to break away from the battle and assess your plan as well as your performance. (174)

• We have carved time out of our schedule that is not given to the daily routine of working in ministry. We plan a high premium on retreats and off-site meetings where our staff can get away, step back, and take a big-picture view of things. (175)

• Monday is the day we meet as a staff – the entire staff…at which time everyone asks the same question: “What did you see, hear, or experience this week that makes you feel we have successfully fulfilled our mission?”…[Also] every one of our creative meetings where we plan an environment includes and evaluation phase when we look at our effectiveness in the previous week. During our worship service evaluation time, we perform an intensive autopsy of the service, ensuring that we can repeat those things that worked and hopefully avoid repeating the ones that didn’t. These small but specific times of evaluation are critical pieces of margin that have been created and are carefully guarded. Calendaring margin goes beyond scheduling a specific time for evaluation. It may also involve stopping a program or activity for a strategic period of time. (176-177)

• We have discovered that in these moments of created margin, we get some of our best ideas. We are able to solve some of our most complex problems and refocus our energies in a way that makes a huge difference in our future ministry. (177)

• When you carve out margin to work on a specific area, you have created an environment where you can turn over the rocks and confront what Jim Collins calls “the brutal facts.” (179)

• A word of warning: Common sense tells us that open and honest debate creates the potential for negative impact on relationships. In order to keep your staff from paying the price relationally, you must develop an atmosphere of trust throughout your team…If your staff will choose to trust one another and assume
the best, you will have an atmosphere where debate can take its full and natural course without fear of retribution or reprisal. (179-180)

- A key thing to remember about creating margin in your organization is that it isn’t enough to evaluate. You also have to celebrate. (180)

- If you want a behavior repeated then you need to reward it. Few things are more rewarding for a volunteer than hearing his or her name shared as part of someone’s life-changing story. (181)

- The critical question that we must all ask is, “Am I consistently carving out time to work on the ministry?” (182)

**Points of Application**

1. Does your present meeting structure allow time for sharing learning experiences? What percentage of your meetings is spent simply downloading information?

2. Discuss ways you can effectively encourage learning throughout your organization.

3. How must of your time do you spend just working on what is happening in your weekly programming versus discussing the overall strategy?

4. Make a list of issues your team needs to discuss that don’t directly impact what happens in your weekly programs – for example, how you reach outsiders, increasing small group participation, identifying what’s not working, developing a hiring philosophy, etc.

5. Would the members of your organization say that their contributions are valued and that time is taken to properly honor these contributions? In what areas and what ways could you improve in this area?

6. Identify a specific win you could celebrate with your team. What would that celebration look like? Now put it on the calendar!
Your ministry is perfectly designed to achieve the results you are currently getting. If you are satisfied with your results, then there is no sense in complicating your life with these seven practices. But if you are ready for change, if you see need for improvement, then the principles in this book will give you traction as you press on toward your preferred future.

Each of the practices anchor the organization to specific components of our mission and strategy. For example:

- Clarify the Win fuels our momentum
- Think Steps, not Programs protects our alignment
- Narrow the focus points us towards excellence
- Teach Less for More guarantees that we stay relevant
- Listen to Outsiders keeps us focused on growth
- Replace Yourself assures us of longevity
- Work On It positions us for discovery. (185)