

# The Church Doctor® Report

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## What Have I Gotten Myself Into?

### Leading from the Center of God's Will

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The Church Doctor® Report provides a quick read of strategic and influential information. This information is free to share as long as the source is respected.

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Kent Hunter leads a team at Church Doctor Ministries that has developed a spiritual pilgrimage

for churches to prepare for the coming revival. Church Doctor Ministries is dedicated to the transformational change of Christians and churches for the cause of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Kent has recently begun a speaking tour, "Leading From the Center of God's Will: A Church Leader's One-Day Boot Camp."

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After a hectic day at work, Esther found herself in a frenzy with the usual activities of the family dinner. Spending what felt like an abbreviated time with her husband and children, her mind kept spinning about the Church Board meeting at 7:30 p.m. It was her first.

"I'm not sure what I've gotten myself into," thought Esther. She remembered how it happened. Two months before, her friend, Kathryn, called and asked her to "run" for a position on the Board. Esther explained how she had never been on a Church Board. Kathryn made light of the objection and said it didn't matter. "Besides," Kathryn said, "there are others running and we need a full ballot. Chances are you won't get elected anyway."

Esther didn't know what to think of that. Her mind wandered, "Is this really the way they run our church...collecting 'warm bodies' to fill a ballot as required by the church's constitution?" A month later, at a congregational meeting, Esther was surprised: she "won" the election!

With mixed feelings, Esther put on her Christian "game face" as she was installed, with others, in front of the whole congregation. Now, just a few days later, she was making her way to her first Board meeting. She thought, "I have no clue what I am doing." Her only consoling thought was, "I do love my church and want to serve...doing something."

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## Leadership in the Church: A Real Challenge

Not long ago, I was consulting a church in Memphis, Tennessee. As part of our investigative and diagnostic approach, I interviewed a cross section of the members in the congregation. That's how I met Dave. Dave is a vice president of FedEx corporation. He heads up their new building construction projects, worldwide. As a leader of their church, Dave was considered the perfect person to lead the church into a small building expansion project. His reflections are insightful. He said he was used to working on building projects for FedEx that were sometimes in the range of \$1 billion. They were challenging, hard work, and always stretching him. "However," he reflected, "they did not even compare to the challenges of the small project at the church. It seemed like everyone had an opinion...everyone was my boss." Dave claimed it was the hardest building project he had ever led. It was in his church!

Church is tough. Church leadership is challenging. The way most churches go about it is somewhere between a joke...and criminal. In his classic book *Taking the Lead*, my friend, Ron Jenson, says, "Our countries increasingly fail because our communities fail. Our communities fail because our institutions fail. Our institutions fail because our churches and ministers fail. Our churches fail because our families fail. Our families fail because we fail individually, as the leaders God appointed us to be," (page 42).

Most church leaders like Esther are really great people. They are committed Christians who mean well, want to serve, and are often sabotaged by a system that sets them up for frustration and performance far below their possibilities.

For many churches, there is this tradition of low-quality effort to attract, develop, and prepare good leaders. It is a ritual, a routine that follows a constitution that is foreign to biblical thinking. It develops a low expectation level of importance for leadership. Leadership boards consist of well-meaning people doing mediocre work--not because they are necessarily poor leaders, but because they are prisoners of a poor system. Poor leadership in a bankrupt system leads to poor results and frustration. The act of leadership moves from a high calling to a lowly duty. The system eventually attracts and keeps managers rather than leaders. Gifted leaders, who know better, refuse to serve. The problem is systemic and perpetuates a culture of mediocrity. This is a big deal for most churches.

## How Do You Break the Cycle?

If you are in the position of a leader, the previous paragraphs sounded familiar. Perhaps, momentarily, those paragraphs added to or affirmed your frustration. Don't quit. Instead, think about how you can change the system.

Start by promoting a high view of leadership in the church. John Maxwell says it this way: "Leadership is a privilege. It is like being a dog in a dog sled. Unless you are out in front, the view is the same for the rest of the dogs. It's all about vision--the leader gets to see the view first." (John C. Maxwell, audio resource, *The Privilege of Leading*).

Think about the concept of vision. What is the focus of your Leadership Board? Maintenance? Reporting? The past? Or, looking to the future, casting vision? Remember: if leaders don't look toward the future with vision, it is unlikely anyone else will.

Another dimension is Esther's question: "How did I get here?" In her case, she was elected because she agreed to let her name stand on a ballot. Consider, instead, a biblical approach. Think about how this would change your system. Move from elections to mentoring leaders. If you can't change your constitution, you can always be a mentor for someone. Ask God to lead you to a potential leader to mentor. This is what Jesus did: He modeled discipling--on-the-job, relationally-based, training and teaching; doing and becoming. This is the context in which values, enthusiasm, attitudes, and worldviews are as much caught as taught.

Most churches operate on some schedule of term limits. A few people, every year or two, go off the Board (as if your leadership gift dried up or the call to service moved on without your awareness). In this approach, the church adds to the Board a few people each year. This approach of adding is contrary to God's plan, as well.

## 10 Key Ingredients for Effective Church Leadership

1. Don't elect. Select key leaders.
2. Develop a "minor league farm club" for future leaders.
3. Select leaders by focusing on the spiritual gift of leadership.
4. Allow for those who do not have the spiritual gift, but have the calling and the role of leadership, for a season.
5. Develop a culture in which leaders mentor leaders.
6. Allow anyone who feels led by God to "try out" leadership by submitting to a mentor.
7. Equip leaders in mentoring skills.
8. Provide an annual retreat for leaders. Main purpose: to build relationships with each other.
9. Develop the biblical values of respect for authority, speaking the truth in a spirit of love, and following Jesus' teaching to avoid gossip by practicing problem solving face-to-face (Matthew 18:15-18)
10. Make the pursuit of God's will--what God wants for your church--is the fabric of the decision-making process, exclusively.

## Think Multiplication

When God gave directions to fill the Earth, the command was, "Be fruitful and multiply." When Jesus called His servants to expand the Kingdom, it was all about multiplication, being fruitful and "making disciples." This, too, is a multiplication strategy. Someone once said, "A leader who develops people ADDS. A leader who develops leaders MULTIPLIES." Another way of thinking about this is asking yourself the question, what do you really want to accomplish? What will be the result, the legacy of your leadership effort? "Leaders impress others when leaders succeed; leaders impact others when followers succeed" (John C. Maxwell, *Leadership 101*, page 113).

As I have worked with churches throughout North America over the past three decades, I have rarely seen this discipling culture. Many pastors go about their daily routines and, most often, are not equipping someone, as they serve. For example, every day pastors are ministering to those who are hospitalized. Usually the pastors are alone. Why?

1. Pastors know it takes more time to arrange for someone to go along.
2. Church people have a high expectation of caretaker pastors. Members expect pastors to do ministry as a primary role.
3. Many have lost the biblical notion of Ephesians 4: 15-16 where pastors and other leaders are primarily called to equip other people to do the work of ministry.
4. Churches seem to ignore Jesus' model of on-the-job training.
5. Most church leaders have a limited view that disciple-making only happens in a class.

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June 1-9, 2011

Team Limit: 20

This trip may be eligible for advance credit through some seminaries, Bible colleges, and Christian universities.

For an application e-mail: [jasonatkinson@churchdoctor.org](mailto:jasonatkinson@churchdoctor.org)

The end result is more frustration. Pastors preach discipleship and there is little change. Leaders challenge others to attend a Bible class under the false assumption that more knowledge equals changed behavior. The frustration, in many churches, leads to a quick-fix mentality. This is desperation behavior: "We need leaders now--we don't have time to go through the long process of mentoring and discipling." This is a perpetual, self-destructive approach for leaders to follow.

So what would you do for Esther? You could ask a former leader like Sally to mentor Esther for her first year on the Board. Sally is a seasoned leader with deep Christian wisdom. She understands discipling and might be willing to invest her life in Esther. Sure, it would be far better to develop a system of discipling for potential leaders, five-to-ten years before they are asked to serve in a leadership position. Reinventing the system is not the only alternative. Would Sally be allowed to sit with Esther at the meetings? Would she be willing to debrief afterward, perhaps the next day over coffee? Will Sally invest in the spiritual dimensions of Esther's life including modeling the ministry of discipling? Will Esther catch the discipleship model and pass it on to the next generation? That would, in a small way, start a movement.

What other ministries could be slowly and methodically changed to begin discipleship preparation? It's not that hard to start. Challenge your Sunday school teachers to seek out helpers and train them in the fine art of mentoring, discipling, equipping, and training. Do this consistently and persistently throughout the church for five years and you'll see a dramatic change in your church. Future leaders, like Esther, will thank God you did.

## New One-Day Workshops

### 20/20 Workshop

Our research demonstrates that large numbers of active members in churches operate from culturally influenced, subconscious, non-biblical worldviews:

65% aren't clear about the purpose of the church.

60% think the pastor is a hired hand to do ministry for the rest.

64% do not approach financial giving from a biblical perspective.

75% are more concerned about personal comfort than missional activity.

We'll share how to recognize these worldviews and teach how to sort out and seek God's will and vision for the local church. This is a great learning opportunity for any leader

### Leading from the Center of God's Will

Equipping new leaders is increasingly becoming an adventure in spiritual formation. There are dynamic ways church leadership is changing today...and everyone benefits - the leader and the church. In our post-modern world, the only way the church will attract young leaders is to practice flat-world, biblically-based leadership.

For more information, contact Shelly:

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