

Leader's Guide to "What is Equipping?"

This Leader's Guide accompanies the PowerPoint presentation "Together in His Service: Helping Each Other Serve Jesus," the first in a planned series of resources to help congregations that want to equip their people to serve. The presentation introduces the idea of focusing on equipping volunteers to serve rather than focusing on recruiting volunteers for church needs. The Leaders' Guide includes:

- questions for group discussion
- suggested steps for implementing equipping
- recommended resources
- script for the presentation

Equipping is an exciting concept that can revitalize a church. The potential for growth in individuals and in the health of the congregation is great. But the potential for misunderstanding is also great. Some people will see it as a new way to push people to volunteer; another way to twist arms. It's important to continually remind each other that while recruitment focuses on the ministry need, equipping focuses on the person. People also need to be reminded of the time and effort involved in equipping. It is not an easy "quick fix."

A handout for participants is available. In booklet format (one 8-1/2x11 sheet folded to a 4-page booklet), it is designed to be distributed to participants after the presentation is shown, and after any discussion. It summarizes the concepts presented, and allows for additional thought, study, or application by those who are interested.

Permission is given to reproduce this Leader's Guide for use within your own congregation. The powerpoint presentation, handout for participants and this Leader's Guide are all available free by contacting Karen Kogler.

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I. Discussion Questions

When showing the presentation to a group, it might be helpful to generate some discussion after the viewing. Use these questions or your own.

- What are some of the good and the bad experiences you have had as a volunteer? (Leader: If you're concerned about opening wounds, limit the discussion to volunteer experiences people have had elsewhere: in the community, in school, in other locations or perhaps even at work. Don't let the discussion become a gripe session; ask what might have been done differently to avoid the bad experience.)
- Do you agree or disagree with the statement, "If God wants something done in a particular church, he will provide people to do it." How does Exodus 31:1-11 relate to that statement?
- "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him to fish and he eats for life." Which of the two actions in this familiar saying is easier and quicker? What steps or procedures might be involved in teaching him to fish? [providing equipment; finding a place to fish; etc.] What other benefits, other than feeding himself, might come from teaching someone to fish? [The teaching will involve a relationship, from which other benefits might follow.]
- What might our church look like if it became more of an equipping church? What might we do differently? What might be the results?
- The church is all about relationship: the relationship God initiated between himself and each of us, the relationship we therefore have with other believers, and the command to invite others into these relationships. What differences do you see in how a recruitment emphasis, and an equipping emphasis, help or hinder relationships with God, fellow believers, and the unchurched?

II. Suggested implementation steps.

If you wish to pursue equipping in your church, these steps might be helpful.

1. **Pray.** Begin with prayer, and pray seriously and continually throughout these steps. You can't pray too much. Look to God for guidance. After all, you want to help His people do His work for His purposes. If it becomes about me, us and our church, we've lost the proper focus. Dig into the Bible for His words that apply to your work and keep them in front of you and others.
2. **Gather other interested people.** Talk to others who are also interested in or excited about this idea. Find some who are willing and able to pursue it together, and who are willing and able to help make it happen. Gather people with a variety of gifts/skills: administration, leadership, helps, encouragement, etc.
3. **Learn.** Get a feel for the subject and what help is available. Do some digging into the subject. Check out the included resource list, and purchase several. Find other churches, local or far away, who are equipping volunteers and talk to them. Consider training opportunities, especially if you have the support of your pastor and church leaders.
4. **Talk to church leaders.** The support of your pastor is critical. Share certain resources, or sections of the resources, with the pastor(s), other staff, lay leaders and those who coordinate major ministries of the church. Listen to them and discuss their responses with your team. Start getting the main ideas out into the congregational leadership and generate discussion.
5. **Assess your situation.** If/when you decide to proceed, look at where you're starting from. Most likely, you are already doing some things very well. Find assessment tools in the resources you've gathered. Get input for the assessment from a variety of people in the congregation: staff/volunteers, new/long-time members, leaders/followers, younger/older members (include the youth and seniors). Determine what you want to preserve, what you want to add, and what you want to change.
6. **Set your goals.** You can't get where you're going if you don't know where you want to be. Write a mission statement and a vision for your team. Then set goals—make them ambitious goals! Goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, and compatible with your mission statement and vision.
7. **Make plans.** Break down those ambitious goals into achievable steps. Who will do what by when? Each goal will have many steps.
8. **Look for support.** Remember that the equipping process will be challenging and on-going. There is no easy, quick fix here. How will you help yourselves through the long haul? Would equipping training be a worthwhile investment? An equipping consultant?
9. **Implement your plans.** As you carry out your plans, look for additional resources and support. Always keep an eye open for additional people with the right gifts and a heart for equipping to add to your team.
10. **Pray—always!**

III. Equipping Resources

Books, other resources, websites and organizations

Everyone a Minister by Oscar Feucht; Concordia Publishing House, 1974. Out of print, but used copies were available at amazon.com at last check. Its strong theological stance is still applicable today but it is weak on implementation.

Spiritual Gifts, CTCR document by Concordia Publishing House (cph.org); \$2.50. A theology of gifts and callings within the church; a biblical analysis of spiritual gift inventories.

How to Mobilize Church Volunteers by Marlene Wilson; Augsburg, 1990, \$13.99. A popular classic that initiated much interest in the field.

The Equipping Church by Sue Mallory (\$21.99) and *The Equipping Church Guidebook* (\$19.99) by Sue Mallory and Brad Smith; Zondervan, 2001. Recent, comprehensive, excellent. The book tells the story of becoming an equipping church, while the guidebook contains many practical resources.

From the Top Down: The Executive Role in Volunteer Program Success by Susan Ellis; Energize Books, 1996, \$24.95. Although written for corporate executives rather than pastors, the majority of her valuable insights and suggestions can be applied to the church. I've seen no other resource on the crucial role of the head of an organization in the success of their volunteers.

Network by Bill Hybels, Don Cousins and Bruce Bugbee; Zondervan, 1994, curriculum kit, \$119.99. Complete program includes teaching materials, gift inventories and implementation guide. Available through the Willow Creek Association at www.willowcreek.org.

Class 301: Introduction to Your Shape by Rick Warren. Teaching materials available in print (\$99) or electronic version (\$40) at www.pastors.com.

The 55 Minute Training Series – An electronic book with a series of 55 minute “lessons” on training busy staff to succeed with volunteers. Staff often need help in working well with volunteers. Available through www.energizeinc.com. The book is \$35.00, but each of the 10 included modules can be purchased separately for \$7.00.

Safety Tips on a Sensitive Subject—Child Sexual Abuse, a booklet you can print (free) from www.churchmutual.com, the website of a company that insures churches. Public volunteer programs that serve children (Boy Scouts, Big Brothers/Sisters, etc.) carefully screen their volunteers to weed out those who might be looking to harm children. The church, where we warmly welcome volunteers, therefore is attractive to those who wish to have close contact with children for wrong reasons. The booklet suggests policies and procedures to reduce the risk.

Energize, Inc., at www.energizeinc.com, includes a comprehensive listing of resources for sale. Susan Ellis writes a provocative monthly “hot topic” column and invites readers to react.

Association of Volunteer Administration (www.avaintl.org) – a professional organization for people who are administrators of volunteers. A good resource section on their website

IV. Script

Script used in “What is Equipping?” PowerPoint presentation

Script for Equipping Power Point

1. “Together in His Service”

The Body of Christ helping each other serve Jesus

2. The church has members. The church relies on members for the work of the church – everything from ushering to teaching Sunday School to stuffing bulletins to working on boards and committees. So the church recruits volunteers. But all too often, the same few people do most of the work. Burnout is common. Pleas for help go unanswered. Leaders are frustrated.

3. It shouldn't be this way, but how does the church get its work done if people don't respond? Is there a better way?

4. A different way, a better way, involves a change in focus. Rather than recruiting volunteers, the church focuses on equipping volunteers.

5. When a young man or woman joins the army, they aren't immediately sent out to fight. Boot camp introduces military life, and specialized training follows. In training and in service, the soldier is supplied with everything they need – battle equipment, clothing, medical care, haircuts, meals. In fact, many military people spend their careers supporting those who fight, by keeping the vehicles running, procuring supplies, providing transportation, and so on. If the military did not equip their soldiers, they could not achieve their purpose.

6. Thankfully, joining the church is not like joining the army. But the church also has a purpose: proclaiming Jesus Christ. Any organization relying on people to achieve its purpose must consider how they equip and support those people. And, in truth, the idea of equipping fits the Biblical model of the church.

7. “You are the body of Christ and each of you is a part of it.” In Romans and I Corinthians, Paul compares the church to a human body. Our bodies have many different parts, each designed for its purpose, and each part must do that purpose if we're to be completely healthy. So also each person in the church was designed by God with a unique combination of spiritual gifts, natural talents, education, experiences and personality, for specific work. As we believers gather, we can either help or hinder each other's service.

8 Some churches teach their members about spiritual gifts, and urge them to volunteer based on those gifts. Isn't that enough? It's a good start, but there's more to be done.

9. If you listen to volunteers talking about their experiences, you'll hear heart-warming stories of joy and satisfaction in ministry, and, if the people feel it's safe to tell the truth, you'll also likely hear comments like these:

“I thought I was agreeing to help out; but I ended up running the event.”

“The long-timers didn't really want someone new around.”

“I had nowhere to go for help.”

“I didn't have the supplies I needed.”

And if you talked to people who use to volunteer but do so no longer, you might hear worse.

10. Unless churches intentionally help their people serve, they often unintentionally discourage them. Most church people aren't complainers. But if they have a bad experience, they're likely to get out of their commitment as soon as they can, and resolve to never volunteer again. And no one knows why.

11. How important is it to help each other serve? Serving goes to the core purpose of the church. Those of us blessed to know Christ are commanded to love and serve each other and, especially, those who don't yet know Him. Serving together, and helping each other serve, multiplies our ability to share Jesus Christ to a broken and hurting world.

12. Serving brings additional blessings. It builds relationships, an antidote to the loneliness epidemic today. People today crave significance. They want to make a difference. They will not waste their time, but willingly give both time and money to that which captures their heart. Serving meets the needs of both the served and those serving.

13. What's the difference between a church that recruits and a church that equips? Recruitment focuses on the position that needs to be filled. When that opening is filled, recruitment is done.

Equipping centers on the person, not the position. Equipping churches encourage serving as a natural response to God's love. They carry out their mission through each person doing what God has gifted them for and called them to do.

Equipping churches offer their members personal help in selecting a ministry. When someone joins a ministry, they make sure the person is warmly welcomed and thoroughly trained. Someone checks in with each volunteer periodically, to see how things are going, and to discover and deal with problems. Equipping churches make sure no one falls through the cracks. They affirm the importance of each contribution and express appreciation frequently and genuinely.

14. That's a lot of work for a busy pastor and a few staff. Yes, it is. Equipping is only possible when we again remember that the church is the body of Christ. When "the church" equips its volunteers, members do these things for fellow members. Whenever God wants something done, he always provides people with the ability to do it.

15. But it won't be easy. Although equipping is better than recruiting, it takes more time and is more difficult. It takes time and effort and sometimes money to get to know people and their gifts, to help them find an opportunity just right for them, to provide training, create support systems and express appreciation. Equipping is not just another church program, but a different way of doing all programs. Leaders must not only talk the talk, but also walk the walk, modeling equipping in all they do.

16. The Church is believers who come together to worship and serve God, people "**together in His service.**" Helping each other serve, we accomplish more than the sum of our individual efforts. 1 plus 1 becomes 3.

17. In Ephesians, Paul reminds us, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do." It is a privilege and a joy to do those works, and in so doing to invite others to share in the great love we've received from God. His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age," rings in our ears as we join each other, together in His service.