

The following article is a chapter from the church leadership training manual titled, "Building A Dynamic Church" by Randall Hillebrand. Copyright © 2008, 2011 by Randall J. Hillebrand. All rights reserved.

If you desire to download the manual in its entirety, please go to the following url:
<http://www.hillebrandministries.com/CompleteEnglishManualWithCovers.pdf>



ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES:

Church Organization:

Why is church organization and infrastructure important?

A church's organization and infrastructure are vital to the operation of the church. A poorly organized church which has a poor infrastructure will accomplish little. A church which is well-organized and has an appropriate and functioning infrastructure for its specific needs will accomplish much. Because the goal of any local church and its leaders is to make an impact for Christ, this should be an important topic for any church.



Churches operate with different infrastructures which govern them. Some churches are governed by one man, the pastor. He makes most, if not all, of the decisions for the church. Little is done without his approval, and in many cases his leadership style tends to be dictatorial. On the other end of the spectrum are churches where no decisions are made without the approval of church membership. In extreme cases, the church's utility bills cannot even be paid without a vote being taken of the membership for their approval. In such cases, the church leaders are not able to function because they have no authority to make necessary decisions. As would be expected, there are many other forms of church government which are in between these two extremes.

As one considers these two aspects of the church, one could imagine infrastructure as the skeleton, of the human body, and organization as how the parts of the body function. A strong and healthy skeletal system supports the body and gives it the ability to move and perform its tasks. Without a skeletal system, the body is not able to do anything. It will eventually die. In the case of a church which does not have a healthy infrastructure (consisting of believers in positions of ministry, and the structure which integrates each position), it will eventually become an invalid that will in time die spiritually, if not also as an organization. Therefore, how this structure is designed will make a great difference in how a church functions.

In the case of a well-organized church, it, like a healthy normal body, can do many things all at the same time. Such a church does things on time, correctly, professionally, orderly and rarely at the last minute. But a poorly organized church functions like a body where its parts are not able to function correctly, either inde-

pendently or simultaneously. In such a case, the body is not able to function efficiently, and tasks which the body needs to complete will many times not be done correctly if done at all. Churches which operate this way do things in a mediocre way, missing deadlines, not accomplishing goals, doing things at the last minute; and as a result doing them poorly. Therefore, many times they miss valuable opportunities. This is why a church's infrastructure and organization are so important to the life and function of a church.

What is the biblical model?

Organization:

Organization is important because it facilitates order in the church. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about their lack of order, he made such statements as:

- "...we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God" (1 Cor. 11:16)
- "for God is not a God of confusion but of peace..." (1 Cor. 14:33)
- "...as in all the churches of the saints..." (1 Cor. 14:33-34)
- "But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner" (1 Cor. 14:40).

And to Titus, Paul said:

- "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains..." (Titus 1:5)

As one can see from these passages, God desires order in His churches as did the Apostle Paul. Things are not to be done in a haphazard, chaotic manner. Churches need to have goals to move toward so that they know where they are headed and what the goals are (cf. Mat. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Eph. 2:19-22; 4:11-16; Php. 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:1-5). These are objectives which need to be determined through prayer and by faith in a Great God who can do great things.

Another reason that organization in the church is important is because an organized church gives the people of the church a sense of order and stability (cf. Acts 6:1-5), as well as peace (cf. Exo. 18:23; Col. 3:15). These things are essential for a church that desires to make an impact for Christ. If these things are not a part of the church, then the people will not have a sense of cohesiveness. Without cohesiveness, the church will have a difficult time "being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (Php. 2:2). They will then accomplish little and may eventually lose their desire and willingness to be a part of such a church.

Infrastructure:

The infrastructure of a church is vital to its operation because it supports the church's ministries which helps them and the church as a whole operate efficiently. Without this, nothing would be accomplished because there would be no system or people in place to make things happen. A church without a good infrastructure is no

more than a gathering of people who lack a specific purpose, plan or goal. A well-developed infrastructure will help to:

1. Assist people in leadership carry out specific functions, thus sharing the workload together -- cf. Exo. 18:25-26; Acts 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:4-7,12-25; 1 Pet. 4:10; Heb. 13:17
2. Have a structure in place which can facilitate problems and specific needs -- cf. Exo. 18:21-22; Acts 6:1,5; 15:1-2; 1 Cor. 14:25-26; Gal. 6:1-2; Jam. 5:13-16
3. Facilitate planning so that goals and tasks can be accomplished -- cf. Mat. 28:19-20; Luke 14:28-32; 2 Tim. 2:2
4. Oversee the organization so that its principles, goals and purpose are met -- cf. 1 Tim. 4:12-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Pet. 5:2-3
5. Oversee members in the organization and to assist them when necessary -- cf. Acts 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 12:18-27; Heb. 13:17; Exo. 18:26
6. Facilitate efficiency in accomplishing the organization's goals -- cf. Exo. 18:14, 23-26; Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 14:33, 40; 1 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:5

A good infrastructure will accomplish these objectives. The key to a good infrastructure is that it is not too complex so that the organization becomes bogged down in bureaucracy, or that it is so unstructured that nothing gets accomplished. An organization that is too structured can be stifling -- oppressing people, their creativity, abilities and the use of their spiritual gifts and talents. An organization which lacks structure generally does not encourage its members to be involved, accomplish, or grow toward their maximum potential in the use of their spiritual gifts and talents. Such organizations can be characterized by chaos, a lack of accomplishment, and people who are doing their own thing (if they are doing anything at all) because there is not an appropriate structure in place to guide them. Therefore, having too complex an infrastructure or one that is not complex enough is detrimental to the organization and its function.

When considering the biblical infrastructure of the church, one must take into account the servant positions which were established in the church by God: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers (Eph. 4:11), elders (1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:5), deacons (1 Tim. 3:8) and deaconesses (1 Tim. 3:11). For clarification, evangelists and pastor-teachers are also elders, just as the apostles and prophets once were¹ (cf. Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23; 21:18; 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1), though their main responsibility as elders is the equipping of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16). The people who hold these positions are very important to the infrastructure of a church. They will fulfill key roles of responsibility.²

¹With the completion of the New Testament, the biblical offices of apostle and prophet are no longer functioning. See article titled, "Pastor's Equipping Ministry."

²In both the Old and New Testaments, the leaders of the nation of Israel and the church were men who were identified by the title of elder (cf. Exo. 3:16; 4:29; 24:1; Mat. 16:21; Mark 14:53; Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17,19). Elders are men who are to be biblically qualified, mature in their faith (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus. 1:5-9); men who protect (Acts 20:17,28-30), lead (1 Pet. 5:1-3), and teach the people of their local church (1 Tim. 4:13,16; 2 Tim. 4:2). Therefore it is the elders who are the God-appointed leaders of the local church. Assisting the elders are deacons and deaconesses who are servants of the church (cf. Acts 6:1-6) to carry out necessary tasks which are determined by the elders (cf. Acts 6:2-3). For further discussion on this topic, please see the article titled, "Church Leadership Roles Defined."

Although the elders, deacons and deaconesses constitute the "official" positions of the local church, one must remember that the remaining and greatest part of the church's infrastructure is made up of individual believers (cf. 1 Cor. 12). It is the totality of all believers in a local church who make up the body of Christ in that church (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 6:15; Eph. 3:6). They are also a part of the universal body of Christ (cf. Mat. 16:18; Rom. 16:16; 12:12-13,27; 1 Cor 10:32; Eph. 5:23-25; Col. 3:15). It is these individual believers who are gifted by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7,11) "for the work of service" (Eph. 4:12; cf. Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-7,26-27). They are just as vital to the church's infrastructure and its ability to function as are its leaders. So whereas it is the function of the church's pastor-teacher and/or evangelist to be involved in the equipping of the body as they oversee the work of the church with the other elders, it is the rest of the body they must mobilize to use their gifts to do the work of Christ. As they do this, the body will naturally cause itself to grow; building itself up in love (Eph. 4:16).

Organization and infrastructure:

The organization and infrastructure of a church are very closely linked. At times it is hard to distinguish between the two, and it is impossible to separate the two. They are interdependent. Below are two examples from Scripture where the lack of organization and infrastructure are seen together.

The first example is found in Exodus 18. In this passage Moses' father-in-law Jethro visited him and helped him correct an organizational problem that he had in his administration of the nation of Israel. Jethro observed that when Moses sat to judge the people's disputes (vs. 16), "the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening" (vs. 13). Jethro questioned this because he saw that what Moses was doing was not healthy for him or for the people (vss. 17-18). It was not healthy for Moses because he was the only judge, and he was overburdened. It was not healthy for the people because they had to sit and wait for long periods of time, probably frustrated with the process. Therefore, Jethro proposed a plan to Moses that would alleviate this problem (vss. 19-23), which Moses then implemented (vss. 24-26). Moses was to delegate a large portion of his responsibility of judging disputes to others who were qualified, with Moses judging only the most difficult cases which those appointed were not able to discern. Through this act a multilevel judicial system (infrastructure) was implemented in Israel. What would be the end result according to Jethro? Endurance for Moses and peace for the people (vs. 23; organization). An organized church with an effective infrastructure will accomplish the same results -- endurance for the church leaders and peace for the people.

The second example of a lack of organization and infrastructure is found in the book of Acts. In Acts 6, the Hellenistic Jews were complaining that "their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food" (vs. 1). The apostles called the congregation together and told them to select from amongst themselves seven men who met certain prerequisites established by the apostles whom they could place "in charge of this task" (vss. 2-3). The apostles implemented this system (infrastructure) so that they would not be taken away from their primary responsibilities (organization), that of prayer and teaching the Word of God (vss. 2,4). As a result of this decision, it is recorded: "The statement found approval with the whole congregation" (vs. 5). In other words, the organizational problem was solved, the people were happy

about the outcome, and the apostles were able to focus on their primary ministries. This is the result of an organized church.

One important lesson found in these two examples is that the leaders needed to be willing to share their authority and not be involved in each and every decision made. In order to do this they had to humble themselves, not feel threatened, and place their trust in others, knowing that they could not do everything themselves. They did not need to be involved in every aspect of ministry in which their church was involved.

The outcome of a church which has a developed and functioning infrastructure will be its ability to mobilize a maximum number of believers, 100% being the ultimate goal. In such a case, the body theoretically will be working properly and efficiently. For this to happen, it is the role of the elders to place each believer in a place where his spiritual gift, personality, and talents can be used for the furtherance of the body of Christ. When placing a person in a role within the church, it is important that the believer's level of maturity and personal desires be taken into account for the specific function he is to perform (cf. 1 Tim. 5:22,24-25). It is important for those in a position of leadership to be willing to share their authority and responsibilities with others. It should not be the leaders' goal to lord it over the church (Mat. 20:25-26; Luke 22:24-27; 1 Pet. 5:3), but instead to serve the church in humility (Mark 9:33-35; 10:42-45; cf. John 21:15-17).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:



1. Describe your church. Be thoughtful about your answers. My church (circle your answers):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Is organized | Is chaotic |
| • Makes plans | Does not plan |
| • Has goals for the future | Has no direction |
| • Has multiple leaders | Is directed solely by the pastor |
| • Knows its purpose | Does not know its purpose |
| • Has many members serving | Has only a few members serving |
| • Is making an impact for Christ | Is not making an impact for Christ |
| • Regularly sees unbelievers saved | Rarely sees unbelievers saved |
| • Is a place of peace | Is a place of disharmony |
| • Is a place of comfort | Is a place many don't enjoy being |
| • Focuses on important things | Focuses on trivial things |
| • Helps people grow spiritually | Has many immature Christians |
| • Is unified | Is divided |
| • Expresses faith, hope and love | Lacks faith, hope and love |
| • Walks according to the Spirit | Walks according to the flesh |
| • Obeys the Bible | Follows tradition and rules |
| • Continually does good works | Rarely does good works |
| • Is spiritually alive | Is spiritually dead |
| • Loves Jesus first | Loves itself first |
| • Reaches out to the lost world | Is not concerned about the world |

Now, consider how people in your church would answer these same questions. Next, consider how the people of your community would answer these questions. How do the three perspectives compare? The goal of this question is to get an accurate picture of your church: Is it an effective church which is making an impact for Christ, or is it not? You may want to consider having people from your church answer these questions anonymously on a sheet of paper and look at their answers in comparison to your own.

2. Can a correlation be made between a church's organization and infrastructure and the statements listed in question number 1? Or to ask the question in another way: "How does a church's organization and infrastructure impact the church, its ministries, its attitudes, its relationship with Christ, etc.?"

7. Are the majority of believers in your church serving and using their spiritual gifts in ministry? If not, then what can your church do to help them become involved in ministry?

8. What possibilities exist for starting new ministries inside and outside of your church? List them below:

Inside:

-
-
-
-
-

Outside:

-
-
-
-
-

9. Choose one opportunity from each category above and consider the following questions:

INSIDE

LIST THE OPPORTUNITY:

- Who can lead this new ministry?
 - Main leader:
 - Co-leader:
 - Co-leader:

- Who can advise the leadership team in the development and execution of this ministry who are currently active in ministry in your church?
 -
 -
- Who can help the leadership team in the development and execution of this ministry who are not currently active in ministry in your church (people you would like to develop)?
 -
 -
 -
 -
- Please consider the following regarding this new ministry:
 - Purpose
 - Goals
 - Target group
 - Resources needed
 - Location
 - Time

OUTSIDE

LIST THE OPPORTUNITY:

- Who can lead this new ministry?
 - Main leader:
 - Co-leader:
 - Co-leader:
- Who can advise the leadership team in the development and execution of this ministry who are currently active in ministry in your church?
 -
 -
- Who can help the leadership team in the development and execution of this ministry who are not currently active in ministry in your church (people you would like to develop)?
 -
 -
 -
 -

- Please consider the following regarding this new ministry:
 - Purpose
 - Goals
 - Target people
 - Resources needed
 - Location
 - Time

NOTE: Please find meaningful, productive and necessary ministries in which you can involve your church members (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-6). These people are a resource for the church. God the Holy Spirit gifted them for a reason when they became believers (1 Cor. 12:7,11,13); He has a purpose for them (1 Cor. 12:17-18). God the Father in eternity past prepared the good works that He has for them to fulfill (Eph. 2:10). To allow them to simply sit in church week after week and do nothing is a waste of God's spiritual gifting, their lives and abilities. Please don't let this happen (Eph. 5:15-17; 1 Thes. 5:4-8). Remember, one day you will be held accountable for how you shepherded the flock which God allotted to your charge (2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Be able to give a good account.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Have you determined what the infrastructure of your church will look like? This is important to decide now because this decision needs to be based largely upon the form of government that your church will utilize. This decision will also guide you in the future as to how you will build upon (add to) the initial structure which you will establish when you begin your church. This structure will also be an important component in determining your church's organization and functionality as it grows. Below draw and label a structure which you believe you will use in your church. Also give the biblical basis for this structure.

