

- Pastors
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Volunteer Leaders

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Equipping: NOT MY JOB!

THE STAFF ASSOCIATE

calmly told the director of equipping that he would not share his ministry with volunteers. His statement surprised the director, and when she probed further, he said he was *not* hired to equip others or “give away his ministry.” “I was hired to *do* the ministry, period,” he said. That statement explained in part why the staff associate was often exhausted, and why volunteers didn’t stay in his ministry area for long.

The director of equipping did a little research and discovered that the staff associate was right about his job description: There was nothing about equipping, engaging or leading volunteers, or building and working with teams. He was doing exactly what he was hired to do—but he wasn’t following the mandate of Ephesians 4:11-12.

As more churches move toward an equipping model of ministry, the structures and procedures of many churches aren’t designed to engage

unpaid servants. Although many churches espouse a “priesthood of all believers” theology, the *actual practice* of ministry doesn’t allow for equipping, and results in a lack of meaningful volunteer engagement.

Consider these actions to make sure that your church has

practices that engage volunteers:

1) REVIEW CHURCH CONSTITUTION

and bylaws to make sure that equipping and shared ministry are listed as key values, and that there are no “structural” issues that prevent volunteers from serving. Many churches are surprised to learn that their bylaws don’t allow volunteers to serve in many positions in which they currently serve. Don’t assume the polity of your church supports volunteering.

2) REVIEW ALL PAID PERSONNEL job descriptions to ascertain that equipping and shared ministry are listed

as job requirements, and that the stated evaluation measures include the number or persons they equip, and how well they perform the equipping function.

3) DEFINE “EQUIPPING” CLEARLY in the goals and values of the church. Many people use the term, but do not have a practical, working definition.

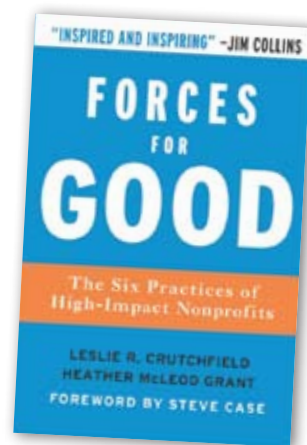
4) INCLUDE EQUIPPING and shared ministry leadership in every job evaluation and review. Ask, “Who are you spending time with in order to give them your ministry?”



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RESOURCE

Forces for Good: the Six Practices of High-Impact Non-profit Organizations by Leslie Crutchfield and Heather Grant (Jossey-Bass) is a well-written guidebook for secular nonprofits, but each of the best practices applies well to churches. Its chapter on “creating evangelists” illustrates that as volunteers serve effectively with an organization, they become the best evangelists of that organization. Churches can apply this practice with volunteers, and see them as more than “free labor.”



BEST PRACTICE

Peninsula Covenant Church in Redwood City, California, created an “equipping wheel” for each staff member to use for self-evaluation of their “equipping actions,” such as inviting volunteers, training, affirmation, feedback, and other key volunteer leadership functions. Staff members use the wheel to designate how they’re doing in equipping both paid staff and unpaid volunteers. “The wheel gives us a visual tool for measuring our progress in developing people instead of simply managing programs,” stated Brian Rhen, associate pastor for people development.

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