

Developing Ministry Teams in Bivocational Ministry

Written by Steve Echols

After twenty years of being a pastor who was fully funded, I entered the world of bivocational ministry somewhat unexpectedly. After answering a call to teach at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, I began a bi-vocational pastorate. Now in my seventh year of bivocational ministry, I have learned that developing ministry teams is not an option but a necessity. Fortunately, I have discovered that bivocational ministers actually have some advantages in developing ministry teams.

One major advantage is that church members are more likely to understand that they must also do ministry because the minister has other employment.

When I began my first bivocational pastorate, the church had been stagnant for many years even though previously the pastor position had not been bivocational. When the church began to exhibit strong growth, a key factor appeared to be that the congregation no longer expected the pastor to do everything. As a result, the members became motivated to be part of ministry teams.

Another advantage is the motivation of the minister himself.

Team building is hard work. The temptation is to do it yourself, but the bivocational minister is acutely aware that he cannot. At the church where I currently serve, there are about fifty people who assist with the pastoral ministry. There are teams that visit the hospital each day of the week and teams that regularly minister to shut-ins and visit the nursing home. In addition to these fifty, an equal number have participated in outreach visitation. To be sure, the time spent in training these teams has been significant. Like a rocket blasting off from the pad, the initial ascent was slow, but eventually a rapid acceleration took place. Over time, the multiplying effect of enlisting others becomes exponential.

An additional advantage is that bivocational ministry forces a prioritizing of tasks that leads to a more efficient church structure which in turn allows people time to become part of ministry teams.

Over the years churches tend to develop a burdensome infrastructure. Organizational bloat drains time from more essential ministry. At one church, I discovered that there was a standing committee for every three persons in average Sunday morning attendance! The previous pastor had attempted to reduce the number of committees, but to no avail. However, the urgency of assisting the bivocational minister brought a willingness to restructure. When people join an active ministry team, they no longer feel as compelled to defend organizational turf.

Finally, bivocational ministry can stimulate an atmosphere of dependency upon the Holy Spirit.

In both of my bivocational pastorates, I committed to the congregation that I would do all that I could do. I appealed to them to team with me to do all they could do. Yet, I reminded them that God's blessing would be immeasurably more than what we could all do. When God's people team together and are empowered by the Holy Spirit, the potential is unbounded!

Steve Echols is a bivocational pastor and Associate Dean for the Alabama and Georgia [New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary](#) Extension Center System. He is also a Professor of Leadership at [New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary](#).

This article was linked in Today's Bivocational Pastor by Dan Garland, Lifeway