

**Reading Material for PM 525
Tyndale Theological Seminary
Netherlands**

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**Transforming Your Church
With Ministry Teams**

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CHAPTER ONE

*Discovering the Power
of Ministry Teams*

Imagine what would happen if the following began to grow systematically in your congregation or ministry:

- The genuine experience of Christian fellowship — *koinonia*
- Growth in discipleship
- Development of new leadership
- Continuity of leadership within ministries
- “Permission-giving” leadership
- People mobilized for ministry
- Growth in interpersonal ministry as well as program-based ministry

The power of ministry teams lies in their potential to make all of these things happen in your congregation. While serving on ministry teams, I have formed many of my dearest friendships, received encouragement in my walk with Jesus Christ, and been equipped to serve and sent to lead. Just think of a ministry in which face-to-face fellowship, spiritual-gift deployment, interpersonal ministry-skill development, leadership expansion, and discipleship growth are all rolled into one experience. A ministry team does all of this while simultaneously accomplishing its vision or task in ministry. For this reason, ministry teams are among the most efficient and effective approaches to ministry available to us today.

I essentially stumbled into my first real ministry-team experience. While attending Purdue University as a graduate student, I heard

about a place called the Natural High Coffeehouse and dropped by to see what was going on. I discovered that the coffeehouse was in an old, converted storefront and used large wooden spools discarded by a power company as tables. A group of college and high-school students were conducting a very effective ministry to the street kids of the day, reaching them with the Good News about Jesus Christ, growing them as disciples, and sending them to offer ministry to others. I was so inspired by their vision that I joined the coffeehouse team. That's how I came to know an amazing group of people. David Stockment had a great passion for preaching. His brother, Rodney, was an encourager with a big heart who radiated a tremendous warmth to all he met. Kevin Ball was a wonderful guitar player who became our lead musician. Brenda Kessinger (Nuland) brought vision and energy to every gathering.

Certain characteristics marked the group — characteristics that I now know are typical of healthy ministry teams. We shared a vital faith in Jesus Christ, a common vision (reaching young people), and a passion to accomplish that vision. Each of us possessed different spiritual gifts and competencies to contribute to the team. We experienced Christian *koinonia* fellowship and became dear friends. All of us grew as disciples and learned something about the art of leadership. What I experienced in that group has had a major influence on my lifelong practice of ministry, yet none of us had any formal training in ministry at the time. God simply worked through the power of the ministry-team concept itself to give us the heart for ministry and the skills necessary to accomplish it.

Huge reservoirs of service and leadership wait to be tapped in virtually every congregation. Some time ago I conducted a survey that asked every person in a congregation to identify his or her particular ministry in the life of the church. To my surprise, a great many people said their ministry was “to give money.” They saw themselves as “program attendees” and “ministry receivers” — spiritual consumers who expected to get something in return for their financial commitment. They understood the “ministry” of church members to be “helping the pastor with his ministry” or occasionally holding a church office such as that of elder or deacon, or fulfilling classic service assignments such as that of Sunday School teacher, usher, youth advisor, or committee

member. Eighty percent of the people didn't see themselves as having a personal ministry.

This traditional view of ministry has many positive aspects, to be sure. But ultimately it is a limited view. When a congregation begins to shift to the ministry-team concept, people start to develop new vision for ministry and to discover their own passions and gifts. They shift from a consumer orientation to one of service.

American culture is infused with team language and team thinking. The word “team” comes from Old English and refers to the harnessing of two or more animals to pull a load. It is an image that still comes readily to mind when we think of a team of oxen pulling a plow or a team of horses pulling a wagon. “Team” occurs only a few times in English translations of the Bible and is found only in the Old Testament.¹ In each case the Hebrew word indicates a yoked pair or team. Ministry teams harness us, yoke us, join us together to accomplish ministry. The concept of team also resonates with the New Testament concept of *koinonia*, the “missional fellowship” that centers on Jesus Christ and seeks to fulfill his mandates and his mission.

Biblical Pictures of Team Ministry

The Bible paints many marvelous images of team life. For the ultimate picture of a ministry team, we need look no further than the Trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.² The members of the Trinity share a common vision for ministry. They enjoy fellowship in wonderfully loving relationships. And each member of the Trinity has a unique “task” or role in the process known as salvation history. They are the quintessential fusion of relationships and work — *the* missional fellowship.

Jesus and the Twelve offer another excellent picture of team life. United in the purpose of following Jesus, in fellowship, and in the ministry to which he called them, each of the disciples carried out the par-

1. See Isaiah 21:9; Micah 1:13; and Jeremiah 51:23.

2. The notion of the Trinity as a paradigm for ministry is developed extensively by George Cladis in *Leading the Team-Based Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), and by Miroslav Volf in *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

ticular tasks assigned to him by Jesus. The Apostle Paul clearly led team-based ministries. I have always loved Luke's description of those who traveled by ship with Paul to Jerusalem: "He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, by Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, and by Timothy, as well as by Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia" (Acts 20:4, NRSV). I call them "The Magnificent Seven." What a team they were! United in Christian faith and committed to spreading the gospel, each one of them served in a specific role, using his particular gifts while encouraging the others in the faith.

One of my favorite biblical illustrations of team life is captured in two short comments — one from Jesus, the other from the Apostle Paul. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:29-30). We take on the yoke of Jesus by faith and so are joined with others who serve him — a team. Paul pleads in his letter to the Philippians, "Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel . . ." (Phil. 4:3).³ We are yoked to other believers in loyalty, friendship, and service. Yokefellows are "teammates" pulling a common load in service to Christ — a great picture of a ministry team.

Indeed, Paul often referred to his fellow workers, his fellow soldiers, and his fellow prisoners, as well as his "yokefellow." In every case, the word we translate as "fellow" is the Greek word *sun*, meaning "with." These were the people *with* whom Paul served, who were "with" him in work, "with" him in struggle, and "with" him in friendship. This is the very essence of team. I call this the "with me" principle.⁴

Significant ministry takes a team. Jesus Christ led several teams, including the twelve apostles, the "inner three" (Peter, James, and John), "the seventy-two" (Luke 10:17), "the women" (Mary Magdalene, Johanna, and Susanna), and a family: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

3. The Yokefellow Movement, under the leadership of D. Elton Trueblood, drew its inspiration from this text, becoming a major force in the last quarter of the twentieth century in raising the banner of the ministry of every believer.

4. See my book entitled *The Joy of Discipling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989). It is currently available from www.vitalfaithresources.com.

Think of Moses with Aaron and Miriam. Consider David's mighty men as a team, Elijah and Elisha as a team, and Paul together with Timothy and Silvanus as a team. The encourager, Barnabas, led a team in Antioch with Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul. Whatever sort of ministry you undertake — whether it be a ministry to an entire congregation or any ministry of worship, teaching, fellowship, or outreach — you will be most effective if you do it with a ministry team.

The Ministry Team: More than a Committee with a New Name

A ministry team describes a particular way of patterning our life together in order to grow in faith, experience Christian fellowship, and accomplish a ministry vision. A ministry team is more than a committee with a new name. It is a new or more complete way to do ministry — or, perhaps more accurately, the recovery of an ancient pattern of ministry.

Conceptually, the ministry team is somewhat more complex than the committee. The designation "committee" originally meant those persons to whom a trust or charge was *committed*. In current usage, a committee is a group of people who are responsible for taking action on a particular matter. In a similar way, a ministry team is committed to take action on the vision entrusted to it. But a ministry team also develops its experience of Christian fellowship (*koinonia* fellowship) as well as the discipleship of its members. A committee rarely makes these matters of deliberate concern.

When Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha, we discover Martha is a bit anxious because she is left with all the work while her sister seemingly "just" sits at the Lord's feet. When Martha complains to Jesus, he observes that she worries about so many things, and that Mary has indeed chosen what is better. Nevertheless, we notice that it is Martha who has opened their home to Jesus in hospitality in this story, and it is Martha who first went to Jesus to plead on behalf of her brother Lazarus. So we realize that Martha loves her Lord, and she loves people too, but she has permitted her work and her busyness to take precedence over her relationship with Jesus. Sometimes when we serve on committees and in various other service organizations, we also find

ourselves so focused on the work that we pay little conscious attention to the development of true Christian fellowship among those with whom we are serving.

My friend Chuck Miller, a pastor and an educator, says, "We must be the people of God before we *do* the work of the people of God." Ministry teams combine the being and the doing aspects of Christian fellowship. It's not unusual to discover committees, boards, and staffs spending just a few minutes on brief devotions and then getting right to work. A friend of mine told me that he liked to get committee meetings over with as quickly as possible so, as he phrased it, "I can get back to my life." The beauty of ministry teams is that the team experience of friendship and fellowship is such that its members don't feel that their meetings are interrupting their lives. Instead, each member can say, "The team has become a *part* of my life. I have dear friends on the team, and we have something significant to do. I belong here."

In their book *The One-Minute Manager Builds High-Performing Teams*, Ken Blanchard, Donald Carew, and Eunice Parisi-Carew make distinctions between the task functions and the maintenance functions of a group: "*Task functions* are behaviors which focus on getting the job done. . . . Group *maintenance functions* focus on developing and maintaining the group's harmony and cohesiveness. They include recognition, listening, encouraging participation, conflict management, and relationship building."⁵ Effective teams have always attended to the development of team members and team cohesiveness as well as to task accomplishment. Indeed, such teams understand that the most effective task accomplishment comes as a result of team cohesiveness and team-member development.

Roberta Hestenes clearly expresses this in her excellent, succinct book entitled *Turning Committees into Communities*: "Transformed committees can be a meeting place for both relationally and programmatically oriented people. . . . My bottom line is this: Biblically, God has called us to be in some kind of Christian fellowship. Fellowship is the gift of God *and* a human responsibility by God's grace and power. The universal community of faith takes form concretely in local congrega-

5. Ken Blanchard, Donald Carew, and Eunice Parisi-Carew, *The One-Minute Manager Builds High-Performing Teams* (New York: William Morrow, 2000), p. 69.

tions, which are called to share together in ways that bear witness to the love and mercy of God."⁶

Ministry teams consciously practice the New Commandment — "to love one another" — while simultaneously accomplishing their vision.

The Power of Ministry Teams

Ministry teams are exceptionally flexible, dynamic means of aligning people for effective ministry while providing ongoing encouragement to each person. In effect, they are the confluence of purpose-driven ministry and small-group life. The power of the ministry team resides in the many additional benefits to those normally experienced in a committee-based organization.

The Power to Build Fellowship

God intends Christian fellowship to be one of the great benefits of participating in the Kingdom of God. "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship [*koinonia*] is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). This *koinonia* — Christian fellowship — intertwines our relationship with our Lord (discipleship) and our relationships with one another (fellowship).

The intensity and intimacy of personal friendships increase as the size of the group decreases. Meetings with five hundred or five thousand people can be wonderful for teaching, worshipping, providing inspiration, and generating enthusiasm, but they are less effective in developing genuine friendships. In smaller groups of less than, say, fifteen people, we discover that we most deeply know others and are known. The early church experienced this "large group-small group

6. Roberta Hestenes, *Turning Committees into Communities* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), pp. 13-14. See also Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders* (Herndon, Va.: The Alban Institute, 1995), and Jessie Schut, *Beyond the Agenda* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1999).

balance.” Thousands responded to the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost. At the same time, the book of Acts reports, “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (Acts 2:46). So, if we want our ministry teams to experience genuine *koinonia* fellowship, team life will need to have a small-group, face-to-face dimension. Indeed, ministry-team life and small-group life are inseparable. Small groups are small enough to allow everyone who wishes to speak to do so, secure enough to permit people to speak about matters genuinely on their hearts, and intimate enough to foster close relationships among virtually all of the team members.

Growth in *koinonia* fellowship occurs when the ministry team engages in corporate spiritual disciplines such as Bible study, shared meals, and prayer. People discover that they have a place to belong, others to love, and a task to accomplish — all of which are signs of true *koinonia*. Team members eat together, go to the movies, play golf, share family time, or do whatever they like to do together, and they are there for each other in times of distress. They not only know one another’s names; they invest themselves in one another’s personal lives.

The Power to Foster Discipleship

The ministry team consciously fosters discipleship in the lives of its members. Team life creates a culture in which growth in the spiritual life is expected and embraced. The team engages in Bible study and prayer when it meets. Team members covenant with one another to practice personal spiritual disciplines such as daily Bible study and prayer. The practices of small-group life that build fellowship — Bible study, prayer, shared meals, and shared work — are also the means of grace that develop disciples.

For many traditional congregations, the major responsibility for the ministries and programs designed to develop “spiritual growth” rests with the Christian education committee or discipleship “department” and is shared to some degree with the pastor(s). This has the effect of delegating discipleship development to a few people and ministries, while giving other church groups and programs the impression

that they are primarily task-oriented and have little responsibility to develop the discipleship of their members.

For example, a traditional Sunday School committee may spend the first few minutes reading a Bible passage or sharing a short devotional, but the press of the agenda quickly moves the committee on to its primary business: the discussion of the issues facing the Sunday School, reports by department coordinators, and the assignment of new tasks and due dates. Although some attention may be paid to specific issues of the spiritual nurture of children, the traditional Sunday School committee rarely spends time discussing ways to develop the spiritual life and depth of those *on the committee itself*. The same thing happens with typical Christian education committees, stewardship committees, evangelism committees, and so on.

Because each ministry team is a center of Christian nurture as well as of service, the proliferation of ministry teams in the life of a congregation de-centralizes responsibility for the development of discipleship and spreads it around. Pastors and specialized ministries of discipleship continue to play pivotal roles in Christian nurture, but the extent to which the congregation fosters discipleship is no longer limited to the energy and scope of their efforts. Every new ministry team adds a new discipling center within the congregation.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the church had the luxury of involving people in multiple weekly activities, and almost no one thought anything about the amount of time involved. In our present over-busy age we can no longer assume that people will give this kind of time — but neither is it necessary for them to do so. Since the ministry team is both a discipling fellowship and a serving fellowship, busy people may grow in Christ *and* serve in ministry without having to attend separate meetings for each activity.

The Power to Develop Leaders

Most congregational ministries simply deploy leaders (“Get that new couple. They’ll make great high-school advisors!”). Ministry teams develop and deploy leaders. Good leadership involves such a variety of behaviors that genuine leadership development is a very complex un-

dertaking. Larry Donnithorne, President of Colorado Christian University, provides an excellent discussion of leadership in his book entitled *The West Point Way of Leadership*. He says, "Learning to lead is every bit as complex as learning to become a mature productive adult all over again."⁷ It is indeed a complex matter to have the will and the skill to clarify a vision, connect people to that vision, and identify their individual roles in accomplishing that vision while attending to their needs and developing them as people. Typically, church "leadership training" often ignores that complexity by trying to develop leaders through a series of classes or officer-training events with titles such as "Leadership in the Bible," "Ministry Leadership Seminar," and "Great Leaders of the Church." Such classes can certainly provide counsel and encouragement to developing leaders, but people rarely learn to lead in a significant way by attending a class. *People learn to lead by leading*. There is no substitute for this. You have to get in the water to learn to swim; you have to bait a hook to go fishing. To learn to lead, people have to begin to lead, and in that way they will learn more about leadership.

The ministry team creates the perfect context in which people may learn to lead by leading. The team leader is assisted by a leadership core, consisting of two to four people. They learn about leadership in these supporting roles. In turn, they involve others in the accomplishment of the team's vision. Team members given particular tasks, whether major or minor in scope, learn to pull others along in order to accomplish their tasks and in so doing also learn to lead.

The ministry team becomes the consummate opportunity for leadership development in the church because it blends at least three different leader-developing processes into a single composite entity. The first such process is the small group that gathers for Bible study, personal sharing, and prayers. This is consistently one of the most prolific forms of leadership — and discipleship — development in the church. A second leadership-development process is that of apprenticing. The team leader has a few people assisting in the team leadership core for the primary purpose of teaching, modeling, and coaching them to become leaders in their own right. These are the Peter, James, and John of the

7. Larry R. Donnithorne, *The West Point Way of Leadership* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), p. 7.

Twelve. A third process is the use of "with me" ministry that emulates the pattern of Jesus Christ: offering ministry *to* people *with* people. Whenever Jesus ministered to individuals or crowds, his disciples were there *with* him, learning to become people of faith and vision, learning how to minister to people.

Ministry-team life captures all three approaches to leadership development. Team members experience small-group life, they function as apprentices to the leader, and they experience "with me" ministry.

The Power to Provide Continuity of Leadership

One of the biggest challenges in church life is the matter of succession in leadership — discerning and installing the replacement for someone who leaves a leadership position. I began my ministry in the church as a ministerial assistant given primary responsibility for a Sunday School involving several hundred children. Solo teachers, working alone, only occasionally with an aide, taught virtually every class. When a teacher gave up teaching because of a move out of town or a change in life direction, I would go through an anxious time trying to recruit a replacement from the congregation. Virtually everyone resisted the invitation to teach, knowing perfectly well that under the existing system it meant working alone with no end in sight. Only after learning the pattern of ministry-team thinking did I discover that teaching teams not only permitted the teaching load to be shared but also developed a cadre of teachers who provided a continuity of leadership. If a teacher left, there were others who could take her place.

We commonly see ministries being led by just one person. It's not unusual to discover a Sunday School class with one teacher who handles all of the administration and teaching, a children's choir with one director doing everything, a social event for which all arrangements are made by one person, and so on. People do this because they have a passion for their ministry — or because they haven't figured out how to delegate and share the workload.

This creates several potential problems for church leaders. First, in the absence of a leadership team, the ministry leader serves until he or she moves away, grows tired of the ministry, or grows old and literally

cannot do it anymore. Second, when one person is the lone leader, the scope of ministry is limited to the energy level of that individual. Third, the sole leader who “does it all” denies others the opportunity to use their spiritual gifts and to serve. Fourth, no one is prepared to assume the leadership of the ministry when the present leader steps down. When the solo leader of a ministry leaves, a kind of panic ensues as others, often members of the church staff, cast about for a new leader. There is no one on the bench ready to step up and lead. Finally, the ministry, though perhaps served well by one dedicated person, lacks the energy, love, vision, and follow-through that an entire team can offer.

Some time ago, I knew a warm-hearted and hospitable person who personally called on all of the visitors to his congregation’s worship services. He did this for a period of several months, but when he stopped, the visitation ministry stopped. I have also seen a congregational small-group coordinator run the small-group ministry by herself, out of love for small groups. When she quit in order to pursue another endeavor, the small-group ministry immediately began to lose momentum. The ministry team remedies this vulnerability of solo leadership in its very “team-ness.” This insulates the ministry from leadership loss when a current leader steps down. Others within the team or the team’s leadership core are then ready to step in, and the team experiences continuity of leadership.

The Power to Mobilize People for Ministry

The power of ministry teams rests in their success in mobilizing ordinary people for ministry. The vast majority of church members haven’t come to terms with their call to ministry, their gifts for ministry, or their opportunities for ministry. This isn’t surprising when we take a look at church history. By the end of the second century, church organization and ministry were increasingly centered on pastors and other key church leaders. The core biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers — the idea that every believer has a God-given ministry — was superseded by the notion that the church leaders did the ministry and the people received it. Those attitudes have certainly continued to the present day and are clearly prevalent in many traditional congrega-

tions.⁸ But now a new wind is blowing. Greg Ogden describes it clearly in his book *The New Reformation*:

The New Reformation seeks nothing less than the radical transformation of the self-perception of all believers so we see ourselves as vital channels through which God mediates his life to other members of the body of Christ and the world. . . . We are finding that in God’s design all the people in the church are gifted for ministry. Ministry is not to be equated with what professional leaders do; ministry has been given to all God’s people.⁹

The concept of the ministry of every believer has several implications. First, God gifts every Christian for service: “But to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7). God has something he wants to do through every one of us! Second, that ministry is born of a serving heart: “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matt. 20:28a). Many times in life we are asked to assume a role or take on a responsibility in ministry for which we do not feel particularly gifted, but we do so out of a passion to serve. Third, ministry is first of all a lifestyle to be lived, not merely a program to be run.

The growing emphasis on the discovery and deployment of spiritual gifts might give one the impression that all ministry is gift-based. I would rather say, “All ministry is service-based and is the work of the Holy Spirit.” Some of that ministry will be gift-based, and for that we rejoice. But sometimes we serve where we’re needed, even when we have no particular passion or giftedness for the task, because at all times our ministry is rooted in a serving heart. The power of a ministry team is to encourage the development of that serving heart as well as the growth of ministry skills.

The team leader and team life work to give each person specific assignments appropriate to his or her gifts, passion, and willingness to

8. See Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970), p. 81.

9. Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), pp. 12, 22.

serve while offering training, coaching, and encouragement. Many church members are not mobilized for ministry because they have never received appropriate training, or because they have been asked to accomplish some task and agreed, only to find it literally dumped on them. "Will you teach the fifth-grade Sunday School class? You will? Fantastic! Here are last year's notes. See you!" I call that the "dump and run." It demotivates rather than mobilizes people for ministry. Ministry teams offer ongoing training that motivates and mobilizes.

Finally, ministry teams mobilize people for ministry by motivating them to pursue their own dreams and ideas for ministry. Teams provide built-in encouragement. They inspire a mutual clarifying of vision among the members that enables them to accomplish far more than if each team member tried to go it alone. "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help" (Eccles. 4:9-10, NRSV). That's team!

The Power to Accomplish Ministry

Ministry teams do share one major dimension in common with committees: they exist to get something done. Today we see many kinds of teams in our culture — athletic teams, research and development teams, marketing teams, management teams. They all center on the work to be accomplished. Ministry teams are no different. Ministry teams are missional: they have a mission to accomplish. They organize for ministry, and they are clear about their purpose and vision. They know their defining vision and practices, they organize their members according to gifts and abilities, and they measure their success by evaluating their effectiveness in accomplishing their vision.

But effective ministry teams add a significant component to their ministries, a component often missed by the more task-oriented committee, board, and task-force structures. Teams focus on both people and program (task). I call that the *double focus of ministry* because the team has one eye focused on the people to whom it is in ministry and the other eye focused on the program to be accomplished.

Making the Transition to a Team-Based Church

The traditional church in America uses a committee approach to ministry leadership. What I call transformational churches mobilize their members for ministry by embracing a thoroughly team-based approach to ministry. In a transitional congregation that shows honor to its traditional past while embracing a new transformational vision for ministry, you will find both committees and ministry teams operating side by side. The committee style of leadership continues to function while more and more people begin to experience and embrace the team approach.

New people entering a transitional or transformational congregation's life have their own preconceptions about how to accomplish ministry, ideas based on previous experiences with other churches and other organizations. Frequently their only experience has been in committee-based ministry. They have to be brought up to speed on team-based ministry and see how it functions — see how it differs from traditional committee-based work. To develop and sustain a team-based ministry throughout the ministry structure of the congregation requires constant coaching, teaching, and review of ministry-team concepts.

How long does transition take to occur? The answer is "It depends" — it depends on the commitment of pastoral leaders and other key leaders to shift to the ministry-team concept. It depends on the people available to provide leadership. It depends on the "lightness of foot," the ease with which a particular congregation adapts to new ideas. In established congregations the transition may occur rather broadly across the entire church ministry via a clearly understood strategic plan implemented with plenty of training, encouragement, and patience. A traditional congregation will most likely shift to team-based ministry via an intentional progressive transition that takes place over several years. As those who grasp and embrace the ministry-team concept move to adopt it, others, preferring to retain their existing ministry and leadership styles, will continue on their original path. New congregations and ministries can build the team concept into the "DNA" of their organizations from the very beginning.

Conclusion

Some good material is beginning to be published describing team-based ministry.¹⁰ We need a whole lot more. The term “ministry team” is rapidly spreading throughout church organizational structures and ministries. Sometimes the term is used to rename existing ministry entities — the outreach committee becomes the outreach ministry team, the church staff becomes the staff team — yet without much change in the internal dynamics of those renamed groups. As I mentioned earlier, a ministry team is more than a group with a new name. The ministry team is a distinct leadership and ministry entity that aims to nurture its own fellowship and discipleship while serving the people and the task to which it has been called.

Ministry teams are not reserved only for pastors and church staff members or for the leaders of parachurch ministries. They are for anyone and everyone in the congregation. Ministry teams may lead entire congregations. They may lead large-scale and small-scale ministries to groups of men, women, couples, singles, youth, and children. They may be responsible for specific tasks such as ushering, snow removal, stewardship development, choirs, and praise bands. They may lead outreach ministries — a soup kitchen ministry, a Habitat for Humanity ministry, a ministry to at-risk children, an international ministry of compassion and evangelism, and so on. Whatever your ministry vision or responsibility may be, you can organize a ministry team to address that vision with you.

I want to encourage you to develop a ministry team for whatever ministry you serve or lead while also thinking through how you will begin to introduce the concept to the wider congregation. Begin to think about ways to shift committees and other task-oriented groups to a pattern that can provide richer, life-transforming experiences for their members.

In the pages ahead, I will describe ways to develop a team that attends to its own *koinonia* fellowship and the spiritual development of its members while engaging in the fulfillment of its vision. The power

of ministry teams rests in the growth of their participants as disciples of Jesus Christ (as well as the expansion of opportunities for spiritual growth throughout a congregation), the deep Christian fellowship experienced on the team, the development and continuity of leadership, and their effectiveness in mobilizing ordinary people for ministry.

10. For a thorough listing of material on team-based ministries, see the “Resources” list at the back of the book.