



# Christian Mentoring

JOHN MALLISON MINISTRIES

## WHEN MINISTRY SKILLS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Ian Jagelman: *A refreshing look at leadership*

In 1984 my wife and I planted a new church beginning with 12 adults and a few children. In three years the church grew to 200 plus, largely on the strength of my teaching gift and the active women's ministry my wife had started before the church began. However in 1987 a number of factors coalesced so that the church hit a wall and I was powerless to lead it on. Services became stale, people became dissatisfied, leaders became discouraged, I became frustrated and respected leaders began to ask serious questions about unresolved issues in my own life.

As always the danger is to oversimplify the problem and to suggest simplistic solutions turned the whole situation around. In 1991, after 4 years of further part-time study, the church began to grow again and has averaged 15% growth for each of the last 8 years.

A number of issues were resolved and changes took place. These included:

1. I spent profitable time with an experienced counsellor to understand why I avoided being involved in painful pastoral situations where there was no obvious answer or solution.
2. Changing the mix of church staff so that our gifts complemented one another rather than being the same.
3. A three month period of brokenness in the services when a mini-revival seemed to soften the heart of the church and deal with spiritual pride and self-indulgence.
4. A major realisation that I had to shift from being ministry focused to being leadership focused.

It is this fourth element that I want to comment on further, albeit briefly.

Like many pastors, I had a reasonably good theological education through it lacked thoroughness in pastoral areas and particularly in evangelism and missions strategies. It represented a continuation of the reformed tradition where it is assumed people have to be 'taught' not 'caught'. Those who are in the church are happy but those outside are unreached and seem unreachable.

What the degree lacked totally was any focus on leadership. Common to most professions (eg lawyers, architects, engineers, doctors, etc) the assumption is made that your technical skills (eg preaching) are all you need to successfully progress in ministry. Words like 'leadership', 'management' and 'strategic planning' were never mentioned or else were referred to negatively as part of a conspiracy to corporatise the church. And yet the stress in ministry is often more related to these issues than it is about pastoral matters.

My studies in leadership and church growth at Fuller Seminary helped me begin to develop as a leader. However my thinking was still fuzzy and often I used the term leader for a person who was clearly involved in a ministry function. I discovered I had delegated ministry, but not leadership, and developed a ministry structure which neither facilitated nor empowered decision making by anyone other than a select few. I had shaken the bottle of 'lay ministry' and kept the 'leadership cork' firmly in the bottle.

I would love to say my life is now stress free and I am able to play golf three times a week. However both statements would be untrue. What I can say is that the church is now four times its size in 1987 and I am enjoying the church more despite being in the 15th year of



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tenure as Senior Pastor. We have a great leadership team of pastors and close to 150 clearly identifiable lay leaders and hundreds of lay people in ministry.

I now spend 80% of my time in the church on leadership and have been released to spend 40% of my overall time to minister to the church at large in Australia and overseas.

My ministry gifts continue to develop slowly but the big change has been my development as a leader. I am now convinced I will probably continue this growth right up to my retirement.

I now look at the church through a leader's eyes and see the value of being 'a clock maker not just a time teller', a concept in the excellent book *'Built to Last'*. I have become convinced that whilst ministry builds people, it is only leadership which builds a church.

I have also become convinced that a healthy church is far more effective in evangelism and discipleship than I can ever be personally and it is my primary calling to lead such a church.

This transition has been achieved by wrestling with the following issues:

*(a) What kind of church am I called to lead and what is it meant to do? What core values should underpin its programs?*

*(b) What is a real team? How can I lead a team of leaders in which I am both a member and its leader.*

*(c) How can I change the structures of the church so that they support rather than frustrate the leadership team and its mission.*

*(d) How can I change my preaching so that it connects with the unchurched and is both a means of ministry and leadership.*

*(e) How can I release the ministry potential of the church so less demands fall on me and my staff and the laity get the same opportunity to express their gifts as I do.*

*(f) How can I lead the church so that it has adequate financial resources.*

*My current thinking on these issues is contained in the book mentioned below.*

(Dr Ian Jagelman is the Senior Pastor of Christian City Congregations, a large multi-congregational church in the northern region of Sydney. Ian's book *'The Empowered Church - releasing ministry through effective leadership'* (Open Book, 1999) went into reprint in only three months and expands on the Ministry v Leadership theme expressed above. He can be reached at [ianjagelman@cccongregations.com.au](mailto:ianjagelman@cccongregations.com.au).)

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