

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR
PASTORS & LEADERSHIP TEAMS



100 DAYS
— TO A —
HEALTHIER
CHURCH

KARL VATERS



Before the 100 Days

*Equip God's people
to do his work.*

Ephesians 4:12 NLT

CHAPTER 1

Get Better before You Get Bigger

Any church can become healthier in 100 Days—not perfect, but healthier.

If a church is especially ill, it may not become *healthy* in 100 Days, but it can be *healthier* than it is right now—as in less sick, and one step closer to becoming the strong, vibrant, effective congregation it was meant to be.

PRINCIPLES, NOT PROMISES

There are no one-size-fits-all methods that will make a church healthier, but there are principles. This book is a reverse-engineering of the principles our church has learned by trial and error over the last two and a half decades of moving from sickness to health, then into deeper levels of effective ministry.

These principles have also been discussed, tested, refined, and taught to thousands of church leaders, proving themselves workable in churches of all styles and sizes.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

If you are a pastor or leader of a local congregation, read this book through in its entirety first. Then do a trial run by yourself or with a trusted ministry partner (maybe your spouse). By doing this self-test first, you'll be more prepared to lead the church through the principles later.

If you personalize these principles seriously before teaching others, you can become a healthier church leader in 100 Days, and a church with a healthier leader is a healthier church.

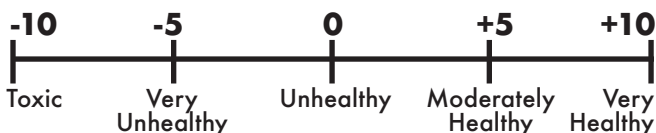
Let me include a quick note about church size. Since the average church worldwide has a Sunday attendance of about seventy-five people, this process is designed with a church of that size in mind. If you're in a church with fewer than fifty (which is about half the churches in the world), some of the instructions about team size will need to be adapted for your smaller congregation. For churches of more than two hundred, remember that most of this book is written with volunteer leaders in mind, so you will need to adapt to include paid staff members. Actually, every church of every size will need to tweak various steps as you walk through this process. That's expected and normal. Methods are meant to be tweaked, but the principles are biblical and universal.

THE HEALTHY CHURCH CONTINUUM

The goal of this book is not to help you start a new program, or pattern your congregation after another successful church. The

goal is to take another step toward becoming the church God called you to be.

To begin this process, imagine church health on a continuum of Negative 10 (-10) to Positive 10 (+10).



These are not precise metrics, but they can be a helpful way to imagine different stages of church health and maturity.

Negative 10: A church at this level of ill health is not just ineffective but dangerous and toxic. There have probably been many years of inner conflicts, bad blood, and a poor reputation in the surrounding community.

The first-century Corinthian church was in a similar condition. They had everything from sex scandals to lawsuits to rampant pride about their own tolerance of such sins (1 Cor. 6–7). In fact, the apostle Paul famously told them, “In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good” (1 Cor. 11:17).

Negatives 9 through 1: Churches in this range have various levels of ill health. The New Testament church at Sardis, which was instructed to “Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die” (Rev. 3:1–6) might have been at -8 or -9 on the church health spectrum, while the Ephesian church that had “persevered and . . . endured hardships for my name” but had lost their first love (Rev. 2:1–7) was probably at -2 or -1.

Zero: We’ll be sticking with the “unhealthy” label for a

church at zero, because even if the people in the church are getting along and having no fights or scandals, a church in neutral is making minimal contributions to Christ's mission on earth.

This was the problem with the lukewarm Laodicean church (Rev. 3:14–22). Their sin was feeling smug about their status. They thought they were getting along well and in need

of nothing, but Jesus was ready to spit them out for their lack of passion.

WE'VE BEEN GIVEN A MISSION. AND WE NEED TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY. DON'T MISTAKE THE ABSENCE OF CONFLICT FOR THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

The church doesn't exist merely to do no harm or be a safe place for hurting people (although it's good when we are).

We've been given a mission, and we need to take it seriously. Don't mistake the absence of conflict for the presence of God.

Positives 1 through 9: While it's great to be on the healthy side of the line, this status is not without its challenges. The danger comes from the almost invisible yet persistent tendency to grow comfortable or prideful, then stale, then start drifting backward. Any church that fails to keep consciously moving ahead is falling behind.

The New Testament church of Thyatira might have been at +1 or +2. Jesus commended them for their baby steps by reminding them, "I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first." But they were not strong enough to have rooted out some heresy that had taken a foothold among them (Rev. 2:18–29).

Meanwhile the church at Smyrna might have been at +8 or +9. Despite the persecution and poverty they endured, Jesus told them, “I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!” (Rev. 2:8–11).

Positive 10: Well, you’re in heaven now. Literally. No church will ever achieve a true Positive 10 until we’re gathered with Jesus in paradise. As long as we live in this broken world, even the healthiest church will have room for improvement. But we need to always keep Positive 10 in our hearts and minds as an ideal to strive toward.

NUDGES, NOT LEAPS

If the church you lead or attend is, let’s say, at -5, how can it get back into positive territory?

One step at a time.

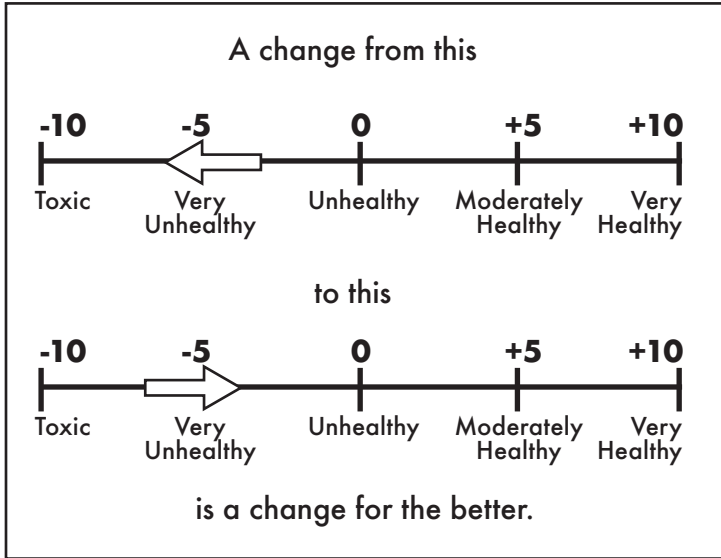
Your church is probably (almost certainly) not going to jump from a -5 to a +5 in 100 Days. God can do that, and He has on very rare occasions. But you can’t program a church to make that jump.

However, you can use principles that can stop the downward slide. Then, once the church has been steadied, those principles can prepare the church to nudge up from -5 to -4 in the following 100 Days.

A CHANGE IN DIRECTION

Sometimes, the change you’ll see in 100 Days won’t be up the scale, as much as a change in direction. A church at -5 facing

uphill in hopefulness is healthier than a church at -5 facing downhill in despair.



Direction is everything.

PLANNED PAUSES

As you're pursuing healthy change, there will be times when the principles of one week may require more than seven calendar days to accomplish. That's okay. It's better to take a little extra time to handle those challenges well than to hit the somewhat arbitrary deadlines.

But don't let pauses become delays, and don't allow more than one or two pauses over the entire process. If the process

takes more than 120–130 days, you'll lose momentum and impact and become far less likely to finish well.

WHAT DOES A HEALTHIER CHURCH LOOK LIKE?

A healthier church is filled with healthier believers—believers who are loving Jesus and each other, who are making disciples, who are cooperating for the advancement of Christ and His kingdom, not for individual agendas.

Unhealthy Churches (-10 to -5)

Aren't obeying the Great Commandment, pursuing the Great Commission, or equipping God's people

Loving, but Ineffective Churches (-4 to 0)

Are obeying the Great Commandment, but not pursuing the Great Commission or equipping God's people

Immature Churches (+1 to +4)

Are obeying the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, but church leaders are overwhelmed and church members are not maturing because leaders are not equipping God's people

Healthy, Effective Churches (+5 and up)

Are doing all three

The best way to determine the health of a church is by how its members are responding to three vital elements: the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and what I like to call the Pastoral Prime Mandate of equipping God's people to do the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11–12).

The goal of this entire process is to assess where your church is based on those three biblical criteria, then get back on track toward health by reestablishing them. (We'll look at this principle a little deeper on Days 1 and 8.)

INCREASING YOUR CAPACITY FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

Did you notice anything missing in that last section on getting healthier? Like attendance figures?

It's great when a church gets bigger as a result of getting healthier. In fact, it's hard to imagine a healthy church that doesn't want to grow. But getting healthy isn't about numerical growth. It's about striving to increase our capacity for effective ministry no matter what size we are now—or what size we may become.

Bigger isn't the goal. Better is the goal. More effective ministry is always better ministry. As Tim Suttle points out, "The church's job is not to grow. The church's job is not to thrive or even to survive. The church's job is to be the church."¹

Let's strive to be the church. More effectively today than we were yesterday, then more effectively tomorrow than we were today. That's what getting healthier looks like.

CHAPTER 2

What Can Be Done in 100 Days?

Turning a church from unhealthy to healthy is a daunting task. It starts by working smarter, not harder. Here's an example.

THE PAINT CAN: A PARABLE

In the 1990s, I led a small group of church members on a missions trip to Bucharest, Romania. The country was just a few years removed from one of the most oppressive, violent, and evil regimes in modern history.

One afternoon we were taking a short break in our hotel. While we were talking, a hotel employee was painting a wardrobe in the hallway—one of those portable closets they use in Europe, like the one in C. S. Lewis's classic book. But there was something about the way he was doing it that was strange.

The employee would brush on a few strokes of paint, disappear into the hotel room for thirty seconds or so, reappear to

brush on a few more strokes, then disappear again. This kept repeating. Why?

Then it hit me.

Although the wardrobe was in the hallway, the can of paint was in the middle of the hotel room, so the painter was walking into and across the room for every single dip of paint! But why would he do that? Probably because that's where everything was placed when he arrived. This painter was nearing retirement age, and he had been raised under an extraordinarily repressive regime in which you kept your head down and did the job you were given, no questions asked. Conformity was rewarded, and innovation was frowned upon.

This painter was taking three or four times longer to paint the wardrobe that day because he had been socially, mentally, and emotionally programmed by a corrupt system not to think for himself. It didn't occur to him to perform one simple step that would have made his job exponentially easier, faster, and better: move the can.

What is true of that painter is also true for far too any pastors and other church leaders. Many of us are pastoring under systems that were in place long before us, and it hasn't occurred to us that we can move the paint can.

Like the tired painter in that hotel hallway, it's tempting to leave things where they are right now and keep going through the motions. Turning an entire church around is like getting the entire room ready—far too big a task to even contemplate at the moment.

That's why, for the next 100 Days, we're not going to attempt to overhaul the entire room. We're just going to paint the

wardrobe. And the first step in painting the wardrobe is simple.

Move the can.

Make the next step toward health as simple and doable as possible.

What's Your Paint Can?

Like moving the paint can, here are some characteristics to look for when considering what to tackle in the next 100 Days:

1. You can do it right away. The painter didn't need anyone else's help or permission to move the paint can. He just needed the ability to see that it could be done, then do it.

In the church you lead, what fits those criteria? What simple action(s) do you not need permission for? Start there.

2. It will ease your burden, not add to it. Sure, the paint can is heavier than the paint brush, and moving it will be harder than carrying a brush. Once. After that, everything else will get easier.

What tasks can be done in your church that will take a minimal amount of extra effort right now, but will clear a path for several tasks to be done more easily in the future?

3. It will get you to your next step more quickly. After the paint can has been moved, the current task of painting the wardrobe will be a lot easier.

Are there any simple steps you can take to reduce waste and help you get more done with your limited time and resources? Make them a priority.

4. It will be a small first step toward thinking differently. This may be the most important—and difficult—aspect of moving the paint can.

It's difficult, because it requires the painter to think differently. But it's important because once you start thinking differently about some initial, simple tasks, you start realizing you can apply the same innovative principles to other harder tasks.

What if you moved the paint can—and *no one* got mad? No emergency committee meetings were called to correct you. The roof didn't fall in. In fact, everything started working just a little smoother. After making a small change once, you'll want to do it again.

Soon, you'll be looking around for other paint cans you can move, other ways to change the long-existing dynamic of systems that have been in place because no one thought to change them for the better.

Now I'm not naïve. I've been in pastoral ministry for almost forty years. I've moved paint cans and been treated as if I were guilty of spitting in the face of our church's beloved founders. So you know what I did in response? I moved the paint can anyway. Then I kept painting.

It's amazing what happens to the naysayers when the wardrobe gets painted in record time, under budget, and with a smoother finish. The complainers either fall away, or they join the paint-can-moving team. And if not? Maybe it's not your wardrobe to paint.

WHY PUT A NUMBER OF DAYS ON GETTING HEALTHIER?

I'm not a big numbers guy. And I've always been more than a little distrustful of books that promise I'll be able to do

something in a certain period of time, especially when the “magic” number ends in zero.

So why have I written a book with a number so strongly attached to it?

First, because a number focuses us. It gives us a clear working parameter. Even if we go over the 100-Day mark (which most of us will), the fact that we’re on a calendar helps us think more clearly about what needs to be done and when.

Second, the number reveals our priorities. Like when a woman discovers she’s pregnant. For the next nine months, family activities and decisions are filtered through the lens of getting ready for the baby. The impending arrival helps us focus so we discover what really matters, what doesn’t, what can be delayed, and what can’t.

Third, the number gives us a goal. If our church is going to be healthier in 100 Days, we need to decide what aspect of health we’re aiming for. Otherwise, we won’t know if we’ve achieved it.

Fourth, the number drives us. You can’t hit a goal you haven’t set.

Timelines drive us to action. “We want our church to be healthier” is a wonderful idea, but it doesn’t inspire action. “We want our church to accomplish this health goal by this date” gets us off the couch.

Fifth, that number invites others to join the team. There’s a reason why people who want to lose weight are more likely to do so if they tell others about it (like on social media or in a weight-loss group). When we announce a goal publicly, it’s inspirational, exciting, and fun. It attracts people who also want to reach that goal—or want to help you reach it.

It's hard to build a team around an unfocused, unprioritized, uncertain, unclear, unannounced idea. But clear, focused, time-stamped, prioritized goals inspire people to join in, motivate them when the going gets hard, and energize them for that last push to completion.

WHY 100 DAYS?

When something matters, it goes on our calendar.

This is why church attendance matters. If your relationship with Christ matters to you, it's going to affect everything in your life, including your schedule.

It's the same in church leadership—and even more so when the church needs a refresher, a turnaround, or a kick start. If we truly want our church to get healthier, we need a plan. Any plan that's worth something deserves a big spot on our calendar.

When we give a task only half measures, we get half results. But if we give it our full commitment by

- clearing the 100 Days of other distractions
- meeting regularly with the leadership team
- following the daily disciplines together
- giving the process more than 100 Days, if needed
- and surrendering the entire process to Christ in fervent prayer

we'll get the fullest possible results.

There are several reasons for using a 100-Day marker for helping a church get to the next level of health and effectiveness.

First, 100 Days is about how long it takes to assemble and launch something this important. For years, experts have told us that it takes twenty-one days, twenty-eight days, or forty days to establish a habit. It turns out we were off by multiples of at least two or three. According to a peer-reviewed study reported in *Psychology Today*, it takes sixty-six days on average to establish a personal habit.²

Second, setting aside an intentional 100 Days makes this big enough to take seriously, but not too big to be intimidating. If I were to tell you that you could make any significant forward motion in your church in forty days, you probably wouldn't believe it. Especially if your church has serious problems. On the other hand, if I told you it would take 365 high-intensity days before you saw even a small step toward health, you'd have a hard time committing to it.

So 100 Days strikes a good balance. It's long enough to have some hope of being effective, but short enough to maintain the necessary intensity to get something done.

Third, 100 Days is about the length of a natural season. Spring, summer, fall, and winter. Each one lasts about ninety-one days. We're created by God to live and effect change according to that timeline.

Fourth, 100 Days can get something going and build momentum for more later. If you and your church leaders invest 100 Days into helping your church become healthier, even by a single step, that practice is like starting a freight train. It takes a lot of energy to get it

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TO GET IT GOING, BUT
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going, but once it's on its way, momentum takes over. Working toward health becomes a habit driven by momentum.

WHAT DO THE 100 DAYS LOOK LIKE?

If you start the 100 Days on a Saturday (which is how this works best), Days 1 and 2 will be a Saturday/Sunday weekend. Then Days 99 and 100 will also be a Saturday/Sunday weekend. This will mean a total of fourteen weeks and fifteen weekends by the time you reach 100 Days.

This span of weeks and weekends is intentional. Starting the 100 Days with an intense, purposeful Saturday meeting, followed by an equally intense, worshipful Sunday, is the best way to hit the ground running. Then, ending with a full Saturday to assess, prepare, and plan for the future, followed by a worshipful celebration on Sunday, is a hopeful way to finalize the process. Everything in this book is written assuming a Saturday start date. If you do it differently, you'll need to adapt for that.

You'll also see that the 100 Days is divided into four main steps:

1. Assess Your Situation
2. Select a Target
3. Train the Team
4. Implement the Plan

The first two steps will get you to Day 50. During that period, you'll rediscover who you are as a church, who you're

called to be, and what your first project will be. During the last fifty days, you'll undertake the final two steps, which will pull the team together to actually accomplish your project together.

Within those steps are several intensive Saturday meetings. The meetings will happen every two weeks during the first fifty days with a group we'll be calling the Core Leadership Team (CLT). Then, at the halfway point, you'll assemble Project Teams (PTs), and they will have meetings as determined by their assignments. Also, there's a theme for each week, sermon suggestions for every Sunday, and smaller assignments for every day along the way.

HOW CLOSELY SHOULD WE FOLLOW THIS PLAN?

No two churches are alike, so no plan can fit every church. But there are some universal principles, and those are what we start with. To get the most out of this process, start by following the book very closely. The first two steps in the front half, especially, are about principles—biblical ones first and practical, methodological ones second. Follow them like a blueprint.

But the further you go, the more each step is open to individual interpretation. Partly because every church is different, but also because Step 1 is designed to help you rediscover God's plan for your church, so it's more important to follow His plan for your church than my ideas for it.

If the book starts out as a blueprint, it ends as a suggestion box—helpful, but not necessarily to be followed to the letter.

CHAPTER 3

Getting to the Starting Line

If you are a pastor, this 100-Day process will cost you a lot more than 100 Days.

Achieving healthy change is like running a marathon. Marathons are 26.2 miles long, but before runners ever step foot on a starting line, they've run hundreds, even thousands of miles.

For your 100 Days to be successful, it's going to take a lot of prep time. In this chapter, we'll look at what needs to be done before the clock starts on Day 1. Please don't skimp on these steps. If you start without the appropriate preparation, you'll be like the novice who thinks he can run a marathon just by showing up that day. You'll flame out quickly, and you might even sustain some injuries.

If you're not willing to put in the time and effort to undertake the right amount of preparation, you and your church are better off not even attempting the 100 Days. But if you do the prep, while this process can be very challenging, it can also be

one of the most exhilarating and rewarding 100 Days of your life and your church's ministry.

So let's get going!

DECIDE ON A STARTING DATE

Timing matters.

If your 100 Days are going to be successful, it's important to choose the right time of the year. Choose a time when you have more than three months with as few calendar interruptions as possible (so the Christmas and Easter seasons are typically not viable).

For most churches, there are four times of the year that seem to meet these needs the best:

1. January through early April
2. Shortly after Easter through the start of summer
3. Through the summer months
4. Through the autumn months

Of the four, January through early April tends to be the best for most churches. Except for Lent, this season of the year has the fewest special days in the church calendar, and it's most likely your Core Leadership Team will have fewer conflicting events than at other times of the year.

ESTABLISH A SABBATH FOR EACH WEEK

This will be an intense 100 Days for the pastor and the CLT. If you go through all 100 without a break it might do more harm than good. So what's the solution?

Sabbath.

Every member of your CLT needs to keep a weekly Sabbath. This rest period is built into the process. Each week will have six days' worth of work to do, not seven.

Sabbath matters for several reasons:

- Sabbath rest is in God's top ten. A Sabbath isn't just a day off, which we might let slip. Sabbath is something we know we should take seriously.
- Sabbath gives our minds and emotions a chance to catch up. Pursuing this process for 100 Days without a break is like running a horse at a gallop without letting it rest, drink, and eat. You'll kill it.
- Sabbath helps us reenergize. If 100 Days seems like a short time to help a church get healthier, it's a long time to work on something this important and difficult without regular breaks.
- Sabbath opens the door for God's surprises. By stepping away we may sometimes see a path forward from an avenue we never would have thought to pursue.
- Sabbath gives you fresh eyes for the next segment. When you come back to the task after your Sabbath, you'll be able to see things more clearly.

Overworked pastors are not healthy, and neither are their churches. Too many pastors are observing no Sabbath at all. For some churches and many pastors, a restoration of Sabbath may bring that step toward health that you need.

CLEAR YOUR CALENDAR

In addition to a weekly Sabbath, it's essential to clear time in your schedule for the extra hours this will cost.

If you're already running at 90 to 100 percent (or more), these 100 Days won't help, they'll hurt—perhaps permanently. Before starting this process, you need to find ways to offload at least ten hours of work from your usual weekly schedule.

What do you normally do as a pastor that someone else can take from you for these 100 Days? Visitation? Weekly Bible study? Administrative duties? If you're bivocational, do you have the ability to reduce your work hours or take some vacation time? Yes, I know what I'm asking. I wouldn't ask if it wasn't necessary. There is simply no way to take on these extra hours—not to mention the extra spiritual and emotional toll—without hurting yourself, if you don't make purposeful space in your schedule.

THE HEALTHY CHURCH LOG

One of the biggest challenges for any church is to figure out how to measure healthfulness. The usual default is to count attendance figures. But the number of church attenders was

never the best measure of church health, and it's becoming a less-accurate measure as time goes on.

After all, the church is not called to sell a product, make money, or build a bigger customer base. We're called to love God, love others, and disci-

ple believers who make other disciples. All of those ventures are hard, if not impossible, to measure numerically. This is why this book is *100 Days to a Healthier Church*, not *100 Days to a Bigger Church*.

When we come to the part about goal-setting for your 100 Days, I want to encourage you in the strongest way possible not to make that goal numerical.

But if we don't attach numbers to it, how can we know if the church is getting healthier?

Start something I call a *Healthy Church Log*.

A Healthy Church Log is exactly what it sounds like. It's a recorded logbook of anything that happens that is a sign of healthfulness for your church. Write non-numerical signs of health as they happen, or you'll forget them. I recommend this for everyone who is a part of your Core Leadership Team.

So what gets recorded in the log? If someone in the church tells you they shared their faith with a friend for the first time, write that in the log. Was there a couple on the verge of divorce whose relationship was restored into a stronger marriage? Write that down. Was there someone who was resisting

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necessary change in the church but has decided maybe some changes aren't so bad after all? Write that down.

Obviously, some of the items in this log will be private, but many of them won't be. So give team members a chance to share them with other team members. You may be surprised and encouraged by how many healthy things are actually happening in the church.

ASSEMBLE YOUR CORE LEADERSHIP TEAM (CLT)

Of all the choices that need to be made before beginning your 100 Days, picking the right people for the Core Leadership Team may be the most important ones. In many churches this first step may also be the hardest one. But putting a team together is essential. In church leadership, as in extreme sports, don't do this alone. Here's why.

My wife, Shelley, went back to college as an adult. While most adults who start back to college flame out without getting a degree (myself included), Shelley not only accomplished her goal, she did it in the designated amount of time. Why? She signed up for a cohort. A cohort is a group of people who start the process together, go through classes with each other, prod each other, help each other, then graduate and walk across the stage to get their diplomas together.

The stats show that Shelley is not an anomaly. Those who attempt to get a later-in-life college degree have a much higher graduation rate when they're in a cohort.³

Pastor, you need a cohort, a Core Leadership Team of

willing, passionate, supportive people who will walk through this process with you. After all, a healthy church is not just about you. Without at least a handful of willing participants, this process cannot work and the church will never get healthier.

My friend Dave Jacobs spent years pastoring small churches and now devotes himself to coaching small-church pastors and writing helpful books on small-church ministry. One of his often-repeated axioms is, “Never process anything of significance by yourself.”⁴ Not only should we not process big issues alone, but we need to get the right people on the team. As Dave also says, “When we’re faced with a decision that affects other people and do not include those who will be affected in the decision-making process, those who are affected will feel disregarded and disrespected.” Nowhere do those bits of wisdom apply more strongly than in a process of this nature.

So how do we go about assembling a team? The oldest way there is—personal contact. Handpick the people you believe will meet the criteria.

A general invitation isn’t likely to get you the people you want, and it may get you some people who won’t fit well. But if you go to somebody in the church and say, “You know what? I’m putting together a small team of people because we’re going to work on a project to get our church healthier over a 100-day process, and I want you to be a part of that 100 days,” the people with passion are going to respond.

So who should you ask? Look for people who are

- Willing
- Available

100 DAYS TO A HEALTHIER CHURCH

- Growing in their faith (better to have a two-year believer who is growing than a twenty-year believer who is stagnant)
- Cooperative
- Curious
- Teachable
- Committed to Christ
- Committed to the local church
- Prayerful
- Adaptable
- Reliable

The first time you go through this 100-Day process, it's also helpful for the Core Leadership Team to meet as many of the following requirements as possible:

- Small in size (no more than eight people; three to five members is even better)
- From more than one segment of the church (young and old, official and unofficial leaders, etc.)
- Motivated, but not impatient
- Engaged, but not overly busy
- Softhearted, but thick-skinned
- Honest, but not rude
- Independent, but cooperative
- Solid, but adaptable
- Open to the idea of health and change
- Likely to commit to and last through the entire 100 Days

There are several times in Scripture when leaders are selected to do work for God's people. In each situation, the primary characteristics were never about their skill and experience but about their character and willingness.

For example, Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, told him to appoint leaders "who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain" (Ex. 18:21). When the early church chose the seven to oversee the distribution of food to widows, they were to be "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). The lists for bishops, elders, and other church leaders include character traits like temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2 RSV), "serious, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for gain" (1 Tim. 3:8 RSV), and "a lover of goodness, master of himself, upright, holy, and self-controlled" (Titus 1:8 RSV), among many other traits. What they all have in common is that they put character first.

There is no way for me to overemphasize the importance of the team dynamic for your 100 Days. Deciding on the right mix of leaders may take a while, but that's okay. Getting the right people on the team may be the most important decision you will make in this entire process.

Think a lot about it. Pray about it even more. Look outside the group of "usual suspects" for new blood with new ideas. Then give them several weeks, maybe months, of lead time before their schedules align for the marathon ahead.

AN ALTERNATIVE: THE TEST RUN

In many churches, there are rules—written or unwritten—about putting such a team together without proper approval. Especially if the church is in crisis or has a long history of resistance to change, getting approval for your Core Leadership Team may be the hardest step of your process.

If that's the case, here's another option. Do an unofficial test run first. On your first time through the 100 Days, select one or two people who are trustworthy and who will give you some helpful feedback.

In many small churches, the test-run team may consist of the key pastoral staff members, or just the pastor and spouse.

The test run has several advantages.

First, a test run can help you decide whether or not the church is ready for the 100 Days.

Second, the test run helps you see potential issues that can be ironed out before you do the official run-through.

Third, a test run gives you another set of eyes to assess those issues.

Fourth, when you do an official run-through, the test-run team can act as coleaders.

ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE: THE SELF-SELECTING TEAM

In some cases, especially in smaller churches, the pastor will be asking for trouble by picking the Core Leadership Team himself. If so, one alternative is to make the team self-selecting. The

simplest way to do this is to have an open call for those who want to be on the team, then have a meeting in which you lay out the requirements for participating on the team.

Show them the commitment that will be required, the daily assignments, the weekly meetings, and so on. By doing this, those who can't or won't make the commitment will self-select out, and those who want in will know what's required of them. This group should also include a handful of one-on-one pre-meetings with people you want to see on the team. Let them know they're wanted and needed.

This is not an ideal way to select the team, but in many churches this, or some version of it, may be the only way to pull a team together.

The bottom line is this. The stronger the Core Leadership Team, the higher the likelihood of success.

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