

# Creating a Church of Impact and Influence

*A Travel Free Learning Article*

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Many people today say church is irrelevant, self-serving, and insulated from the real world. As a consultant who encounters many churches and various denominations, leaders, and church sizes, I have made some observations regarding churches who make an impact and have a powerful influence. I've also noted that many of these churches are created; they rarely just happen. What is involved in creating and what does a church of impact and influence look like?

## Creating Churches of Impact and Influence

Whether small, large, rural, suburban, Anglo, African American, or multi-cultural there are several observable elements that seem to contribute to churches that have impact and influence for Christ in their communities, states, and nation. The impacts are that in which churches plan and engage that makes a difference. It matters and would be missed if churches were not present. Influence is the presence and intentionality of ministry that permeates and penetrates the culture in ways that represents the virtues of Christ. Such creates waves of influence of leaders, agencies, institutions, individuals, families because of the work of Christ in their lives and ministries.

*What is involved in creating these churches? There are a few common threads:*

1. Focused missional lay and clergy leaders
2. Focused prayer ministry
3. Focused on penetrating culture/community rather than pampering the pew
4. Focused and intentional ministry designs
5. Empowered and challenged lay leaders driven by their passion and callings
6. Balanced use of resources—buildings, budgets, staff, etc.
7. Celebration of impact and influence through commissioning, worship, dedications, ordinations and ministry descriptions

## What Does a Church of Impact and Influence Look Like?

How does a church of impact and influence differ from most of the churches scattered across denominations and communities?

### ***Typical Church Characteristics***

### ***Church of Impact and Influence Characteristics***

Inward Focused	Outward Focused
Seeks to appease and appreciate	Seeks to commission the called
Desires to use resources for membership	Intends to use resources for the community
Leaders serve members	Leaders mobilized to serve those in need in and beyond membership and within their calling
Worship seen as sacred, God-focused and sanctuary for membership	Worship is seen as place of celebration and equipping to mobilize for impact and influence as a way of honoring God through service and accountability

Decisions made to preserve our mission and comfort and in keeping with our bylaws	Decisions made to deepen impact and influence in keeping with divine virtues and callings and missional focus
Ministry driven by clergy and traditions or denominational affiliation	Ministry driven by calling and mobilization of ordained and unordained

I am keenly aware these are broad and general observations, but they do seem to have traction in my travels. Another element woven through all of these is the issue of leadership. **Leaders of churches of impact and influence, engage in mentoring, coaching, casting vision deliberately and with deep spiritual guidance, passion and commitment.** Pastoral leaders realize they are not there to just preach. In fact they see themselves more as inspirers, hope-builders, and companions for life's journey. They disciple, commission, challenge, cast vision, empower and mobilize.

They are not as consumed with biblical preaching; although it is certainly important. They are more committed to biblical living. How does faith manifest itself in the day to day activities of families, business owners, managers, educators etc? The pastoral duties are offered and handed willingly to those gifted to pastor those they live with, work or play within their daily lives. What a shift!

Leaders are only leaders when they have followers and those who are being inspired to live life to the fullest. **Pastoring is more from Paul's model of leadership than Moses' model of leadership.** Paul lived and worked among the people, learning from his encounters with Lydia, Aquilla and Pricilla, and Barnabas. Paul was sensitive to cultural issues in order to speak in ways his message of Christ might be heard and understood. Paul embraced innovation and Moses preserved tradition.

While Moses tried to calm the disgruntled, wander with the wanderers who couldn't make a decision and live with it. Then there was Moses' successor Joshua. He moved his leadership model and people from wandering to walking a far more intentional model and moving on to cross into the Promised Land rather than just appease those he was called to lead. (I discuss this model in greater details in my book ***Spiritual Leadership in a Secular Age.***)

**Focus, intentionality of prayer, mission, soulful leadership and forward movement are drivers for churches of impact and influence.** Their membership is not to perpetuate the church building, staff, or budget, but rather membership is about a mobilized army of believers touching and impacting the world for Christ. Oh that such commitment might be multiplied in our world! The coach approach is a powerful leadership tool that brings focus, establishes accountability, and pulls out of the believer and congregation that which God has planted within as His divine calling and mission.

Helping churches discover their future through the coach approach of leadership deepens commitment, broadens ownership of dreams and ministries far more effectively than a dictatorial leadership model that more about telling others what to do rather than asking questions that uncovers that which God has planted within. (I discuss this coach approach in my book ***Making Shifts Without Making Waves: A Coach Approach to Soulful Leadership.***)

**A final observable trait of churches of impact and influence revolves around incarnational principles.** These churches are more about intentional presence in their communities as the church rather than just getting the community into the church. Being church is more important to them than coming to church. Such as it is the challenge of being a non-anxious presence and learning to be salt, light and leaven in the world provides the key ingredients of creating and being a church of impact and influence. What does this look like? One church minister's title is *Minister of Community Impact*. Another expression is Bible Study for children (Vacation Bible School), or help in the community park rather than the church building. Still another church commissioned one of their deacons to serve on the local school board.

Another church is seeking to build a supportive, encouraging and collaborative partnership with the small businesses and their staff within their downtown business district. Another church put some of their church offices in bank buildings so their presence could be felt and seen in the business district. Another church does a dialogue session in their prayer garden on the corner of major crosswalk in their small town. This session is led by lay leaders around issues of relevance in the town. Hopefully this gives you a taste of how to create a church of impact and influence and a hint of the price of such shifts and the payoff for effective ministry in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

### **Coaching Questions to Consider and Use:**

1. How would you evaluate your church in light of this article?
2. How would you evaluate your personal leadership style in light of the article? Where are you leading by the example you are providing?
3. What shifts are needed?
4. What will help you and your church make these shifts?
5. What are your next steps?

***For additional help from Eddie consider [www.50for99.info](http://www.50for99.info) for a call with Eddie to help you discover and sift through your options.***

### **Important Things to Know**

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