

Ministry Leadership is a Moving Target Continually Changing the Focus of Your Journey

A Travel Free Learning Article

By

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Have you ever seen the confidence game on the streets of a city somewhere around the world that involves shells, plastic cups, or even match boxes with a small round ball about the size of a pea? The shells are moved around, the pea shuffled, you are asked to watch it and guess the location of the pea.

Ministry leadership often seems like a confidence game on the streets and alleys of church communities. Figuring out exactly where the pea is seems impossible because ministry leadership is always a moving target. About the time you have it figured out and want to lay down your bets on a certain style or approach, it shifts.

Pastors often say many of the methodologies they learned in seminary no longer work within five years. The pea has shifted to a new location. It is part of the reality that ministry leadership is a moving target. What once worked may no longer work. Senior or solo pastors and staff ministers are often swindled out of their hard earned leadership skill sets just like they are in a confidence game.

Ministry leadership is not just about leadership skills, but about figuring out effective ways to learn how to lead in each new situation or season of ministry. It is about constantly adapting. It is about not learning one style and methodology of leadership, and forcing each congregation into that style. It is about figuring out the ministry leadership style that will empower each congregation to soar with their spiritual strengths; at least for a while.

Because ministry leadership is a moving target, ministers continually change the focus of their leadership journey. They never arrive at a fixed destination. They are never finished with their journey towards effective leadership. As they journey in the direction of what they understand to be effective leadership, the cutting edge of ministry leadership moves away from them about as fast as they move toward it. If ministers stay fixed on one destination they find as they approach their target that it was a mirage.

Numerous dynamics surrounding ministry leadership can change. The stage of the life cycle a congregation is experiencing can progress to the next stage and require a different set of skills. Ministers can reach a different stage of their life and ministry and shift in the way they provide leadership. The diversity of the congregation can increase or modulate to demand different dynamics of leadership.

Conflict can explode onto the congregation scene. Economic crises from inside or outside the congregation can occur. Efforts at deepening discipleship can work and the congregation starts demanding a new dimension of leadership ministers were never trained to provide. Theological controversies can occur. As is happening in many denominational settings the theological middle can disappear and denominations may even attempt ecclesiastical suicide. In the middle of all this ministers are called upon to provide effective leadership. They realize the confidence game continues.

Important Things to Know

George Bullard is a Ministry Partner with The Columbia Partnership. He is also General Secretary [executive director] of the North American Baptist Fellowship of the Baptist World Alliance. The Columbia Partnership is a non-profit Christian ministry organization focused on transforming the capacity of the North American Church to pursue and sustain Christ-centered ministry. **Travel Free Learning** is a leadership development emphasis. For more information about products and services check out the web site at www.TheColumbiaPartnership.org, send an e-mail to Client.Care@TheColumbiaPartnership.org, or call 803.622.0923.