

Raw Data

Expert Panel Answers to Questions on the Health of Leadership Teams

Compiled by Dan Jarvis: Life Action Ministries

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Re: Workshop at 6:4 Conference, Enhancing Spiritual Health of Your Leadership Team (2016)

#1: Trent Griffith, Pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel of Granger, Indiana

What are some evidences to you of a spiritually healthy leadership team?

The conversation quickly turns to spiritual things when talking about operational things. Scripture comes out naturally in conversation. We are quick to stop and pray in the middle of meetings. Encouragement and praise are natural. Necessary rebuke is not withheld.

How do you measure/inspect the spiritual health of your team?

We have honest personal dialogue about real issues. The ethos of the team is transparency.

What practices have been helpful to you over the years at:

- maintaining health?

Taking time away from the office as a team for 'required fun' together.

- enhancing health?

Required reading and discussion of a particular topic.

- restoring health after a problem?

We have involved elders who meet regularly to mentor and disciple unhealthy team members. They have communicated the seriousness of the problem and confronted it directly. This has protected the senior pastor from difficult people and affirmed the God-given role of the senior leader.

Any resources or specific encouragements you'd offer to another pastor who was facing an "unhealthy" leadership situation?

Gather healthy leaders around him and together address the problem without delay.

What would you do (practically) if you realized that a team you were leading was in great need of corporate revival?

Call a meeting and declare the problem with a prophetic voice. Articulate the symptoms. Identify the root. Prescribe a remedy. Call them to prayer. Create an environment where unhealthy team members were uncomfortable in the culture.

#2: Bill Elliff – Directional Pastor of The Summit Church near Little Rock, Arkansas, and author of Life Action's "PastorConnect" emails for church leaders

What are some evidences to you of a spiritually healthy leadership team?

Love, united-very clear vision; genuine, weekly prayer together; no “silos” but all working together and sacrificing together for the overall vision; no “weak links” on the team; humility, no awkwardness, no areas we are unwilling to talk about, no topic off-limits, great transparency, trust

How do you measure/inspect the spiritual health of your team?

We have very clear lines, not of authority, but of discipleship. We not only have an org chart, we have a culture of discipleship among our staff and leaders. I know we are healthy when everyone is being disciplined and discipling others.

Are we praying together, and is that prayer real, vibrant? How do we do as we are all naked before the Lord and his throne?

We are always talking to our guys. If we sense anything – weariness, anger, depression, etc – we’re right on it, asking how they are doing and staying with it until we help them process through it.

What practices have been helpful to you over the years at:

- maintaining health?

Weekly discipling and spending unhindered prayer time together. This is 1-2 hours for us weekly, and is the single greatest key to the unity we enjoy. We also have organizational clarity and good communications, which we accomplish by weekly meetings, both tactical and spiritual.

- enhancing health?

Going to a conference together, having times of training, reading the Word together, reading books together

- restoring health after a problem?

Discipleship, time, prayer, and communication together, and retreating for rest and re-calibration

Any resources or specific encouragements you'd offer to another pastor who was facing an "unhealthy" leadership situation?

Lencioni's books, like the “5 Dysfunctions of a Team” – are classics, and can help any team.

I wrote a book called “Whitewater: Navigating the Rapids of Church Conflict”

Get a mentor – a more experienced pastor and let him give you perspective

Retreat for rest and to gain new perspective

What would you do (practically) if you realized that a team you were leading was in great need of corporate revival?

Put them in environments that expose them to the manifest presence of God (conferences we go to, or what we bring into our church)

Begin praying together – it will be hard at first, but you can tell your team: “We ARE going to learn to pray together!” and then stay at it. Bring in someone who can lead your team in a prayer retreat.

You could read “The Presence-Centered Church” by...well, you know...Bill Elliff and then cry out for God's presence together! ☺

#3: Gregg Simmons – former pastor of Church at the Cross in Grapevine, TX, now a Life Action team revivalist

What are some evidences to you of a spiritually healthy leadership team?

Biblical community, unity, openness, loyalty (I will not talk about you unless I have first talked to you), accountability.

How do you measure/inspect the spiritual health of your team?

Are we making progress as a church - attendance, baptisms, good morale. In my experience, the overall health of the church is a reflection of a healthy leadership team.

What practices have been helpful to you over the years at:

- maintaining health?

I would stop by their office each Monday morning to chat about family, workload, personal well-being. We would always have a time to pray for each other in staff meetings. We tried to do 2-3 day staff retreats in fall and spring.

-enhancing health?

I would occasionally bring in an outsider (fellow pastor, denomination worker, successful business man) to shake us up, ask hard questions, including me. We would do a book study once a year on leadership, church growth, spiritual formation.

-restoring health after a problem?

At times I would bring two staff together who were feuding, sometimes their spouses as well, to walk through a biblical process of reconciliation. I would bring together staff and church members who were having problems as well.

Any resources or specific encouragements you'd offer to another pastor who was facing an "unhealthy" leadership situation?

Do not expect it to get better on its on, you need to intervene, the sooner the better. In my experience, a fractured leadership team leads to a fractured church. The problem is bigger than just you. If one or both refuse to reconcile, there may need to be a termination.

What would you do (practically) if you realized that a team you were leading was in great need of corporate revival?

Lead them through a book or Bible study on the essentials of revival. Make sure I am leading by example, am I pursuing personal revival.

#4: Jim Lyon, former pastor of Madison Park Church of God, Anderson, Indiana, now the General Director of Church of God Ministries

Here a few thumbnail replies—thanks for asking.

1. How team members interact with each other and face challenges individually or corporately is a key indicator of spiritual health. As with all things, the fruit of the Spirit should be front and center—and not obscure. How we treat each other, how we react to the difficult, how we manage the ordinary all should routinely be clothed by love, joy, peace, patience, and so on. In this hyper-pressured (and sometimes hyper-masculinized) world, the fruit of the Spirit stand out.

2. As above—by observing the fruit of the Spirit in them. If the team relationships are strained, if conflict resolution is problematic, if tempers wear thin, if there is any deconstructive tearing down of one another, etc., the team is spiritually ill. Conversely, when there is much encouragement, laughter, life, trust, respect, sharing—even in difficult hours—the team is healthy.

3. Working relationships that are underscored by personal friendships are key, especially in peer categories at work. Intentional effort to engage “off-the-clock” can pay rich dividends in maintaining clean, healthy spiritually grounded relationships “on-the-job.” Prayer in the working environment and the ordinary linking of decisions, choices, strategic planning to the model (and words of Christ) should be the oxygen in the room. Regularly articulating, in conversation, “I think Jesus would ...”. “Is that what we think Jesus would ...?” and so on is never trite, but fundamental. We’re Jesus people. Dealing with the bank, dealing with the phone, dealing with the constituent base, dealing with the unbelieving neighbor in the office suite across the hall—dealing with everyone, everything. Traveling together can also be an important opportunity for relationship development and spiritual grounding—I encourage my staff to not only travel together, but to share lodging, meals, down-time, along the way. When wrinkles must be ironed out, sooner is always better than later. Direct and thoughtful conversation—putting the problem on the table in a respectful way can extinguish sparks before they become fires. This requires a certain reservoir of heart understanding, though, developed over time: the subordinates (and peers) must have seen enough of the leader’s heart to trust his/her heart, even when the conversation/conflict resolution is, at first, awkward. No one benefits—and no ministry advances—by pretending the conflict (or problem) does not exist or never happened.

4. Peter Scazzerro’s **Emotionally Healthy Church** (2003, Zondervan) remains (after almost 14 years) the best go-to this side of Scripture for developing a healthy ministry culture. The workbook is almost better than the original text, in the way it condenses and focuses the issues and steps-to-health for any group of believers. I’m a fan and use it everywhere. Scazzerro’s tagline, summary is spot on (my restatement here): No one can be spiritually healthy and, at the same time, emotionally immature; emotional health should be the inevitable consequence of spiritual health—the two are inextricably intertwined.

5. Jesus is the subject. Jesus must be breathed, talked, and modelled into the team mix. The leader has primary responsibility here and must be very intentional in his/her own walk with Christ and the manifestation of the walk into the ministry environment. Discipleship is about mentoring, modelling, living—not so much program, teaching-by-seminar, policy.

6. Bonus answer :): I’ve always had two rules for working with me (in ministries I have led); I make it clear to all my staff: (a) whatever happens, be able to explain your conduct/decision by telling me why you think you acted as you believe Jesus would have acted—be able to back your explanation up with some biblical grounding (“because Jesus reacted this way in the story of ... I decided to ...”). Even if I do not concur with your exegesis, we’ll be good, if I know you’re reaching to be Christ-like. (b) Never speak negatively about anyone with whom you work or the ministry itself outside of appropriate in-house conversation—we will resolve concerns in our staff family, not in conversation with others outside of our family; if I ever learn that you have spoken negatively about co-workers or the ministry outside of the staff, you just gave two weeks notice. No exceptions, no matter who you are or how valuable you are to the team. It sounds draconian, but I have lived by it and it has saved us all much grief (suffered by other teams that don’t live up to this rule).

#5: Dr. Richard Fisher, former professor for Moody Bible Institute, now pastoring at Grace Church near Akron, Ohio

What are some evidences to you of a spiritually healthy leadership team? In general I would say go to Timothy and Titus for Paul's advice for leadership, Spiritual disciplines and practical exercise. Stick with the main thing - 2 Cor 5:16 - 6:2.

- A healthy leadership team - has a clear and unified vision; and they have a respect for all the players on the team, knowing how each contribute with their gifts. (cf a baseball team. Like marriage there are four elements: They trust one another, they are committed (Love) to one another and the team, they hold to the same values, they are united in their submission to God and His word for direction and vision. The other elements fall in to place - communication, effective cooperative ministries, joy in service, laughter

How do you measure/inspect the spiritual health of your team? Keep your pulse on the stress levels, hours working, etc - the things that creep in to undermine the joy of the Lord. Measure the "performance level" versus training level. The church is a training hospital, not an opera hall. Measure the complaining, griping level.

What practices have been helpful to you over the years at:

- maintaining health? As much as possible follow a weekly schedule that includes physical exercise(at least 5X per week); sleep at least 7 hours per night average; Get into the habit of eating smaller portions of everything (and never eat doughnuts); engage in mental exercises on a daily basis - reading; playing "7 Little words" or other mind developing games (computer or board); debating and discussing important issues with thinking people. Spiritual exercises - avoid complaining, griping and destructive speech - rather follow Phil 4:4-9. Doctors have discovered that harmful spiritual habits affect our physical health adversely. Medical health - get a complete physical checkup every year; follow the recommendations of your family physician.

- enhancing health? Follow a healthy diet and exercise routine. Paul is clear to timothy that bodily exercise does profit for this life, but spiritual exercises profits for both this life and the future. So use wisdom. In my experience, when you lose your health; your effectiveness in ministry begins to decrease - not your worth, or your soul. Health is a vital element. Even David spoke often of being unable to praise God from the grave as a reason why God should restore him to health.

- restoring health after a problem? The Bible mentions medicines, remedies and even Paul had a personal physician. Take medicine as needed to restore health - the "little wine for the stomach's sake" is a medical remedy.

Any resources or specific encouragements you'd offer to another pastor who was facing an "unhealthy" leadership situation? Get back to basics; Start sharing your stories of what God has done and is doing in your life - focus on Jesus, not the circumstances. Celebrate trusting God (Prov 3:5-6); Deal with the bad apples if necessary. Then practice good medical or health recovery procedures. After Surgery, you don't play football, you rehab and rest.

What would you do (practically) if you realized that a team you were leading was in great need of corporate revival? Remember it didn't get that way over night. You begin to challenge the principles that

are used to guide the lives of leaders and the policies of the company. I would go to Proverbs and Psalms - the wisdom books and speak of the righteous vs the wicked. 1 Cor 16:13-18.

#6: Walter Price, former pastor of Fellowship in the Pass Church, Beaumont, California, also has served as a board member for Life Action for many years

I'm not the best to ask questions like these because I tend to operate more "by the seat of my pants flying" than with pre-planned organization and development. This has served me well in my own style of leadership but I don't recommend it for others. It just seems to be the way God made me. But here are a few meager responses.

What are some evidences to you of a spiritually healthy leadership team? *openness, transparency and honesty*

How do you measure/inspect the spiritual health of your team? *nothing quantifiable; personal conversations; spiritual discernment is a key*

Any resources or specific encouragements you'd offer to another pastor who was facing an "unhealthy" leadership situation? *Spiritual Leadership, by Oswald Sanders*

What would you do (practically) if you realized that a team you were leading was in great need of corporate revival? *Probably every team is in need of corporate revival. So I would do the normal things of the faith while praying for an abnormal move of God.*