

A detailed oil painting of a lush garden scene. The foreground features a stone path leading through various plants, including white flowers and green foliage. A large, gnarled tree trunk is prominent on the left, and another large tree is on the right. The background shows a bright, hazy landscape with more trees and a white structure. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

Ministry As Art

By Steve Gordon

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ABOUT THE COVER

The artwork on this book's cover is an original oil painting entitled "The Garden of Gethsemane" by Katherine Gordon Rice, sister of the author. It was inspired by a photograph taken by Carol W. Gordon, the author's mother, on a trip to Israel in the early 1990's. To see more of Rice's work, please visit www.gordongalleries.com.

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FOREWORD

I was on a spiritual retreat recently and stayed in the home of my sister, who is an accomplished artist. She works with oil paint on canvas and is a prolific and successful painter.

In that creative environment, I had an encounter with the Holy Spirit. I had been crying out for who knows how long for clarity of my purpose and focus for my work. It was why I was there.

While reading *Crazy Love!* by Francis Chan, a book recommended to me by my wonderful brother-in-law, the Lord began to speak to me. He told me that He had created me to help faith-based nonprofit organizations become beautiful works of art.

It was a real, bona fide epiphany. I spent the entire rest of the weekend trying to absorb the meaning and scope of this revelation.

This book is what He gave me.

“I sought the Lord and He heard me...”

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PREFACE

Pretend you are dancing or singing a picture. A worker or painter should enjoy his work, else the observer will not enjoy it.

(Robert Henri)

All real works of art look as though they were done in joy. (Robert Henri)

~

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Eph. 2:10)

The Greek word for “workmanship” is *poema*, from which we get our word “poem.” We are God's poem to the world, the art that displays His grace, His workmanship of love. (Mike Cleveland, *The Way of Purity*)

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KEYSTONE SCRIPTURES

...though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy
inexpressible and full of glory...

1 Peter 1:8 NIV

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with
me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk
with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms
of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with
me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

Matthew 11:28-30 The Message

We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it
along with us...Our motive for writing is simply this: We want you to enjoy
this, too. Your joy will double our joy!

1 John 1:3-4 The Message

DISCLAIMER

“WHAT THIS BOOK IS NOT”

This book is not geared toward the leadership of the typical local church, although many of the truths it contains may still apply.

According to Google, when you search for “why ministry leaders are frustrated” or related topics, the only responses you get deal with leaders in local churches.

Nothing against local churches at all, but this is so *not* the problem we are addressing. Maybe this lack of supportive information is why we have so many faith-based non-profit organizations (ministries) with leaders who are underfunded, over-worked, under-supported, and have lost their vision and their joy.

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We are specifically addressing the needs of the leaders of para-church ministries, those brave souls that most church leaders don't quite know what to do with, as they labor in the harvest fields of the Kingdom.

There is so much more Kingdom activity that happens outside the four walls of the traditional local church. I pray that this book is a huge blessing to those who are laboring alone, unappreciated, or about to give up.

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DEDICATION

So, here's to all of the prison ministries, urban missions, after-school programs, missionaries, mentoring programs, and myriad other charities – you know who you are! So does all of Heaven!

“May your ministry become a work of art filled with beauty and joy!”

*Also, a special recognition of the team
of wonderful people at
Reaching Souls International
in Oklahoma City,
a ministry that models beauty, joy, and
excellence in their work!*

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INTRODUCTION

When times are hard, it is difficult to remember the purpose of our calling. We get focused on the immediate crisis at hand and lose site of the greater vision.

To recapture vision and regain momentum, let us look together at your organization with fresh eyes. And not at the part that is apparent to our natural eyes, but with spiritual eyes. Let us peer through the fog to the beauty on the other side, the beauty that Our Father created you for, and with you, the organization he has called you to steward and lead.

PART I

“YOUR MINISTRY IN 3-D: THE 3 DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEAUTY”

THE FIRST DIMENSION

This is *God's* view of your organization. What is He looking for? What constitutes Beauty to him? I believe He is looking for three things: an organization that is **principle-based, people-centered, and beautifully balanced.**

“Principle-Based”

So many ministries are personality-based nowadays. But to create Beauty in an organization, we must shift its culture to one based on principles. We

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must search the Scriptures (which is different than just reading the Bible) and build our House upon the Rock.

Have you identified your core principles? You need to invest in defining your core values, your organizational identity, and the source of your legitimacy. It is not a luxury – it is a matter of life and death, a matter of creating an organization that is life-giving and sustainable above and beyond the lives of the people who lead it – or else it will die prematurely.

Do you have a principle-based approach to planning? To decision-making? To management? Do you take the time to study principles of leadership from the Bible?

“People-Centered”

Our culture today, especially in the business world – which many ministries model themselves after – is so goal and task oriented. But does that create an

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organization of Beauty in God's eyes? No. A beautiful organization is a culture where *people* are valued, esteemed, and made the focal point of our strategies, plans, decisions, and policies.

Isn't that the reason you launched the ministry in the first place? Wasn't it a heart to help others that inspired you to step out and attempt to create an organization, an outreach, a mission?

But in the face of great needs, in the face of a lack of funding, in the face of insurmountable obstacles, it is easy to lose sight of the original calling. Regain your vision of being people-centered. Work with your Master to create an atmosphere that glorifies Him, reflects His great heart of love for His sons and daughters, a culture of honor, where each one is valued as a treasure in the Kingdom.

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He is looking for Beauty in the very heart of the organization. And the life, atmosphere, and culture of the ministry – what we call the “DNA” of it – flows out of the spiritual life of the Leadership.

So, unless the Leadership is people-centered, the organization won't be either. In other words, unless *you* lead with a people-centered approach, it won't happen in the organization as a whole.

“Beautifully Balanced”

Balance is difficult to achieve, especially when dealing with the People issue. It is balancing “the internal vs. the external.” You want to keep your mission focused on your target group, the people that God has called you to reach. These are the “external” ones. But just as important is stewarding the people the Lord has sent to help you with the mission – the people “internal” to the organization.

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It is not “either-or”. It is “both-and”. It is a difficult balancing act, but it is mandatory to keeping a healthy organization. You need the zeal of the missionary and the heart of the pastor. This is often not an easy combination to achieve.



You need the zeal of the missionary and the heart of a pastor.



Your attempts, even struggles, to maintain this critical balance are what makes your organization beautiful in the eyes of the Lord. You do not have to do it perfectly, but you have to do it!

If you can view your ministry as a canvas upon which to create a beautiful masterpiece, then you are getting close to the heart of the Father for why He has created you on this earth.

THE SECOND DIMENSION

This is your, the *Leadership's*, view of your organization. For a real Leader called of God, I believe there will be three attributes that will cause the ministry to be beautiful in *your* eyes: **clearly defined**, **easy to do**, and **willingly supported**. And experience tells us that if you attain the first two, the third will follow close behind.

“Clearly Defined”

The mark of a good Leader is to be able to cast the vision, and to create the principles and methods needed to pursue it. This is the essence of Leadership.

You simply must possess or develop the skills necessary to define the essential purpose of the mission, the means for carrying it out, and the ability to communicate that to your followers.

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Once you are able to articulate this clear definition or plan, it will be a thing of Beauty, to you (and quite likely, to the Stakeholders you need to be successful.) Without clear definition, no lasting success can be achieved.

If you don't have the ability to develop a clear definition for the organization, then you may have to look to an outside source for help. Don't procrastinate on this one. You simply have to work "on" the ministry in order to create a ministry that is easy to work "in." (There's that *balance* again!)

"Easy To Do"

Do you delight to go to work every day? Does it still thrill your heart to work in the ministry that the Lord has called you to? Or has it become a burden, a drudgery, or a dread? "*Men and brethren, these things ought not be so!*"

The main culprit in losing your love for the ministry is often that the organization was created with great zeal but little wisdom. Most ministry leaders

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were never taught how to build a healthy, functional ministry. They usually just stumble or back into it. In an effort to meet a need or respond to a divine calling, an organization gets created, with little thought given to its design, function, or operation on an on-going basis.

Seminaries and Bible schools teach aspiring leaders spiritual matters, but very little on leadership skills, organizational development, people management, systems thinking, or other related skills needed to build a smooth-running ministry. How does one go about building a sustainable organization that will stand the test of time?

Many business skills are useful in this matter, but it is not automatic that a good businessperson is a good ministry leader, because most businesses themselves are not healthy or “easy to do” either. They are typically built upon and within the fallen World System, ignorant of the biblical principles for building a business according to the Kingdom of God.

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On the other hand, your ministry *can* be well ordered, smooth running, and efficient in its operations – running like “a well-oiled machine.” It can be easy to work in and a delight to your heart. It can reflect the organizational principles of the Kingdom. *“If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives liberally and upbraids not.”*

“Willingly Supported”

One of the great frustrations in leadership of faith-based non-profit organizations is the on-going lack of support. This happens in three distinct areas:

- 1) Lack of qualified workers who catch the vision
- 2) Lack of funds to carry out the mission
- 3) Lack of eager volunteers to come along side and help

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Can you see that if you have a ministry that is *clearly defined* and *easy to do*, then all three of these areas will tend to correct themselves? It is a law of nature that a healthy system attracts the right people and resources, and an unhealthy one repels them.

If *you* are not thrilled and excited about the Beauty of your ministry, how can you expect others to be? If you do not create a sustainable, workable organization, you will always be in a state of lack. “[O Lord, let] *Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.*”

THE THIRD DIMENSION

This is the *Stakeholders'* view of your organization. We want the organization to be Beautiful in the eyes of the Board of Directors, Partners or “Investors” (both current and prospective), Employees, the Community, and – our personal favorite – Auditors!

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What does organizational Beauty look like to these “observers”, these potential participants, these “examiners” of the real essence of the ministry? I believe these are the three primary attributes: **standards-based**, **a spirit of excellence**, and **systems for sustainable improvement**.

“Standards-Based”

There are standards and best-practices for the governance, management, and operation of non-profit organizations, whether you are faith-based or not. Most ministries are ignorant of these standards, often to their great harm.

A concerted effort should be made to evaluate the operations of the organization for issues such as the fiduciary responsibility of Board Members (do they understand their liability?), financial controls, legal compliance with state and federal requirements, and the list goes on. A thorough organizational assessment is called for, and is not that hard to do. A standard “non-profit organizational self assessment” form can be obtained and executed easily

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enough. It is the *correcting* of all of the *inadequate* findings that is hard. In my experience, these corrections can often take several years to fully implement.

The goal should be to create an organization that is fully ready to be audited at any time – a thing of Beauty to your Stakeholders! “...*always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks...*”

“A Spirit of Excellence”

Again, the culture and atmosphere of the organization flows from the spiritual life of the Leadership. An excellent, or Beautiful, ministry requires excellent leadership.

A spirit of excellence actually has two components: spiritual excellence and natural (or practical) excellence. You can not skimp on the spiritual excellence (honoring the Lord to the fullest extent possible, both privately and publicly), and still achieve excellence in your operations. (You did not know

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that your prayer life – or lack thereof – might affect your accounting system, did you?)

On the other hand, a focus on spiritual matters can not take the place of creating a well-designed, well-managed organization! Right here is where so many problems begin.



...a focus on spiritual matters can not take the place of creating a well-designed, well-managed organization...



It is back to that balancing act again. A beautiful organization strives to find that true balance between the spiritual and the natural, the vertical and the horizontal, the eternal and the practical. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it! *“We glory in our own weaknesses, because in our weakness, His strength is made perfect, for His grace is sufficient for us.”*

“Systems for Sustainable Improvement”

Boards of Directors (and Auditors, for that matter) like to see that Leadership has a plan for making requested changes. And they like accountability to be a part of that effort.

It is easy to do an assessment and find out where the problems are. It is another thing all together to make needed corrections while maintaining the on-going day-to-day operations of the ministry. Someone has equated it to trying to change a flat tire on a moving car!

As a godly, effective leader, you will never escape the need to have systems in place that allow you to work ON the ministry at the same time you and your team work IN the ministry.

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Your Board can help so much right at this point. Request that a committee of Board Members be formed to oversee – and take responsibility for! – the implementation of changes to policy, procedures, and other action items identified in the organizational assessment. Work hard, as a group, to bring the organization “up to code.” Don’t get in a hurry, but work steadily at it.

As the Leader, you and your team will often be tasked with carrying out various changes mandated by the Board, but those can often be fit in around your normal operational activities. But strive to create systems for communication, accountability, progress tracking, etc. that become a part of the organization’s culture. Because the one thing you can always count on is *change*.

Form a close working relationship with the various Board committees (or individuals, as the case may be) that are directly involved with the on-going mission of the organization. Communicate, communicate, communicate! This one factor alone can make a huge difference in creating a sustainable, functional ministry rather than a dysfunctional one.

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We will discuss the specifics more later, but to be a successful ministry leader, one that builds an organization that stands the test of Time – and gains the approval of Eternity – you will need to grow in your ability to build systems with the following attributes (for everyone involved, not just you):

- Continuous Improvement
- Continuous Learning
- Continuous Personal Growth
- Measurable
- Stable
- Reportable



...to be a successful ministry leader, one that builds an organization that stands the test of Time – and gains the approval of Eternity – you will need to grow in your ability to build systems...



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*SUMMARY OF
PART I*

“The 3 Dimensions of Organizational Beauty”

God’s View: Principle-Based
 People-Centered
 Beautifully Balanced

Leadership’s View:
 Clearly Defined
 Easy to Do
 Willingly Supported

Stakeholders’ View:
 Standards-Based
 A Spirit of Excellence
 Systems for Sustainable Improvement

PART 2

CHAPTER 1 “THE NEW STANDARD”

The premise of *Ministry As Art* is that the new standard or plumbline for successful ministry is *joy* “...unspeakable and full of glory.” If you as the Leader will set this biblical standard before you, it will guide you into a higher life, individually as well as corporately.

My assertion is that an organization is at its best when the end product is joy. It becomes a masterpiece, a work of art, a thing of beauty.

“Why are we here? We are here to come alive, to have fun, to have joy in work.”

–Dr. W. Edwards Deming

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Is your faith-based non-profit organization a place of joy? We are not talking about humor or laughter, although these are wonderful in the right setting. We are talking about a place of delight, where management and staff flow together, and the mission is seen as a desirable pursuit, a fulfilling calling, accompanied by a sense of deep satisfaction.

We intuitively know that this is not happening in most cases. Very few successful ministries have the reputation of being excellent, much less “joy-filled.” Oh, that we had ministries that were at least candidates for “Top 50 Best Places to Work”!

Instead, the trend is toward low-pay, “sacrificing for the cause,” struggle, lack, frustration, and the list goes on.

Did not our Master say that the World would know us as His disciples by our love one for the other? Is not the greatest witness to the lost the joy that true believers have in the face of difficulties? We must rediscover the power of joy, holding it up as our standard, individually and corporately. It is by definition our distinguishing trademark, our flag flown high.

CHAPTER 2
“THE NEW MINDSET”

“Be no longer conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

We have so often applied the verse above individually, but as leaders we need to adopt a new mindset for the good of the organization, and beyond.

The main area of transformation needed in the typical organization centers around *fund-raising*. Lack of financial resources is the universal problem facing the vast majority of ministries in operation today. Something has to change. Since the only thing we really have the power to change is ourselves, let’s explore the possibility that a New Mindset toward fund-raising might result in a new attitude and new possibilities.

First, can we agree that what we have been doing traditionally has not been working? And can we agree that the majority of the stress of leaders in minis-

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try can be traced to this constant sense of lack? So if organizational “ugliness,” if you will, is so tightly connected to the apparent scarcity of financial resources (or our approach to them), then we can safely conclude that to achieve organizational Beauty, we are going to have to “*attack the lack*” as my dear friend and mentor, Louis Gandara, used to say.

To quantify the old mindset or traditional fund-raising paradigm, let’s assign it the following attributes:

- Based primarily on donor contributions
- Could be in a variety of forms, including monthly recurring gifts, one-time gifts, major gifts, grants, matching gifts, etc.
- Required specialized fund-raising skills, which many leaders do not seem to possess
- Required extensive relationship building to acquire charitable donations from potential donors

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- Took away much time from pursuing the core mission and vision of the organization
- Often required the services of outside agencies who require payment for said services to assist in the fund-raising efforts, thus reducing the net amount raised
- Mis-managed fund-raising efforts sometimes resulted in legal problems for the recipient organization
- An entire industry rose up to serve the fund-raising needs of non-profit organizations, including certified fund-raising professionals, professional organizations, attorneys, grant writers, grant reviewers, and the list goes on

These are just some of the attributes that describe the current world of fund-raising that your ministry faces in trying to finance your mission.

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Have you ever stopped to wonder if that is in fact what the Lord had in mind when He called you to the task? When you compare this complex and often dysfunctional approach to His biblical examples and methods, it seems that we are at two polar opposite extremes, wouldn't you agree?

So, in this short book, we are not going to try to fix all of that. But I am prepared to declare that there is a New Mindset available, that can be specifically applied to funding your mission. It has the following attributes:

- Creation of simple revenue streams, such as passive income from Internet-based business models (and other creative alternatives)
- Partnering with business owners and businesses to create outcome-based funding projects, that are measurable and show community improvement
- Looking at economic development and community development models that show promise

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- A focus on pro-active “sowing and reaping” – a major Kingdom principle – rather than begging, borrowing, or selling
- Avoiding government grants and “stimulus” money like the plague, and looking to the Lord and the free-market system for witty and creative inventions
- A move toward creating leaner, more streamlined organizations that have designed into their very foundations the elements for self-funding solutions
- A new style of leadership that creates strategic partnerships based on *investment, value and mutual benefit*, rather than charitable donations to a “needy” organization
- A shift from a “poverty” mentality of constant lack to a keen awareness that we live in a Kingdom of abundance!

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Most ministries with which I am familiar, especially those trying to help the poor, are in fact in poverty themselves – something is wrong with this picture!

If any of this resonates with you, then you are ready to embrace the New Mindset toward fund-raising, and to begin to create a Beautiful, well-funded organization that will be a joy to work at!

Print resources for the New Mindset:

The Treasure Principle, by Randy Alcorn (2005)

The Sower: Redefining the Ministry of Raising Kingdom Resources, by R. Scott Rodin and Gary G. Hoag (2009)

Revolution in Generosity, by Wesley K. Willmer (2008)

CHAPTER 3
“THE NEW WINESKIN”

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined.

But new wine must be put into new wineskins.

Mark 2:22 NKJV

“Small is Beautiful”

The day of the mega-church and the mega-ministry has passed. The work of the army of the Kingdom of Heaven in the earth is being done through the vast network of His Kingdom outposts all across the globe. The Glory of God is being revealed throughout the whole earth as the waters cover the sea!

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Not only does being a small organization *not* disqualify you from making an impact, I believe it is actually *the* model that King Jesus is highlighting as His end-time strategy for conquest and transformation.

But He is raising the bar. He is no longer willing to tolerate sloppy, poorly constructed, poorly managed organizations. “*For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.*” (Luke 16:8)

If He is raising the bar, maybe that would explain a good measure of the frustration you have been experiencing. The old ways, methods, and mindsets are not working any more. A shift has occurred. The New Wineskin is here. And it contains the awesome wine of organizational Beauty and Joy! Are you in it?

“Unity is Beautiful”

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Another aspect of the Kingdom Mindset is the increased emphasis on unity among His disciples. We are seeing a global movement of alignment that is beyond anything we have ever seen.

No longer will old-fashioned ecumenicalism get it done (unity for the sake of unity).

No longer will old-fashioned denominationalism get it done (security through uniformity).

No longer will ethnic lines of division be tolerated in Kingdom work. He has truly made us one (John 17) so we must start acting like it.

The day of unity-in-diversity is here. There were twelve tribes in Israel but they were all one Nation. Even so, today, we see that we can unite the Body of Christ to form a unified front, while allowing doctrinal differences to be our unique distinctives, rather than divisive weapons.

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So, get lined up! Find your place and get in it.

Line up, individually.

Line up, corporately.

Line up, locally.

Line up, regionally.

Find like-minded organizations, your “Divine Connections”, develop common ground, build coalitions and take your Territory back for King Jesus! “*Occupy till I come.*”

CHAPTER 4
“THE NEW MOTIVATION”

For your organization to make the journey from chaos to a beautiful work of art, there is a significant value shift you must embrace. I call it the New Motivation. Leaders have to continually check their motives. You are being held to a higher standard. The Kingdom Mindset has a way of forcing that.

You, like so many of us, are being weighed in the balance of Heaven. Is the Glory of God your true, underlying motivation for ministry, or is it still, after all these years, still about *self*, no matter how subtle? “O God, search our hearts!”

The only true motive, from Heaven’s perspective, for praying, for ministering to the hurting, for outreach and witnessing, for feeding the poor – no matter what Kingdom activity you are called to – the only acceptable motivation is that the Father would be glorified in the Son.

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That may be another reason you have been struggling. He may have so orchestrated your circumstances to sift your heart and separate the wheat from the chaff.

Don't fight it! Volunteer! Cooperate with the gracious inner work of the Holy Spirit. Simply yield and say, "Yes, Lord, search me and try me and see if there be any false motives in me." As a very wise man said recently, "If you will pray this and mean it with all your heart, then God will break you through to the next level you have been desiring: 'Speak to me, Lord, and I will obey your voice, not matter what it costs me!'"

So the New Motivation is really the classic, original motivation – the love of God in our hearts constraining us to serve Him in the hardest assignments and craziest locations imaginable. Just make sure it is for His Glory!

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A ministry whose Leaders have purified their hearts and motives in the fire of His Love, will have an encounter with Jehovah M'Kaddesh – the Lord God Who Sanctifies Us – and will come forth as a Beautiful golden vessel, fit for the Master's use in these last days.

Are you willing to pay the price to have a ministry that is a Beautiful work of art, before Him?

CHAPTER 5
“THE NEW MODEL”

The truly Beautiful ministry is going to be free from the trappings of the personality-centered leadership model. Teamwork and team-based leadership is the Kingdom model (and really always has been). *“He sent them out, two by two...”*

Jesus worked very hard developing His leadership team. Reams of books have been written on the subject, but very little has been applied to help faith-based non-profit organizations realize the benefits of decentralizing control and empowering teams across the organization to accomplish the mission.

Synergy and synergistic effect are two over-used terms, but the concepts are still very powerful and valid. It takes a special kind of Leader to shed the old mindset and embrace the New.

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The E Myth Revisited by Michael E. Gerber should be required reading by every Leader and aspiring leader. So few entrepreneurs know how to venture out and start the enterprise and then have the wisdom to shift its management to a team once it reaches a certain size.

Don't look to classic approaches, and hierarchical structures of control, taken from the military, as your models. Strive to build a lean organization with a high degree of delegation, empowerment, flexibility, and teamwork woven into its fabric.

Consider outsourcing as much of your non-essential operations as possible (payroll, accounting, fulfillment, I.T., web-based activities, etc.). Tim Ferris has written the definitive book on this subject – a new classic, in my opinion, and the inspiration for much of this book – *The 4-Hour Work Week*. (Be sure to get the revised and updated 2010 edition.)

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The exact “how” of moving your organization to the New Model is going to be different in each unique case. But here are some ideas that might help you:

1. Make sure your Board is totally in agreement with the New Mindset and the New Model
2. Invest in long-range planning by conducting an off-site planning retreat
3. Recruit the services of a strategic planning consultant who understands these concepts
4. Develop a plan to help you re-engineer the organization

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight before you.”

CHAPTER 6
“THE NEW MANAGEMENT”

I have intentionally tried to keep *Ministry As Art* as simple and straightforward as possible. It is not meant to be a technical manual on non-profit management, but an encouragement to have a new view of your organization and your role in it.

However, in this chapter, I am going to lay out a management structure that I have learned by working with non-profit organizations. It falls in the category of “traditional best practices,” but it seems to be very effective and efficient. If you have a differing experience or opinion with the recommended approach, please bear with me. No one I have worked with in the faith-based ministry community has anything even close to this structure, so it is not too common.

It has to do with proper governance of the organization. The standard configuration is to have a Board of Directors, which includes elected officers (presi-

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dent, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary) and other members. This group is legally bound to have fiduciary responsibility for the affairs of the organization.

Most board members in the faith-based ministries that I have worked with had no concept of anything other than that they sat on a ministry's board and attended meetings. That may sound like an unfair exaggeration but it is my direct experience. For instance, back in the 1980's, I was elected to the board of the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Norfolk, Virginia, and I know for sure that I had no clue what a board did or what it was supposed to do or not do.

But the optimum use of the Board is to provide oversight and leadership to the organization itself. This is called a "working board." In this configuration, the whole board meets once a year (some do it more often, but never less). In the annual meeting, which can typically last all day or over a weekend, functions of the board itself are dealt with, including elections, membership, etc., and major issues of the organization.

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But this is not the place to help the organization run better or accomplish more. This more “hands on” part of the board’s activities is accomplished through a structure called “board committees”. In a well-governed non-profit organization, the board is expected to maintain a number of “standing” committees. As sample list would be:

- Planning
- Governance
- Fund Development
- Evaluation
- Financial Management
- Legal Accountability
- Communications
- Administration/Other

Create others as needed.

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Where a committee is responsible for activities or oversight that ties directly to a major function of the ministry, that committee can be a big help to that manager or department, if – and only if – the relationship is designed properly.

Without getting into too much detail, the goal is to have these board committees staffed with committed people (maybe that’s why they’re called “committees”?) who will take a vital interest in their role. They should meet regularly (typically monthly) and accomplish specific goals.

The board should have a system for evaluating the performance of committees and individual board members. The organizing and evaluating of board committees should be a significant part of the annual board meeting.

Depending on your role in the organization, and your level of seniority, influence, etc., you may or may not be able to steer the board into creating a

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healthy, functional configuration like this, but oh, wouldn't it be beautiful to work in such a well-managed organization!

There are plenty of resources at the local library or online to help you organize your board of directors according to a variety of widely-accepted best practices. But it will require a "champion" on the board of directors who is willing to work hard for the development of an excellent board.

I firmly believe that you can not have a Beautiful faith-based nonprofit organization without one.

"And the government shall be upon His shoulders..."

CHAPTER 7
“THE NEW GENERATION”

Succession. Many faith-based nonprofits in existence today are simply ignorant of this concept, yet it is possibly one of the most crucial topics facing any non-profit that was founded by a strong leader.

What is succession? It is the passing of the mantle from one generation of leadership to the next. It is the retirement of the founding CEO (in most cases) in such a way that the new CEO – and the ministry itself – is able to make a smooth transition, not a major setback. Do you have a succession plan?

“Successful succession is possible when certain principles are...followed...The job of any leader is succession. As soon as you say yes to a leadership role, you must open yourself to who will do the job after you. Face it. Own it. Plan for it...

“Succession can be an emotional issue. Boards bonded to their leader will fear they are losing a beloved and trusted resource... Some boards lean heavily on

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their leader to guide them through executive transition. This is especially true when the leader is either the literal or figurative founder of the organization. In other cases, the board prefers that the leader prepare the organization for transition but not be personally involved...

“Rather than working to replace yourself, ready the organization for the future. Resist the urge to look for a ‘mini-me’ in leadership. Instead, guide the organization forward strategically to accomplish its mission. When the organization is well-shaped, it will attract the right leader for the next season...

“Bond your staff to the mission rather than to yourself. Preach often and clearly that the staff exists for the mission, not for your version of it. A mission-bonded staff can receive a new leader in due time since they understand the mission belongs to God, not an individual...

“Mentor mentor mentor about vision vision vision for the mission mission mission. Leave a legacy with your leadership that cements the mission of the ministry into the future...

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“Lead as you leave. The way you leave says as much about your dependence on God and belief in a mission as the way you begin your tenure. Lead your staff, your board, and your constituents further toward the ministry mission even as you leave. Show them how to set systems in place that will make your successor successful. Let them see you release responsibilities to God. Be vulnerable and honest about the natural grief of tenure completion – both for yourself and for those who have served with you – but also develop a discipline of contentment that assures others of God’s hand in the process.”

Excerpted from the article, “Successful Succession” by Elisa Morgan. Published in the ECFA newsletter, “Focus on Accountability,” fourth quarter, 2009.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE BEAUTIFUL ORGANIZATION

Inspiring! Hope-filled! A new vision!

Sure, I'd like you to be saying that about this book right now, but really, I am hoping and praying that you are saying that about your renewed vision for your organization. My greatest dream would be that this book would be a mini-epiphany for you to catch a new glimpse of what your Father created you for and how He wants you to go about doing what He has called you to do.

Finally, at the risk of being accused of shameless marketing, I have a stand-up presentation I give on this subject to gatherings of Leaders. I am also planning on a DVD version of the "The Art of Ministry" seminar that I will be teaching soon at a local university. Please let me know if I can be of any help.

Blessings on you and yours...

--S.G.--

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Gordon is a self-described type 3 extrovert. Type 1 are healthy, outgoing, and really care about other people. Type 2 are hopelessly insecure and fake extroverted behavior to mask their sense of inadequacy. Type 3 genuinely think they are the most interesting people in the room and everyone needs to know!

Steve is the Director of Development at ESE Consulting Services, a consulting firm that creates affordable management consulting solutions for the leaders of faith-based non-profit organizations. He had been in the consulting business, in one form or another, since 1987. He specializes in innovative management and technology solutions for Christian ministries of all sorts and sizes.

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ENDORSEMENTS

I wanted to let you know that I did read your wonderful book *Ministry as Art*. I actually read it during a time when Agape Connection Ministries was in a 40-day prayer and fast for direction. I have to say that the timing could not have been better for me. I know that I have become burdened with the details and business aspects of ministry. I had felt overwhelmed with and incapable of doing those things.

Your book though took me back to the beginning when I was so passionate about helping others and just wanted to serve the Lord no matter what it took. Ministry then was exciting, it was exhilarating, and it was not ever a burden. When I read “you need the zeal of the missionary and the heart of a pastor,” I thought, “I have that.” I can trust that the Lord will help provide the skills, the people, the funding, etc. for a truly balanced organization, and even as we are developing in our weak areas, He is strong. And as you say in *Ministry as Art*, we will “view this ministry as a beautiful canvas upon which to cre-

Ministry As Art

ate a beautiful masterpiece, knowing we are getting close to the heart of the Father, for that is why He has created us on this earth.”

I will be studying the book more in depth as I develop the ministry and work on goals for this year, but I wanted to thank you for this tool. It was easy to read and understand and something I think I actually could implement. Other books have left me completely overwhelmed and I just never really got interested. Your book was different. I know you know what you are talking about and are passionate about helping those of us in ministry.

Thank you so much.

In loving response,

Laronda Alexander, RN

Agape Connection Ministries - Director

www.agapeconnection.com