

HOW TO

CONNECT

PERSONALLY

WHEN YOU CAN'T

KNOW

EVERYONE

A large church presents a host of new problems.

One of the more uncomfortable problems, though, is figuring out how to connect with people when there are so many people present. The days of knowing everyone's name and story are gone. The days of standing at the back door after the service to shake hands and say everyone's name are gone.

All of the things you did as a smaller church don't work anymore.

This new season requires you to do new things. It means making some changes in your schedule and planning so you maintain personal connections with people beyond your staff and key leaders.

Why bother, though? As a ministry leader, you want to serve all people well. Why bother trying to connect when you can't do it for everyone? Because you should do what you can so you engage with people where they are. In other words, create ways to build relationships with people so you avoid becoming an isolated leader.

THE PROBLEMS IT SOLVES

People are the driving force of ministry. As more people come, the people-related problems only grow. These issues may seem abundant. In reality, they're often variations on a theme. In this case, problems that seem disconnected can be solved by strategically building relationships.

It's easier to lead when you're known.

John Maxwell once said "A leader without followers is just out for a walk." People will likely follow you because of a title or perceived authority. More people are likely to follow if they know the person leading.

Find out what's going on among people.

Leading a church means casting vision and working to fulfill that vision. It also means existing in the daily needs of people in your congregation and community. When you connect personally with people, you discover the challenges in their lives and in the community. As a result, you get more clarity in how to lead and serve people well.

Create advocates.

Let's face it: trials come. Difficulties arise. Tensions mount. In those challenging seasons of ministry, you need people who know you as a person, not just someone on the platform. You need people to fight off any attacks on your behalf. The more people know you, the more advocates you have. This is a wonderful asset for you, your family, and your ministry leadership.

HOW TO GET IT WRONG

Relationships are key to ministry and critical for strong, growing churches. As you encounter new challenges due to church size, it's easy to make these common mistakes.

Isolate yourself.

Look at the stories of fallen pastors and you see one common theme: isolation. As the church grew, they protected their schedules so they could focus on their work. But this can easily extend into everything else, leaving no one able to approach a pastor.

Assume other staff members should do it.

The entire staff should absolutely be known by people in the church. This responsibility isn't theirs alone, though. Set an example as a senior leader, otherwise staff will follow your lead and distance themselves from individuals too. Before long, no one really knows the staff.

Be insincere.

People sense when someone isn't being authentic. Whether it's on a stage or on social media, most people have a pretty sensitive authenticity meter. It pings when they detect someone being fake. As you spend time with people, be comfortable being you. This is tough for ministers.

Ignore technology.

Technology doesn't replace relationships; it supports them. It's why grandparents FaceTime their grandkids. Ignoring technology means you miss opportunities to make connections with people in your church.

WHAT DO YOU DO NOW?

With so many people in your church, connecting personally with them feels overwhelming. But like the old saying goes, you can eat an elephant one bite at a time.

Here are a few ways you can start today:

Be in a small group.

Weekends are busy. There are so many things to do and oversee. Part of leading a church staff usually means no chance to be in a small group. This isn't leading one; it's attending one with your spouse. Be a church member, not just a staff member.

ACTION

Make time to regularly attend a small group. This may mean adjusting your weekend schedule or delegating responsibilities, but prioritize this.

Enable your staff opportunities to be in small groups.

Your entire staff should be in a small group. Logistically this may mean starting new groups at times they can attend, like Sunday night, Tuesday night, and so on. Support them with whatever they need to make it happen, like finding additional volunteers or shifting responsibilities. Small groups let you and your staff be known as people, not just leaders.

ACTION

Enable every staff member to attend a group. Shift what needs to be changed so this happens.

Volunteer in something outside of your role.

There's almost always something extra on the horizon. Whether it's a mission opportunity, special event, or something else. When these arise, be a volunteer. Encourage your staff to volunteer. Let them serve as church members, not staff members. Often they have skills beyond their job descriptions that support the work of the church. This also gives people a chance to see the staff in new ways.

ACTION

Look at the event calendar for the next quarter. Decide how you and the staff can volunteer for at least one event.

Show up to “that” restaurant for breakfast.

Older adults can be your biggest advocates. This helps you be made known to folks you may not personally know. It's not uncommon for older adults, especially men, to routinely meet for breakfast at the same place every week. Show up occasionally. They won't turn you down.

ACTION

Find out where “that” restaurant is for breakfast or lunch, then show up. They won't turn you down.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Connecting with people requires intentionality. We can move so quickly through our day that we forget to build relationships with people in our congregation and community. These connections grow more difficult as your church grows. Prioritizing this, though, sets you up for a stronger church.

Large churches mean greater impact. They also mean more challenges, especially for growing churches. Each new phase of growth introduces new issues to solve. This guide, along with the other guides in the series, help you navigate the potential roadblocks with clarity and confidence. Avoid the gaps and continue leading a stronger church.

Choosing the Right Ministry Partner

The know-how you need from experts you trust.

ACS Technologies is the original pioneer of Church Management Software (ChMS). We are firmly dedicated to serving local churches all over North America by providing the best-in-class ministry software and service solutions that help you fulfill Christ's mission for your Church.

Tools and support to strengthen churches.

We build great software, but we don't stop there. We have a "service-first" approach that truly sets us apart. With hundreds of dedicated support and consulting personnel, your staff can reach our team 24/7. We're in your corner to help you with the ministry challenges you face every day.

Ideas and solutions powered by integrity.

Integrity is real for us, and it means consistently being faithful stewards by doing the right thing for church success. We have earned the trust of pastors, church staff, congregants, our employees, and colleagues for over 40 years.

A plan to meet your needs and move your ministry.

We're not just interested in satisfied customers. We see ourselves as your real ministry partner and will work with you to make disciples that will last for an eternity. We're excited to talk about your goals, create a plan together, and set you up with the software, service, and resources you need.

We believe in YOU!

ACS Technologies believes in the local church. Over 75% of our team has experience serving in their local churches. We know firsthand that serving the Church means serving people, and we take seriously our commitment to helping ministries like yours achieve their God-given mandate - to make disciples in their communities, states, and across the world.

Let's Talk

We know the challenges of switching or implementing new technology and how that can be intimidating. But we also know the unbelievable changes that have happened within churches that have partnered with us for their ministry needs. Let's connect and see how we can assist you in the greatest thing you do - grow God's Kingdom.

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