

interact



Motivating for Ministry

by Kel Willis

One of the greatest frustrations in any local church is the large number of people who just occupy a seat, making no productive contribution to its ongoing ministry. Even more frustrating is that many of those same people are clearly aware of the biblical principle of 'the every member ministry' that calls each of us to be actively involved in the 'works of service' that are essential to ongoing life and growth (Ephesians 4:11-16). The obvious question for those of us who are leaders is how we can motivate them to action.

For that matter, what is it that motivates those of us in leadership to be committed to being true Christian leaders who make a difference in people's lives? Is it just that we are a particular kind of personality or that we are naturally motivated? I believe it is much more than this.

Whilst I am a realist and know that there will always be those who are struggling with their level of commitment, I also believe we can see God challenge and transform people when they are confronted in a biblical way, so that they respond with a deeper commitment in their walk with God, which in turn will enhance their desire to engage with others. I am not suggesting that there is a fail proof formula that will always work, but the following principles will help us in our desire to influence others.

Our personal involvement will add another dimension to people's motivation to change.

1. We motivate by creating an awareness of need

Fundamental to any lasting change is changed thinking. If we want to move people from point A to point B they must first see the need to do so. When I speak with pastors about their preaching program, the first thing we discuss is the current issues in their congregation—spiritual coldness, a lack of real comprehension of how to live godly lives, a lack of concern for the lost, etc. Whatever the issues, their exposure to the light of biblical truth is the first step in seeing people motivated to deal with them.



As I recently worked through a conflict situation with a group of church leaders, I realised that most of them had little real understanding of the biblical concept of leadership. They were simply applying business practice to their church roles. This led to conflict and confusion about how the church should be governed. The leadership group had become fragmented and was under the control of two of the older men who had been in their roles for years and who insisted that they stick with the status quo. This group expressed their need to rethink their role in light of Bible principles of leadership. We spent two Saturdays working through the relevant New Testament concepts and they began to see that God has called them to exhibit in their lives and dealings with others the reality of Jesus. Their new understanding of biblical principles of leadership has now motivated them to respond with a greater sense of urgency than most of them have ever experienced before. I wait with anticipation to see the effects of their renewed sense of purpose on the congregation at large.

2. We motivate by giving clear direction

When people become aware of their spiritual needs, it is imperative that they discover how they can be met. Many people are wracked with guilt because they are aware of their significant spiritual need but are unclear what to do about it, and may be reticent to talk about it for fear of what other Christians might think of them. It's easy to 'challenge' such people from the pulpit but when we preach to produce guilt the results tend to backfire: we end up just laying heavier loads on those who are already weighed down. Instead of motivating people we create discouragement and a sense that it's all too hard and what's the point of trying. It's one thing to create the awareness of need but quite another to provide answers which give direction.

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This of course challenges our preaching. Our sermons should expound biblical truth in such a way that our audience will become aware of issues in their lives that need to be confronted. The question I ask myself is how often my sermons contain clear instructions that show people how to deal with their issues. The Holy Spirit has one primary concern for us when he points out our sin and that is to enable us to deal with it in repentance and faith. Our role as pastors and teachers is to help people understand what that looks like in practice in their lives, but we also need to follow through and add the relational element by encouraging them. Our personal involvement will add another dimension to people's motivation to change. Someone in our church recently confided in me about a particular problem they were having. It was important not only to give biblical input, but also to follow through to make sure that they understood it sufficiently to be able to apply it to their situation. Following up with a call, a coffee and a chat after church affirmed and cemented the message.

Howard Hendricks constantly reminded his readers that 'leaders lead'. One of the ways they do this is by declaring all of the above, but they also do it by declaring and affirming values and vision for the church. Values are the base from which we operate and the framework that keeps us in shape spiritually. Vision is the direction we need to move towards, which is shaped and driven by what we really do believe (our values) and is fulfilled as we affirm biblical strategies to see the vision become reality. When properly presented, vision can be very exciting and especially motivating as we understand the possibilities and embrace them.



3. We motivate by modelling

In Acts 20 the Apostle Paul shared with the Ephesian elders about his own journey as a Christian leader. I am sure that as he exposed his heart for God and for those to whom he ministered that they were very challenged. He was seeking to motivate them to follow his example, so concluded with the following instructions in Acts 20:28: 'Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.' Did you notice the first directive? Make sure your own personal life stacks up and then you will be in a position to positively influence others.

I have had recent experience with a 'significant leader' who 'controls the ministry in my church' (his words!). He is self-seeking and self-promoting and constantly strives to portray his own importance and control. The tragedy is that that church allows this kind of behaviour and is seemingly oblivious to the damage being done to many who are hurt and undermined in the process.

Showing how you deal with failure is a significant part of modelling. You don't have to be a perfect model; you just have to be genuine.

When I look back on my own journey in my walk with God, I think of the people who most influenced my spiritual growth, some through their teaching and encouragement but mostly through their gracious and humble modelling of the Christian life. I am sure that most of them imparted good teaching, but I hardly remember any of that (although undoubtedly some of what I now believe and teach came from them!). What I do vividly recall is their life and passion for God. It was what they modelled in their walk with him that challenged, encouraged and motivated me to want to know God better.

I have no doubt that most of you could say the same. When we share our story it is with gratitude that we recall those who influenced us by their genuineness and hunger for the things of God. It was the reality we observed in their lives that added credibility to what they taught and motivated our own hunger to follow on to godliness.

Our commitment to being a model to those we seek to influence has the potential to transform them. Whilst people will retain some of what we teach them, the real and lasting impact is through who we are as people, our character, our desires and passions. The credibility of what we teach will be affirmed by how we live and what we do, especially in our relationships and treatment of others. Share with people your life experiences including your successes and your failures. Indeed, showing how you deal with failure is a significant part of modelling. You don't have to be a perfect model; you just have to be genuine.

When we preach to produce guilt the results tend to backfire.

There is abundant biblical instruction about being good models. We are firstly to follow the example of Jesus (Matt. 11:28,29). Paul frequently exhorted his readers to follow his example (1 Cor. 1:11) and one of the keys to dealing with the error and lack of godliness in the church at Ephesus was for Timothy to model the truth that he taught (1 Tim. 4:12).

People follow models who are passionate. That's why my friend Ian North had such an impact on people. His passion for God and concern for the lost was constantly evident in his conversation and everything he did. It just oozed out of him and people couldn't help but feel motivated to have the same relationship with God. We can only really be passionate about the lost when we tap into the heart of God and see them from his perspective.

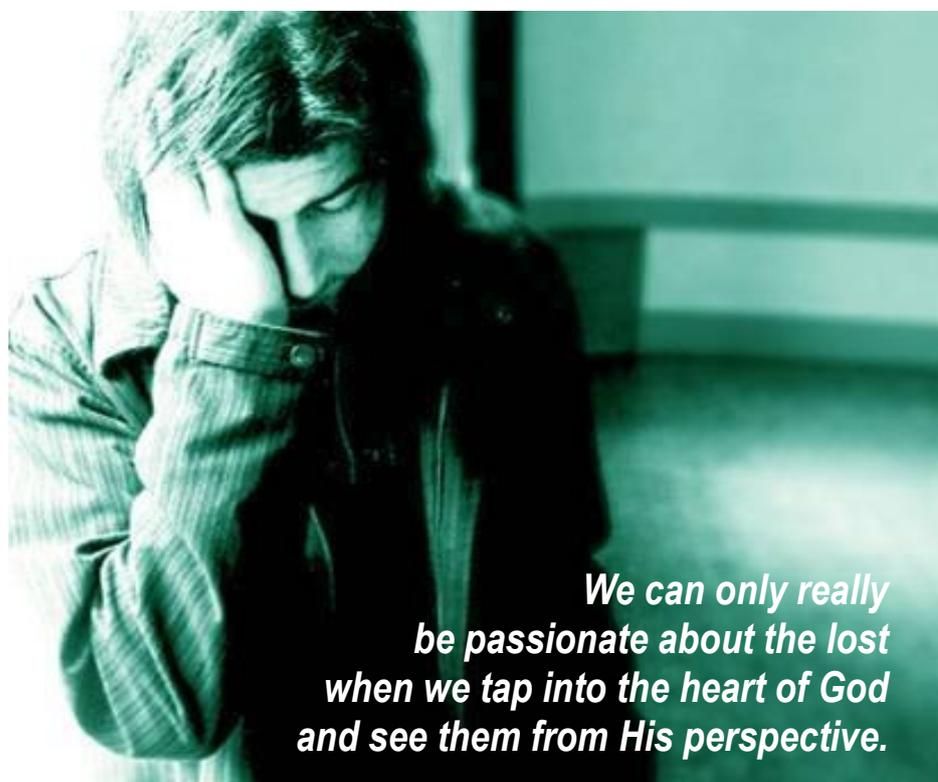
People follow models because they desire to be like them. Research shows that followers of strong leaders don't care about remuneration or what's in it for them. They are prepared to sacrifice to an extraordinary degree, partly because they perceive that their models, or leaders, are prepared to sacrifice themselves. This high level of commitment to Christian goals, including personal sacrifice, is a key component in effective modelling.

4. We motivate by demonstrating a love for people

There is a great hunger in the world for genuine love. Although most people would find it difficult to articulate what they mean by 'being loved' they would readily agree that they want to be loved, understood and accepted. This need is inherent in who we are as humans. The kind of love we are speaking of must be much more than Christian jargon. It needs to be practical and visible.

Make sure your personal life stacks up.

I am on the board of a group that ministers to women with life-controlling issues. Most of those who come for help have been abused for most of their lives. They have absolutely no sense of self-worth and many of them self-harm because they believe they are nothing. The counselling and healing process is centered in the gospel and undergirded with love. The practical love that is demonstrated to these women is a very powerful motivation that draws them to want to be free, and many of them find that freedom through experiencing the love of God demonstrated in forgiveness and reconciliation with him through the crucified and risen Christ.



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It was this kind principle that Paul wrote to Philemon about when he said, 'I appeal to you on the basis of love.' Paul was urging him to forgive and accept as a son his wayward slave Onesimus. I have no doubt that Philemon responded to the plea and that Onesimus became a light for the gospel in Philemon's house. It was the love of Christ within him that compelled Paul to commit to sharing the gospel with a lost world (2 Cor. 5:15).

There are few more powerful motivational forces than love. When we practise the love principle it brings the ring of truth to what we say and do, so that people are impacted and are more likely to respond to our message. I would suggest that one of the greatest challenges to the church today is to motivate and mobilise its existing resources. Imagine if all of the people in your church were living up to their potential. What an incredible impact would be made upon the world!

You can't take it with you, so what do you do with it now?!!!

by Peter Murphy

When I first became a Christian and started telling my family and friends about my new-found faith I received a number of responses - some negative and some positive. My new Christian friends were excited and encouraging and showed a real acceptance of who I was. However, people who had known me for a while found it a little more difficult to accept. They were confused and didn't want me to change, and indeed some were very angry.

However, the response that stunned me the most was from my father who said, 'I'm happy for you. If that's what you want, that's fine. But don't let them get your money!' As a 21 year old in the late 1980s, I didn't know how to respond. Not having been raised in an evangelical church, I was finding a strong disconnection between my finances and my faith. The notable finance scandals involving the American based televangelists who seemed to 'fleece the flock' made it impossible for me to make any coherent reply to my father. To be honest, I was profoundly embarrassed about articulating what my faith had to do with my financial situation. (I should point out that God has a sense of humour, because nearly 20 years later I am the CEO of Christian Super with just over 17 000 members and approximately \$500 million in funds under management!)

Moving from the organisational to the personal

Over the past decade and a half, I have been involved in helping organisations consider how they wrestle with being faithful with the resources God has provided. As each organisation is different, and what works for one might not work for another, this has involved some significant and robust dialogue to reach consensus about the way forward. Some organisations have been very skilful in approaching this task and others have 'developed from a low base'. Nevertheless, there appears to have been a genuine desire to not only be good stewards of the resources that God has entrusted them with but also to put their vision and commitment into action.

**We should have a standard
of living expectation which
reflects who we serve.**

As I commenced working with Christian Super in early 2008, it forced me to consider afresh the implications of looking at finances from a **personal** rather than **organisational** viewpoint. This has been both challenging and liberating, as I have found there are patterns of my own financial behaviour that are not as consistently obedient as I would have liked. This process has helped me refocus my understanding and practice of financial management from a personal perspective. In some areas I have needed to improve and be more vigilant; in others I have been encouraged that my practice has reflected my heart's desire. Regardless, this process has made me more intentional in how I manage my money than I would otherwise have been.

A biblical view of money

As I began to review this area of my life I came across *Your Money Counts* by Howard Dayton which gives a very practical and biblical view of personal money management, noting that there are over 2350 verses in the Bible on money and possessions. Dayton points out that there have been three theological views of money adopted by the church over the past 2000 years, as illustrated by the following table:

	Poverty	Stewardship	Prosperity
<i>Possessions are</i>	evil	a responsibility	a right
<i>I work to</i>	meet basic needs only	serve Christ	become rich
<i>Godly people are</i>	poor	faithful	wealthy
<i>Ungodly people are</i>	wealthy	unfaithful	poor
<i>I give</i>	because I must	because I love God	to get
<i>My spending is</i>	without gratitude to God	done prayerfully and responsibly	carefree and consumptive

We can go back to Genesis and remind ourselves that God has provided us with good resources and clear boundaries on how his children are to use them. There is an imperative for those of us who have entered into a free relationship with Jesus to apply the stewardship principle above, as we recognise that we have been given resources for his kingdom. This is not to be done in fear but rather in recognition that we are walking in relationship with the Creator.



Stewardship—some practical tips

In looking at some practical issues concerning stewardship, the following ones are those that would seem key in moving ahead in a godly manner:

1. **Honesty** about your financial situation
2. Determining an appropriate **standard of living**
3. Seeking wise **counsel** in the decision-making process
4. Managing at a level of **debt** that empowers you to live life without regrets
5. Understanding and implementing a **giving** strategy
6. **Investing** from a Christian perspective.

Honesty

Whilst I would expect Christians to be honest in all their dealings, sadly this is not always the case. A society of 'easy credit' has led us to a place where people's buying behaviour is not matching their

earning capacity. The first step in appropriate stewardship is sitting down and documenting your income, expenses, assets and liabilities. This may be confronting for some, as they may realise they don't have what they think they have, or that they have an abundance and have been wasteful. The development of a budget, no matter how simple or complex, is the practical starting point of becoming a good steward. This simple process allows us to begin gaining control over what, for some, is the uncontrollable. It provides the opportunity to make appropriate spending decisions and strategic plans for the future.

God expects multiplication of resources, not just maintenance.

Standard of Living

I was talking to someone recently who said that when he and his wife did their budget they realised they needed \$320 000 p.a. to maintain their standard of living. I was stunned! I know of people who live life to the full on less than \$10 000 p.a. (not to mention those in the two-thirds world). He wasn't a Christian but it highlighted to me just how easily our standard of living expectations run away to absurd levels. There is always the new toy to buy, the new car, sporting equipment, holidays, furniture and clothes. As Christians, we should have a standard of living expectation which reflects who we serve, and we need to learn to hold in tension contentment with progress.

Counsel

Proverbs 15:22 reminds us that 'Plans lack for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed.' This is especially true when making decisions about our finances. Being in Christian community provides us with a range of people who can assist us in gaining knowledge and wisdom in areas in which we might not have skills or natural inclination. This is especially true in wise financial management.

Debt

Debt is clearly an issue for most Australian Christians. Mortgages, car loans, personal loan and credit cards are part of the reason why Australians are presently at record levels of debt. This high debt, can cause Christians to get the point where they become 'servants to the lender'. Christians should be gaining an understanding of what constitutes a level of sustainable debt that is honoring to God and does not inhibit their opportunity for Kingdom service.

Giving

Many of us need to remember that giving is not an optional extra for Christians. Our attitude should not be one of obligation but of response to the grace that has been given to us. We need to remember that our gifts (whether money, time or talents) are from God and need to be approached with the right attitude. Just as with any functional relationship, our pattern of giving needs to be personal, intentional and consistent. We need an intentional giving strategy that is capable of being turned into action. Once these foundations for giving are laid down, the more complex questions of to whom we give and how much can more easily be answered.

Giving is not an optional extra for Christians.

Investing

Investing, whether through shares, property, fixed interest or superannuation, presupposes there are savings to invest. There are some Christians who would suggest that those who invest don't have 'sufficient faith'. However, I believe that a correct eschatological view (i.e. longing for Christ to come, but building for the future) would see investing as a legitimate activity for Christians. In thinking about investing, it is crucial that our attitude reflects the parable of the stewards in Luke 19:11-27, for it gives us the following sound principles to work with:

- God only gives us what he wishes us to handle
- He gives to each according to his ability
- As we prove trustworthy, he entrusts us with much more
- There are consequences of being untrustworthy
- God expects multiplication of resources, not just maintenance.

It's all about balance

As Christians we need to decide how connected to the world we are going to become. We are clearly called to be 'in the world' but not 'of the world' and this is where money and possessions need to reflect that we live under the royal rule of grace. With a correct understanding of our relationship with God we can hold in tension the freedom to live beyond the present and to use our resources in a manner that reflects our standing as His children. We have the opportunity to impact our world through the intentional use of our possessions for the Kingdom of God, but we need to start with action.

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