
GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Promoting Personal Ministry

Becoming a fit church is directly proportional to the degree the people of God are active in ministry. This principle has significant implications for a local church. Among other things, it means the heartbeat for a local church is the training of its people. Fit churches do the following activities.

First, fit churches train people to know their spiritual gifts. The identity of people as gifted and called to serve is an important impetus for involvement in ministry. Classes and small group leaders systematically teach that God calls his people to service. As each person grows to understand his or her identify in Christ and his body, they catch the vision of personal ministry. Each one identifies his or her remarkable spiritual gifts, unique talents, and special skills.

Second, fit churches equip people to use their gifts, abilities, and skills in ministry. As the consciousness for personal ministry develops, training is offered to develop needed skills. The church begins by determining the needed skills in the community and the church. Training does not necessarily mean a church must have a full-blown

curriculum or training classes. The easiest way to begin is simply to ask those currently involved in church ministry to find an apprentice. As each person recruits and begins meeting with an apprentice, training begins naturally. The total number involved in personal ministry doubles. A church may certainly decide to provide a more formal training environment, but it is not necessary to do so to get started. The training does not need to be elaborate; it only needs to be functional.

Third, fit churches place people into ministry . . . quickly. Gary remembers how God started using him in his high school years. After becoming a Christian at age 14, Gary attended the youth group of his church for the first time. The next week, the leader of the youth group asked Gary to lead the music. The very next week! Now, Gary had been involved in music since third grade, but he literally knew none of the songs the youth group sang. The youth

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director took a chance on Gary, but by getting him involved soon, he communicated the importance of service . . . and Gary has been involved in ministry ever since!

Fourth, fit churches provide coaching for people in ministry. Formal coaching is somewhat of a recent development in churches, but people placed in ministry positions must always have someone to whom they can ask questions. One major advantage of an apprentice model is that it has a built in coaching connection. In other situations, a coach can be assigned to a person in ministry. Whatever a church decides to do, it is important that no new servant be left alone.

Fifth, fit churches evaluate people in ministry. A coach should make contact with a person newly placed into ministry every week for one to two months. After two months of fruitful experience, a coach may reduce contact to around once a month. A coaching time should focus on questions like “How are things going?” “What problems are you encountering?” “What further training would be beneficial?” “Are you experiencing a positive level of success?” Whatever the coach discovers should be acted upon. If the person is not happy, or not experiencing some level of success, an attempt should be made to place them

in another ministry.

Sixth, fit churches build new ministry around their people’s gifts and passions. New people bring new gifts, skills, and interests to a church. In growing churches, the increase in the number of people reveals the need for fresh ministries and approaches. The larger a church grows, the more it must be starting new ministries that serve the new people.

Seventh, fit churches express thanks to those in ministry. Churches that successfully enroll people in ministry over a long period of time have several ways of saying thanks to them. One church hosts a catered *Dinner of Appreciation* in May of every year. A pastor in a smaller church hand writes one thank you note a week to someone serving in ministry. Some churches hold an awards dinner each year and distribute fun awards, such as, the Golden Banana award (for the most creative new ministry), the High Dive award (for the most daring action taken by someone in ministry), and the Crazy Clown award (for the person in ministry that make everyone laugh).

How well is your church involving and supporting people in personal ministry? What can you do better this year?

Adapted from the book [Building the Body: 12 Characteristics of a Fit Church](#).

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Building the Body *12 Characteristics* *of a Fit Church*

Just as physically, healthy people might not actually be fit enough to run a 5K, so churches can appear healthy—with no obvious issues, maintaining a healthy size—but not exhibit fitness.

A fit church is one that is not satisfied with merely coasting along with no problems. A fit church is actively making disciples, maturing in faith, developing strong leaders, reaching out to the community, and more.

Building the Body unveils the twelve characteristics of fit churches and shows pastors and church leaders how to move their church through five levels of fitness, from beginner all the way to elite.

Here's what others are saying

“Building the Body powerfully draws on the biblical imagery of the church while taking the concept of church health to a whole new level. Becoming fit is presented in a way that motivates rather than produces guilt, and the combination of principles and practices applies to churches at all levels of development.” — Wayne Schmidt, general superintendent, the Wesleyan Church

“Practical steps to the next level—that’s what this book offers. Wherever your church lies along a continuum of twelve factors (e.g., outreach, stewardship, worship, disciple making), McIntosh and Stevenson give concrete strategies for advancing to the next level . . . and then the next level . . . and then the next level.”

—Donald R. Sunukjian, chair, department of Christian ministry and leadership, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

“A practical, informative, doable resource for leaders and churches who want not only to get better but also to get as strong or fit as possible for the good of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.”

—Jim Dunn, vice president of church relations, Wesleyan Investment Foundation

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“All fit churches are healthy, but not all healthy churches are fit.”

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