



Nelson's Blog

CHURCH LEADERSHIP UNCATEGORIZED

8 Vital Systems of A Healthy Church Body

May 5, 2015



It's not surprising to me that the Bible compares the church to the human body. Paul says in Romans 12:4-5 the following:

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

The human body itself is composed of different systems that are designed to help keep it going. Such as:

- The Skeletal System
- The Muscular System
- The Cardiovascular System
- The Digestive System
- The Endocrine System
- The Nervous System
- The Respiratory System
- The Immune / Lymphatic Systems

While each of these systems could be studied independently of the others, it is true that each is crucial for the health of the entire body. If one system suffers, it effects the whole!

Edward Deming, a famous businessman and entrepreneur in the 20th century, was asked to help turn around the struggling car company Toyota after World War II. He studied many of their systems and was quoted as having said:

“Your system is designed to give you exactly what it is giving you.”

This brutally honest analysis of this company was part of what helped turn Toyota around into the great automobile manufacturer we know today. However, think about what is going on (or not going on) in your local church. These same words can apply to you today. Your church systems, in whatever state they may be, are designed to give you exactly the headache or success that they are currently giving you.

Today I'm sharing eight systems present in every church. While some may be more developed than others, none of these systems can stand alone. If you'd like more information on these ideas, you can pick up the e-book that I got most of this information from: *Healthy Systems, Healthy Church* by Nelson Searcy.

ABOUT ME



My name is Nelson Fernandez Jr. I am married to the love of my life, Sarah. Together we have a beautiful son named Isaac. I serve as Pastor for Administration and Evangelism at the Miami Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Florida Conference.

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TAGS

1. The weekend service system: How we plan, execute, and evaluate the weekend services at our church

Also known as the Worship System. This is the way churches plan, evaluate, and execute everything from your music, preaching, transitions, offering, etc. If you are slack in your planning, the lack will be obvious.

Whether you acknowledge it or not, you already have a system for preparation in place. The system may not be giving you the results you want, but it's there.

Searcy suggests the following in this area (the block quotes can be found in his e-book referenced above):

To start building up your Weekend Service System, make a list of everything that goes into getting ready for the weekend. How have you been evaluating each service to make sure the next one is better? When was the last time you watched a game tape (i.e. a recording of a recent worship service)? How often do you work on your communication with your worship leader? Always be asking yourself and those you trust:

- What was missing?
- What was confusing?
- How can we be doing things better?

If you don't pay close attention to the details of your worship service, they will atrophy.

Jot down some ideas for how you can make your service better. Decide to give attention to the areas you've been neglecting. The worst thing you can do is let Sabbath worship run on auto-pilot. God is always up to something new.

2. The evangelism system: How we attract people to our church

Some people refer to the Evangelism System as the Outreach System or the Marketing System. No matter what name you give it, this is the system that inspires you to ask, "How do we attract people to our church?" All churches grow through the incarnational and the attractional. Ultimately, God is the one doing the attracting and the drawing, but have you ever wondered why some churches seem to get all of the new growth while others sit stagnant? How does God decide which church to draw people to?

The principle of spiritual readiness teaches that God will never give us more than we are prepared to handle. We have to do our part to let people know we are in town and ready to receive them. So, how do you get that message out? How do you invite people through your doors for the first time?

As you begin to think about this system, make sure that you are maximizing the seasons of the year when people are most willing to come to church for the first time.

- Have we invested in servant evangelism lately?
- Who was the last person I personally invited to church?
- When was the last time we challenged our people to bring their friends to a big day?

Note: Here we see the interconnected nature of systems. If the first system (worship) produces a lifeless weekend service, you won't be inclined to invite anyone to your church (evangelism). This starts affecting other systems and a cascade effect happens.

You may not know where to begin in meeting the needs of your community, and that's okay. Let me give you a resource that may help change that. The Southern Union has a great resource for all churches. *Season of Service (SOS)* is a book that includes not only small group bible studies, but also 100 creative ideas for how your church can be intentionally evangelistic in your community.

Try it out; it may revolutionize the way you do and think "church." You can find it for free in English and Spanish at <http://www.mycitysos.com/>.

Hard copies of the book are also available for \$2.00 through the Southern Union. Contact their ministerial department for more [information](#) on this.

3. The assimilation system: How we move people from first-time guests to members

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The question here is, how do you help lead people from one-time visitors to regular guests, to members, and finally to active members that are discipling others?

Most churches don't have anything in place in this area. Most times we assume everyone knows what they want, or we wait till they tell us what they need (be it visits, Bible studies, baptism, etc). Is this really the best and most effective way to lead people into a closer walk with Christ and assimilate them into the church community?

It's astonishing to me that we in Adventism consider a member "in good and faithful standing" according to our church manual even when the person is not involved in any tangible way within their church body. We have such a small view of church membership. Tithe is not enough to count ourselves as faithful stewards (more on that later).

Challenge

- When was the last time I looked at our church through a guest's eyes?
- What do people say is their first impression of our church?
- What are the steps that we take to bring people into a path of discipleship in our church?

For more information on this topic, I would highly recommend the book "Simple Church". It's a great resource written by Thom Rainer. You can find it on Amazon.

4. The small group system: How we fill and produce small groups at our church

In his book, *The Big Four*, Joseph Kidder did a study on many of the most successful Adventist churches in our part of the world. What he found was that in *all* cases, a critical component of this was the incorporation of a intentional small group system within their outreach and discipleship plans. Think about it: what was the first thing that God said was **not** good in Genesis 2:18? That man be alone!

Remember, this was *before* sin entered the picture. You and I were created to be a part of a community. We were meant to share our journey with others in meaningful ways. Small groups are a tangible way the church answers an intrinsic need inside of human beings.

So look at your Small Groups System. Would you say that it is healthy?

- How many of our attendants and members are actively involved in a small group?
- Are we competing against our own groups by offering too many other activities?

5. The ministry system: How we mobilize people for significant ministry

The Ministry System, also known as the Volunteer System, determines how you mobilize people for significant ministry at your church. God created people to serve. It's part of how they grow as disciples. If you don't have a system in place that helps them get plugged in, you will be hurting both yourself and your potential, untapped leaders.

- What are we doing to make people want to serve?
- How are we using people's gifts, talents, and passions to best answer the needs of our church?
- Are there any ministries that have lived out their usefulness?
- Do we have "just because" ministries? These are ministries that exist just because they've always been there.

Think about what you want your Ministry System to look like one year from today, and jot that vision down.

6. The stewardship system: How we develop extravagant givers at our church

Most of us, as church leaders, tend to separate the issue of giving from other spiritual disciplines, like praying, reading our Bibles, and gathering for service. This is because we are afraid to hold our attenders accountable in the personal area of money. But, let's face it – money is essential to Kingdom growth. It's also an essential issue in the hearts of our people. We will never develop strong disciples until we learn to develop strong givers. This is where the Stewardship System comes in.

How do you encourage people to give for the first time? How do you know when they do? Once they give that first gift, how do you follow up with them? How do you turn sporadic givers into regular givers and teach them the importance of giving the full tithe?



Growth doesn't happen haphazardly. We will never disciple a church of extravagant givers if we don't have a system in place that allows us to train, educate and nurture them.

- Am I modeling extravagant giving and living?
- When was the last time we taught on the spiritual discipline of giving?
- Have we ever been educated on the principles of Biblical Stewardship?

Stewardship is less about our resources, but more about *what we do* with the resources God has given us.

7. The leadership system: How we develop leaders at all levels of our church

Any healthy church knows and understands that in order to grow, they will have to find, form, and develop new leaders constantly.

What kind of plan do you have in place to make sure you are developing people in the right way? What tools are you using? How do you determine the qualifications of a leader? Your Leadership System will help you with staff management, organizational efficiency, and personal development. To get an idea of how things are going with your Leadership System, consider:

- When was the last time I invested in developing new leaders?
- How am I helping my current leaders grow personally and spiritually?
- Am I modeling the kind of leadership I want to see from my leaders?
- Are any of my levels of leadership in need of more people?

8. The strategic system: How we constantly evaluate and improve our church

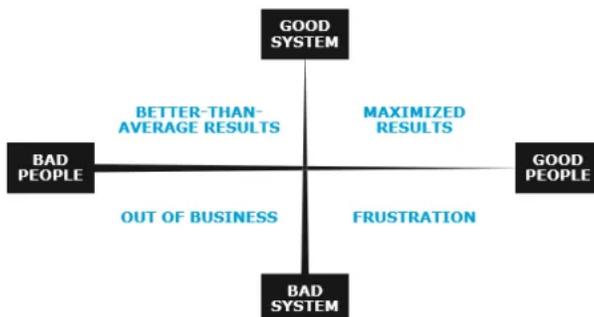
The Strategic System sits above the other seven systems, and serves as the evaluation tool that ties them all together. It gives us the opportunity and means to make sure that we are constantly improving, rather than living by the status quo. Strategy has a bad wrap, but without it, we continue to reinvent the wheel week after week, month after month and year after year. A well-thought-out strategy will help you become more faithful and fruitful in every area of your ministry. To that end, the Strategic System makes sure that you are continually evaluating and improving all of your other systems.

How healthy is your Strategic System? Ask yourself these questions:

- When was the last time I checked in with my eight church systems?
- How prepared am I for what God wants to do in and through my church?
- Do my staff members know and understand our strategy?

Pull out your calendar and block out some time for reviewing your strategic system. Meet with your strategic team and discuss ways to improve your strategy. As you sow some time and effort into your Strategic System, you will reap the reward in your other seven systems. Don't skimp on strategy. It's the thread that ties your church systems together.

The mix of the right or wrong people along with a good or bad systems in your church will produce the following:



In order to know how your body is doing, it is a good idea to periodically go in for a physical. Churches also have the ability to do the same! [Here is one](#) resource that you will definitely not want to overlook.

A Natural Church Development survey has been created to enable individual churches to be measured in each of these eight areas. Questionnaires are filled out by 29 active, involved lay persons and by the pastor. The data from these questionnaires is entered into a computer program with a special connection that enables this data to be compared to the data previously entered from ALL the Christian churches in the U.S. that have ever taken the survey. The results are then computed and can be printed out so the church can easily see their strengths and weaknesses in each of these eight areas.

The survey was designed by Christoph Schalk, a social scientist and psychologist, who drafted the new questionnaire with rigorous standards for objectivity, reliability and validity, and used approved methods from social science for the analysis of the data. This allows the results of the survey to be based on sound scientific research. This research project was one of the most comprehensive studies on the causes of church growth ever undertaken. Churches from a total of 32 countries participated. The survey questionnaire, which was to be completed by 30 members of each church, was translated into 18 languages. This research provides worldwide scientifically verifiable answer to the question, "What church growth principles are true, regardless of culture and theological persuasion?"

The survey questions do not ask members to "appraise" the church, but to describe "actual behavior." Each church's responses are compared to the roughly 4 million previously collected answers and creates a church profile. NADEI processes the surveys and returns the church profile, complete with graphs, showing what the church members' answers determined was the minimum factor. This then gives the church a starting point for building the quality of their church. A trained coach then works with the church as they set goals and intentionally seek to improve their minimum factor.

NCD Survey Kit

The survey kit includes:

- 1 pastor's questionnaire
- 30 lay questionnaires and instructions on how to select survey participants
- Instructions for the most efficient way to get the questionnaires filled out
- 1 copy of [The ABC's of Natural Church Development](#)
- 1 copy of [Creating Healthy Adventist Churches through Natural Church Development](#)

The kit costs \$250.00 and can be ordered by calling the NADEI Resource Center at (269) 471-8303. Many conferences, including here in the Carolinas, have incentives that subsidize or even fully reimburse the expense of this survey if certain steps are taken. Contact your conference for more information.

***Please note, NADEI is only able to assist Seventh-day Adventist churches in the United States with the NCD Survey. If your church is another denomination and located in the United States please contact the U.S. Partner, [ChurchSmart Resources](#). If your church is in another country, please work with the NCD Partner for your country. NCD Partners can be located via the [NCD International website](#). Once your church has completed the survey, if you need assistance from an Adventist perspective we will do our best to assist you.*

Have any thoughts? Leave them below!

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