

Motivation . . .

Bill Black

Breakfast with a visiting work team. An hour in the office-phone calls. Back to the work team at our staff dorm for problem solving and to keep them rolling. A 10-mile trip through the mountains to the hardware store. Closure with the group. Back to the office. Summer preparation. Phone calls. Play with the dogs for 30 minutes. Make sure flowers for chapel during Dollywood's grand opening are picked up. Special events ministry at Pigeon Forge Dollywood Parade. It's now only 5:30 p.m. One hour trip to meet a week-early and unexpected truck delivery of mattresses for dorm. Dinner with friend from ski school. Twenty minutes of powerful conversation and sharing with a friend about God's presence and absence in his life. Late evening phone calls about summer staff. Crash!

An average day for any of us. Too full. Too fine. Too much. Too right. A blend of planned activity and interruptions. All of it ministry. All of it missions. All of it just part of what resort and leisure ministry is all about.

In a good week, the busy days are balanced by days off (quiet or active). In a good week, there is quality spiritual time and spare time. In a bad week, there is never a moment's rest; there is no time to catch your breath. And always my feet hurt!

Motivation

We are all involved in similar activities and actions that demand much of us. Surely for us to work as hard as we do there must be powerful motivators driving us.

These forces and ideal work within us to empower and stimulate us in performance of our ministries. Further, they grant to us a power for life and a passion for ministry. In an exterior sense, motivators provide us with incentive to act. In an interior sense, motivators serve as an inner drive or impulse to feel. We are enabled through exterior action and interior incentive. Coupling these forces together, we are moved.

The root of motivation is found in the idea of moving, of motion. Thus, we are moved to our work by these forces. Our activities and actions are movements in our part to enable others to move closer to Jesus Christ. As followers on the way (as early Christians were called), we move in conjunction with Christ's leadership and direction. As followers, we call others to go with us. The Christian life and ministry is one of movement and we cannot be effective in our work unless we are moving within the work of the Holy Spirit.

The reasons we do what we do are as varied as our personalities, our settings, and our assignments. They are expressions of our response to God's love for us and His creation. Why we do what we do is important, for in understanding and expressing these motivators, we reveal our heart and strengthen our effort.

Call

We are called by God. The history of this ministry is marked with strong individuals who were not afraid to follow God's call to us in our own fashion. We have become closely identified with that call and that work. We find who we are in that call. We are resort and leisure ministers with clear identities because of God's summons for us and our lives.

To answer God's call requires that we take risks that are personal, professional, economical, and familial. God grants us boldness that enables us to take these risks.

As we find identity in this call, we are led to our gifts. Here God blends the desires of our hearts with our talents and with the needs of the resort and leisure world around us. We are better equipped than we think and we are thus ready to meet the demands of our ministries.

Meaning

Similar to, but separate from, this understanding of vocation is the concept of meaning. Our work validates us and affirms our selfhood. We find *identity* in call. We find *joy* in meaning.

This elusive corollary between call and meaning is difficult to describe, but is easily recognized in the story of the Association of Resort and Leisure Ministers (ARLM). In the formation and action of ARLM, there is a bond of community. With great joy, we have discovered that there are other people like us who do the same things we do. There is a sense that family matters; that what we do is important; that how we do it is also important; and that who we are is to be encouraged and celebrated. As we have become friends, we have affirmed each other and given meaning to our individuality and community.

Love for Leisure-Lifestyle People

A third motivating factor is our love for leisure-lifestyle people. These people are special to us, for their unique character requires and enables a unique response on our part. Population numbers in resort and leisure settings are generally overwhelming, yet each resort and leisure ministry seems to find a way to handle both the masses and the individuals these numbers represent. In mass, these people bring energy to our settings. In mass, they wander as sheep without a shepherd blocking our roads, ski runs, beaches, and trails. As individuals, they respond to our efforts with amazement and appreciation for our care. As individuals, they demand of us that we keep up with their world and their varied stories. It is only our love for these people that enables us to respond to them as millions and as singles. "For the first time in my life I saw tourists as real people." A young, year-round resident in a major resort said this after participating in a special-events ministry clown performance. It took putting on clown face for him to actually see the people that surrounded his life. It stands as a powerful change statement in his life and holds the key for us as we relate to the leisure lifestyle people around us.

Becoming real before these parishioners and enabling them to become real before God, their own self, and their families and friends is the single most important expression of our love for them.

Love of Play

Even as we minister to people at play, we desire that play for ourselves. In the best of times we use our settings to the best of their and our ability. We are an active people who seek to fit with the actions of our areas. Natural beauty, exercise, sports, fine dining, shows and entertainment, relaxation therapy, special events, arts and crafts, shopping-these are the things around us and we are encouraged in our work by them.

Further, there is within our general personality profile a strong attraction to the positive energy of play. This has revealed itself as ARLM has come into being and grown through our fellowship. Whether it's high-energy activity (for example, the 1994 ARLM National Wallyball Championships) or more reserved (like the fellowship meals at Hilton Head that gave birth to ARLM), we like to be with people of our style, a style with a hunger for leisure and its accompanying energy.

For the sake of clarity it is helpful to divide our play into two categories that overlap: professional play and personal play. Professional play is activity we do within the call of our ministry. Resort and leisure missions requires that we identify with and participate in the activities of our settings. We become skilled in the leisure activities of our resorts so that we can use those activities as tools of ministry.

Personal play is activity we do solely and simply for our own betterment and enjoyment. These leisure activities may be the same as those done for professional ministry, but they must generally be done in private or in a different setting from our home parish for us to have full enjoyment of them.

The good news for us is that we are blessed with the honor of doing church while doing something we enjoy.

Creative Drive

We are a peculiar people with a passion for creative expression of the gospel. In resort and leisure ministries there is room for that creativity to work. There is freedom in this form of church that allows our love for Christ to be announced with passion and unlimited expression. This freedom enables us to apply all of our creativity to our work.

This creative drive reveals itself in two clear and powerful ways. First, we hunger for the new. Resort and leisure settings have a life of their own as energy is imported by the seasons and through visitors. Further, they must constantly change and improve to reach their target groups. The new people and activities brought by changing seasons lead us into new ministries during the year. Because of our creative drive, change renews us.

Second, this creative drive motivates us to never settle for less than the best. We hunger to excel, for we want the best, namely Jesus Christ, for our people. This means that we push ourselves, our staffs, and our programs to their professional best. The danger here is that we sometimes want it too much. We must remember that people are more important than programs. Further, we must remember to pace ourselves to stay healthy.

Have to

As much as our God-called vocation means that we cannot help but do what we do, many of our actions and much of our activities come under the heading of “have to.” They are simply requirements of our job. They are not an option if we are to be successful in our work or faithful to our call. We have to do certain things, some of which we like and some of which we do not.

Basic Ministry 101 teaches us certain requirements inherent in our field: reports, committee meetings, public speaking, pastoral care, biblical studies, and so on. Listing the inherent requirements of ministry quickly reveals your own understanding of whether they are a response to our creative drive or are considered “have to” work. You know whether they are fun.

Label these required actions you dislike and examine yourself to better manage them. The bottom line is that they come with the territory. They deserve to be done well. They will not go away, so we must make the best of them.

Results

Some of the time we do what we do because we seek results. We envision the end of an action, a meeting, or a season and we can see the results of it. To be end-driven means that we must have a clear vision of where we are, where we want to go, and how we want to get there. The movement from start to finish, whether in a worship service or a multi-faceted, season-long ski ministry, requires that we see, feel, taste, know the desired result.

In a spiritual environment and effort, the Holy Spirit works around, within, and through us to lead and to elicit leadership on our part. As ministers of the gospel, we seek the result of Christ working to change lives, ours and our parishioners. The ultimate result is Christian salvation and growth.

Much professional material exists to motivate and train in result-oriented work. *Teaching the Elephant to Dance: The Manager's Guide to Empowering Change*, by James Belasco, or *Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun*, by Wess Roberts serve as two examples in this area. One of the benefits of ARLM is the exchange of such ideas and materials.

As results continue to motivate us, we must always seek to balance the spiritual movement with secular skills. Blending these together provides us clear direction and a framework for action. The 1995 Smoky Mountain Resort Ministries summer staff vision statement serves as a strong example of this blending:

“Our vision is to seek with humble hearts and focused eyes the genuine needs and hopes for Christ’s love in the people we meet. With the Savior’s compassion we will go beyond the ordinary to fulfill God’s extraordinary plan. We will join with God in offering to real people with real issues the ultimate solution of God’s matchless love and grace. We pray the Holy Spirit will work through us to transform our world.”

This wonderfully inspirational statement emerged from the context of business material. It is a result of spiritual/secular balance.

Success

Similar to but separate from *result action* is *success action*. We do what we do for measurable results, but we also do it for that satisfaction of success. In particular, we seek successful ministry, that is, ministry in which the grace of God is shared and experienced by individuals and communities.

Success is best identified in the language of covenant, for covenant moves us quickly into and beyond the limits of quantifiable results. In the covenants we make individually with God and within our communities of faith, we identify the heart of our hopes and dreams for success. In covenant we prepare for success by entering into relationship with our Heavenly Father who desires for us success in terms of selfhood and ministry action. In this context, God honors our sincere efforts and, ultimately, we cannot fail. Our selfhood and our ministry are successful not because we are faithful and capable, but because God is!

Years ago in a stress management seminar for resort and leisure ministers, Randy Foster identified success as “what happens.” This open definition affirms God’s ability to bring about His will. In covenant relationship with God we seek to do His work and He is in control of what happens. (More good news is that this definition also enables us to shoot at the target and then move the target to wherever our arrow flies!)

Ministry is meeting the needs and aspirations of others for Christ’s sake. As needs are addressed, life is repaired. As hopes are fulfilled, life is enabled. As these are done in Christ’s name, success becomes a sweet expression of life.

Growing the Church in resort and leisure ministry is celebrating the revelation of God’s presence in our resort and leisure world. As individuals and communities become aware of God’s active presence and love, transformation takes place.

We can go on because we know success!

Fun

We do what we do because it is fun.

Our discussion of meaning incorporated such words as affirmation and validation. These are good church words easily applied and understood. “Fun” would use such words as excitement, energy, and passion leading to fun-not our traditional Church words (although they should be).

The excitement of resort and leisure ministry is seeing and experiencing the change in lives that Jesus Christ can bring. The energy of our settings, people, and activities is teamed with the energy of our own spirit to provide us with wonderful strength to handle the demands of our assignments and the pace of our lives. Our passion for life is channeled through the compassion of Jesus Christ to accurately focus our abilities, efforts, and activities.

Simply put, we do this because it is fun. As we’uns in the mountains of Tennessee would say to you’uns: “If it ain’t resort and leisure ministry, it ain’t fun!”

Let it go and enjoy it! Yahoola!

An article by Bill Black in the February ‘96 issue of the *ARLM Journal* (v2, n1). Used by permission.