

Q&A – Church Size

"How does a person get on staff at Substance?"

People ask me this question a lot. And I love it because "If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task" (1 Tim 3:1). And, if you desire to be in full-time ministry, then, an "overseer" is essentially what you are desiring to be. So, a great place to start is by studying the attributes of elders, deacons, and overseers and exemplifying those attributes through volunteerism and fruitfulness. But, people generally tell me: "*Sounds great Pastor...But, beyond this... what do I need to do to get on staff here?*"

First of all, if you want to do ministry, keep your secular job because: First off, you'll interact with twice as many non-Christians. Secondly, according to the Bible, pastors don't "do ministry"; rather, according to Eph. 4:11, they "equip the saints for the work of the ministry." So, I always tell my staff: "If you do any ministry, I'll fire you." I don't pay our staff to *do ministry* for other people. I pay them to equip *other people* to do ministry."

Secondly, people send me resumes all the time. And it's not that I'm against resumes; but, resumes very rarely offer any insight to a person's emotional intelligence and true leadership potential. In fact, almost none of the great churches I know of hire from "the outside" unless it's for a highly technical job... and *especially* based on degrees or resumes. Resumes are still common assets when you're wanting to pastor in older denominational churches. But, I'd be highly suspicious of any pastor or church that needs to look "outside" their flock to find people. After all, any church that's healthy and has good empowering leadership should already have a line-up of inside people waiting for the next job opening.

You see, the best organizations usually have a farm-team of home grown leaders who are already working their butts off in the organization. This is why, every time we hire someone at Substance, I realize that I am secretly disappointing about two dozen other people.

Of course, there are some rare occasions where a leader needs to go "outside" the organization to find a suitable person; but, the moment any of our leaders get into a habit of thinking like this, it's a sign that we are looking for short-cuts to true leadership development.

For example, I already know what positions I'm going to need to hire within the next couple years. And I'm already looking for (and developing) suitable candidates from within our church. When people come to me with resumes, I always tell them: Jump in the fray. And if your fruitfulness sets you apart, you'll be on staff in no time. In fact, the Bible promises that "a man's gifts will make room for him and usher him into the presence of the great" (Prov. 18:16).

As Jim Collins found in his landmark research project "Good to Great:" very rarely do "great" organizations hire people "from the outside." And the same is true with churches. There are an infinite number of dying churches with deadbeat pastors waiting to capture fresh meat... I mean, fresh leaders who they can mooch off of for a season. However, if you want to pastor at a church that has any real

exciting future to it, here is some sound wisdom: *Find a dynamic church that you'd love to be a part of. Sink yourself into a non-paid leadership role and bear as much fruit as possible.* More often than not, it's better to do this than it is to get a full-time gig at a mediocre church.

So, if money is your main concern, you'll have a thousand opportunities to sell out your call. Because there's always a "tuition" if you want to be in a great church & it almost always comes in the form of non-paid internships and volunteerism.

So here's a couple secrets to getting on staff:

(1). We generally do not hire "positions" – we hire leaders: I don't want to hire an **administrator** who can do everything; rather, I want a **leader** who can get **200 people** to do everything. (Do you see the difference?) For this reason, we generally only want to hire people that have proven leadership amidst our congregation. They have influence. People admire them and follow their vision. And, their emotional intelligence must be obvious both to the church and the staff. If a person can't easily lead a weekly small group of at least 80 people, then they need to seriously question if God is calling them to *full time pastoral leadership*.

(2). We want to have chemistry with every staff member (& their spouses). Very rarely will our top leaders recruit anyone to their teams that they wouldn't want to hang out with on their days off. We see our leadership teams more like marriages than corporate "hired guns." We don't want to have a bunch of independent professionals working under one roof (& you can always tell when you're in that type of church); rather, we want there to be an irresistible chemistry oozing out of every leadership team. We may not do everything excellently; but, we guarantee that we'll have more fun than any other church on the earth. Jesus didn't say: "By your professionalism, all men will know you are my disciples." Church is a family filled with loving chemistry. And when churches have love emanating from the staff, people see it and line up to be adopted. We haven't averaged 80 members a month because we have the best facilities (or best of anything); rather, it's been the raw leadership skills of a team that adores one-another.

"But Pastor Peter, what about education requirements or previous ministry experience?" Sure, these things help. But I know a lot of highly educated people who are horrible leaders. Which brings me to my last point: Make sure you're called to ministry in the first place. But how do I really know that?

Have you ever watched someone on American Idol who couldn't sing worth anything. Some of the people are convinced that they are the best singers on the earth; yet, somewhere along the way, they became self-deceived and horribly misguided. The truth be told, every second they continue in their delusion, they're missing out on their true destiny. What a shame!

So, here's a better way to approach this: At Substance, we believe that every calling has an "internal call" as well as an "external call." Your internal calling is what *you* feel *you* are called to do. (E.g., I'm called to be a pro-football player. I'm called to be a full-time ballerina). But an *External Call* is what *other people* say that you are called to do. (E.g., Another professional in that field telling you: "*you need to*

play football... you have a gift!"). So, I always tell people that, if your internal and external call don't match up, you probably haven't truly unearthed your true calling yet. And an external call can only come from a person who's a truly successful person in that field. (E.g., Just because your momma says you're beautiful doesn't make you a super-model). So, for example, if you're a clumsy 450 lb ballerina, chances are, you're not called to be a world-class ballerina.

But, people tell me all the time, "*But God called me to do this*"... and it happens to be something they are horrible at. (E.g., a missionary who can never raise funds; or, a singer who can never get a record label). Many times, these people have mistakenly put their self-esteem into being something they're not. So, unfortunately, they spend the rest of their lives financially struggling... wondering why the world won't give them a shot.

But you see, if you're doing what God has called you to do, God will generally provide. Ultimately, if you have the skills, eventually, they'll pay the bills. Or as the Bible puts it: "*A gift will make room for the giver and usher him into the presence of the great*" (Pr.18:16). If you're having a problem getting an "External call" from people, then, it's probably a sign that you're not called, or, you're not being faithful to truly serve the people who have the power to help you. This takes a lot of humility; but, those who are willing to sincerely listen to truly successful professionals in the area you're seeking, will end up putting themselves on the fast track towards your destiny.

So, if you're one of those people who feels like the world is always "passing you by," then consider the following questions:

- (1). Maybe you're not called to do what you think you're called to do?
- (2). Maybe you're called, but not to do it "full-time"? Not all of your hobbies are meant to be your full-time occupations.
- (3). Maybe you're called, but you're not faithful to develop the gift: E.g., Don't expect to be a world class worship leader if you aren't taking guitar/piano lessons and volunteering on a good worship team.
- (4). Maybe you're called, but you're not locating yourself in a place where the right people can appreciate your gift? (E.g., Don't expect to get a job as an amazing clothing designer in the middle of central Wisconsin).
- (5). Maybe you're called, but the timing is wrong for you: Some of you are extremely talented yet opportunities aren't happening for you. Quite often this is because God is trying to work other things into your life, like character, godliness, self-discipline, and well-rounded leadership. Rather than whining (which is the surest way to prolong your promotion), God is calling you to simply be faithful in little things. Do you have sin in your life? Deal with it. In the meantime, wait patiently.

But one thing I know for sure: "If anyone lacks wisdom he should ask God who gives wisdom to all without finding fault" (James 1:5). So, wherever you're at in your journey, put God first, and God will open doors that you never dreamed could be opened.