

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



# *5 Hidden Habits* **OF HEALTHY CHURCHES**

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I've had the privilege of working with some of the most remarkable churches across the country over the last ten years. Perhaps one of the greatest honors is that I have witnessed the incredible leadership in these organizations personally. Working so closely with churches, I've noticed several hidden habits that many of the largest and most healthy churches in the country maintain. These are habits that, while they have a profound impact on their ministry, remain largely unseen by the masses. Here are five of the most prominent and recurring healthy habits that I have encountered:

- **Leaders Park Far Away** // Arriving a few hours before a church service begins can tell you a lot about the leaders of a church. If they are all parked right up against the building it indicates that they don't instinctively think about their first-time guests or people outside the church. Leaders who park their cars at the farthest away spot and stroll over make a symbolic statement; a guest's needs come before a leader's. These leaders are actively living out the fact that the first will be last in their churches. This attitude ultimately weaves its way through the organization as people see humility and servanthood lived out in a million small ways!

- **Limited Green Room Time** // Most church leaders have room or area within their church dedicated to providing them respite from people. While setting aside some time to gather your thoughts is an important part of serving at any church, it is important to limit the amount of time leaders are away from "the people". Recently, I took a friend to visit one of the largest churches in the country and we arrived about an hour after an evening service had wrapped up. As we stepped into the main auditorium, it was humbling to see their lead pastor still talking with people at the front of the church. There was a leader of a church of tens of thousands of people who knew that slowing down and serving people one-on-one is vitally important part of leadership. Get out of the green room and talk to the members of your congregation more this coming Sunday than you did last weekend!



- **Lots of Thank You Notes** // I'm still convinced that the thank you note is one of the most powerful tools a senior leader has at his/her disposal. Slowing down to handwrite a quick note to someone conveys so much in a world of depersonalized digital communication. It doesn't take long and the notes you write are often held onto for months, or even years, later. Many leaders in thriving churches have a thank you note writing regime where they regularly identify people within their community to reach out to through this medium. All you will need is a stack of simple cards and a pen; just half a dozen notes a week and you'll start to see all kinds of benefits within your community.

- **First In. Last Out.** // Running a church is challenging work. It takes a tremendous amount of effort to "do" ministry. One of the things I've noticed in thriving churches is that their leaders are often the first to arrive when the church is doing something and the last to leave at the end of the event. These people want to be part of what's happening and ensure that their presence is felt and known on "game day" when the church is at its best. This selfless act demonstrates to your people that you are as deeply committed to the mission as they are. Churches are fueled by a group of amazing volunteers who are giving up their personal time to make the mission happen. Then how much more committed to the mission should the "paid staff" be that are leading the mission? Sure, you have lots of places you could be but your team is choosing to serve with your ministry so why not show them some love and care through your presence with them while they serve?

- **Do for one what you wish you could do for all.** // As a church grows, a natural pressure creeps in. The scale of the ministry starts to push to the point where the leader can no longer provide the individual care and support that they used to when the church was smaller. The natural pull is towards not doing individual care for people because of the mass of people

attending the community. But healthy and thriving churches are led by people who figure out a way to serve individuals in their church in a way that they wish could serve everyone at the church. Rather than being paralyzed by the dual pressures of the scale of people attending the church and your desire to serve them all individually, healthy church leaders look for places to slow down and care for people at a personal level. They understand that although there are a lot of people attending church, people have individual reasons for journeying with a church. Taking time to slow down to send flowers, make a phone call, help with meals or attend a funeral are never a bad idea to ensure you, as a leader, remain connected to the people.

I'd love to hear from you. What are some "hidden habits" that you see being lived out by church leaders you admire!? Let's share those stories.

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