
GROWTH POINTS

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

The Invisible Obvious

Have you heard the story of how a little boy saved the fire department a lot of work? It seems that a fire truck became stuck under a low bridge as it was responding to a fire in the foothills. In fact it was wedged so tightly under the bridge that it couldn't be moved at all. For several hours, the experts at the fire department, as well as the tow truck driver who arrived to help, studied the situation, but nothing they tried worked. Standing a short distance away was a little boy who had arrived on his bike to see what was taking place. After observing the situation for a few minutes, he shouted to the workers, "Why don't you let some air out of the tires?" Upon hearing the boy's suggestion, the workers tried it and were able to move the truck out from under the bridge, proving that sometimes we cannot see the answer to our problem simply because it is too obvious.

Richard Farson, a psychologist and founder of several research institutes, writes, "Nothing is as invisible as the obvious." He suggests, "The most important discoveries, the greatest art, and the best management decisions come from taking a fresh look at what people take for granted or cannot see precisely because it is too obvious."

Numerous examples are found of new inventions coming from someone seeing the obvious. Consider the following:

For years people observed the water vapor coming out of a teakettle, but it took James Watt to see its obvious relationship to power, which led to the invention of the steam engine.

For years scientists observed that penicillium mold stopped the growth of bacteria, but it took Alexander Fleming to see its obvious potential use as an antibiotic.

For years teams of craftsman built cars one-by-one, but it took Henry Ford to see the obvious possibility of building cars more efficiently along an assembly line.

For years people carried their luggage through airports, but it took an airline pilot, Robert Plath, to see the obvious and add wheels so the luggage could be pulled upright.

30th Anniversary
of
Growth Points

I've observed that church leaders often miss the obvious, too. Consider the following:

For years a church maxed out attendance at its worship service, but it took an outside consultant to point out the obvious answer of holding two worship services.

For years a church hovered around 175 in attendance with one pastor, never able to break the 200 barrier, but it took a new elder to see the obvious answer of adding a second pastor.

For years a young man struggled unsuccessfully in youth ministry, but it took a godly mentor to see that he obviously worked better with adults than youth.

For years a pastor strived to manage a staff of thirteen, but it took a business person to see that he obviously had too many direct reports and needed to realign the staff structure.

For years a church augmented its ministry by using its facilities and property multiple times, but it took a new leader to note that they obviously needed to relocate to a new property.

For years an associate pastor strived to be a lead pastor, but it took a wise friend to help him accept his gifts that made him an obvious second pastor.

Seeing the Obvious

It is always difficult to see the obvious. This fact is highlighted in common statements, such as, "We are often too close to the forest to see the trees."

There are numerous obstacles blocking one's ability to see the obvious, for example, tunnel vision, tradition, cultural values, personal perceptions, individual bias, and ideological views. Helping others see the obvious is one of the most valuable services one can offer to any organization. Here are three ideas to help you see the obvious in your church.

Invite new people to share their insights. People who have been attending your church for less than one or two years often see things that long-term attendees miss.

Invite outsiders to share their insights. One time I attended a conference on evangelism. During one session, the organizers of the conference had someone ask people walking down the street to come in and be interviewed (they were paid \$50 for fifteen minutes). The insights gained from the interviews helped those at the conference see the obvious barriers to evangelism.

Invite someone to be a secret visitor on a Sunday and then share their insights with your leaders. Guests often see things that obviously need to be improved.

Growth Points is published twelve times a year. Subscription price is \$20 (US Funds) per year. Permission is granted for use in a local church. For other reprint usage, advance permission must be obtained.

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Church Consulting

Picture your church in the not-too-distant future. Imagine a gradually changing attitude reflecting a new sense of expectancy. Imagine new people with a contagious enthusiasm for Christ and your church. Imagine ministries pulsating with new life. Imagine a new heart for mission in your church.

Is it possible? The answer . . . a resounding YES! It is possible. Indeed, God very much wants to see it happen. Just think about it. God wants your church to grow! And, the McIntosh Church Growth Network stands ready to assist you through personal coaching and/or your church through consulting to see growth take place.

Gary L. McIntosh is considered one of the premier church consultants in the United States today. Here is what others are saying about his church consultations and guidance.

“I cannot tell you how much I appreciated your consultation with our elders. You are a wealth of help and guidance. And you do it with such grace! As I sat there listening to you describe the challenges of growing from 400-800, I noticed the elders faces. They were lighting up with understanding about things that I would have found difficult to say. You did a masterful job.” —**Jerry Reub, Cornerstone Church**

“It was wonderful to return from my time in England and Indonesia and to receive the McIntosh Report. Thank you for its clarity, brevity, wisdom and insight. Everybody so far has received it with enthusiasm, which is no mean feat in the Midwest! May God richly bless you in your ministry of strengthening and supporting the Church.” —**C. John Steer, Autumn Ridge Church**

“I have had the opportunity to meet and speak with Gary individually on several occasions, and he has been a tremendous blessing to my life and ministry. Gary is a very wise, stable, insightful and capable Christian man. The counsel, guidance and direction Gary has offered to me over the past two years have been extremely helpful.” —**John W. Tastad, East Hills Christian Church**

“The impact has been incredible. Through his insight and recommendations I have grown as a pastor in ways I never thought possible. We appreciated not only Gary’s expertise but also the spirit by which he worked with us. He was compassionate, sensitive and personable as he interviewed our people, brought recommendations and continues to lead us through the growing process. Each conversation has been an encouragement to me as a pastor to continue in the work to which God has called me.” —**Robert L. Bletcher, Faith Evangelical Church**

If you could replenish the spiritual dynamic of your church, would you be interested?

If you could enhance the guest welcome of your church, would you be interested?

If you could improve the growth environment of your church, would you be interested?

If you could increase the outreach potential of your church, would you be interested?

If you could align your staff in a more productive way, would you be interested?

Dr. Gary L. McIntosh can help you with these and other aspects of fruitful ministry. For full information email Gary at cgnet@earthlink.net or call 951-506-3086 for details.