



SOUND STRUCTURE

By Greg Wiens

Winning on Purpose: How to Organize Congregations to Succeed in their Mission

By John Edmund Kaiser

Abingdon Press, 184 pp., \$17.00

Runners with poor form work harder to run the same distance and time than runners with correct form. The same is true of churches. The more churches I work with, the more I am convinced that so many churches stop growing because their form is inconsistent with their mission. Their very structure inhibits their ability to create and develop disciples.

In his book, *Winning on Purpose*, John Edmund Kaiser explains the importance of a healthy church structure called the Leadership Accountability Model. John has implemented this system in hundreds of churches over many years. This method of church polity is so effective because it combines biblical integrity with organizational integrity.

Winning on Purpose analyzes why so many churches today are failing. Kaiser believes that many great leaders do not fit into the traditional church board structure, and many local churches are not operating under a biblically based mission. Kaiser also asserts that an effective leader must have a balance of responsibility, authority and accountability, and that many church leaders have not been provided all three.

The underpinning of the Leadership Accountability Model holds these three concepts in tension, however, it will fail without trust. The congregation must trust the leadership board to govern, the leadership board must trust the pastor to lead, and the pastor must trust the staff to manage and congregation to minister. When trust breaks down in one of these areas, it is often replaced with control. When this happens, the board, pastor, staff and congregation treat each other like children rather than trusted adults that have been called to carry out the church's mission. This phenomenon is happening in many congregations today. If a church lacks trust, it must be dealt with before moving on to other aspects of leadership.

The trust in Kaiser's model is not blind; it is always accompanied by accountability. The board keeps the church on mission, the pastor leads the church in pursuit of the vision, the staff manages the resources, and ultimately the congregation is called to minister out of their gifts toward the mission.

A section of *Winning on Purpose* is dedicated to contrasting the Accountability Model with the Carver Policy Governance Model that is popular among non-profit companies, including churches. Kaiser suggests that while applicable for many organizations, the Carver model is inconsistent with the Biblical description of the pastor's role. In the Accountability Model, Kaiser maintains high accountability with more leadership responsibility placed on the pastor.

MY EXPERIENCE

In my experience implementing this model in hundreds of churches, there are many instances where this model doesn't work. First, there is the issue of trust mentioned earlier. Second, some pastors don't want to lead because they lack the confidence or spiritual gifts to do so. Other pastors fear being held accountable for their actions. Lastly, some congregations refuse to let their pastors lead and don't they don't want to follow. These congregations often turn inward and focus on meeting their own needs.

I have found that the Leadership Accountability Model does not guarantee an effective, missionally minded body, but it does provide a structure where gifted and obedient people can fulfill their God-given destiny.

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