

Local Church Administration
Keeping a Church's Organizational Structure Simple

Brian Hershberger

Lesson Purpose: To equip church leaders in building local church structure

Overview: The purpose of the trellis is to support the work of the vine. The purpose of church structure is to support the ministry of the church. The trellis needs to be strong enough to support the spiritual life and growth of the church, but trellis maintenance should not detract from ministry to people. This lesson explores the relationship of the trellis and the vine.

Opening: Rube Goldberg, Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist, is famous for drawing ridiculously complex machinery that accomplished nothing except for perpetual motion. None of his zany machines are remotely practical. "Do it the hard way," Goldberg once wrote. "The more trivial the product, the more complicated the machine. His cartoons spoof organizations that continually move with no purpose other than amazing onlookers.

Scripture Reading: As you listen to the following scripture, John 15:5-8, contrast the outcome of Jesus' words with the outcome of Rube Goldberg's cartoon machines.

Mini Lecture: *Local Church Administration—Keeping a Church's Organizational Structure Simple*

Exercises:

Exercise 1: Vine and Trellis Work

- List ten examples of vine work.
- List ten examples of trellis work.
- Circle the items on both lists that energize you.
- Which of the lists contains more circled items? Discuss with the group your propensity for vine or trellis work.

Exercise 2: Organizational Structure

- Draw a diagram of the organizational structure (the trellis) of a church you know.
- Now redraw the diagram, simplifying it.
- Talk to your group about what could be gained or what could be lost by simplifying the church structure.

Exercise 3: Tangled

- Jot a few notes about a time when an issue or a person became tangled up in the structure of an organization.

Exercise 4: Trimmed

- Jot a few notes about how each of the following tasks could be done in a church:
 - Remove dead, diseased, and damaged wood.
 - Remove crossing branches.
 - Trim back to one leader.
- Share with the group.

Exercise 4: Spectrum of Engagement

- Identify where a church you know is positioned on the spectrum of engagement.
- Share evidence for your analysis with the group.

Exercise 5: Teamed

- Think about an effective ministry team you have seen and describe this team to the group.

OR

- Think about a dream team for ministry. Describe this team to the group.

Closing: Listen once again to a reading of John 15:5 – 8.

Closing: