

### III. FANTASTIC PEOPLE

- A. God also reminded Bill that he knew something else: it takes fantastic people if you're going to move an organization or church from *here* to *there*.
  - 1. Recently Bill was in an airport in Asia and rode a sleek, modern train that was completely automated—no driver, no engineer, no safety attendants needed.
  - 2. He thought to himself, “I want to buy one of these things, because every time Willow has to go from *here* to anywhere all I got to do is load the Creekers up, hit the send button on my laptop and they wind up *there*. There's no staff involved, no elders, no deacons, no leadership team, no payroll, no hirings, no firings. How slick is that?”
  - 3. He doesn't really want it, because one of the greatest joys of leadership is assembling and knitting together teams of fantastic people, who become the catalyst for moving an organization from *here* to *there*.
  
- B. Bill has probably been spending more time on that than on almost any other thing in leadership for the last two-and-a-half years since he stepped back into his operational role at Willow and he's had to put a bunch of new teams together.
  
- C. When Bill is building teams, he looks for the 3 C's: character, competence and chemistry.
  
- D. In recent months, he has been playing with the idea of adding another C: culture.
  - 1. By that he means: “What kind of person flourishes on our unique team? What kind of person feels at home on our team, and what kind of person is never going to catch stride?”
  - 2. This has been rigorous work, as they've had to slow down and ask themselves some questions:
    - a. What do we value here on our staff team?
    - b. How do we work?
    - c. What's our style?
    - d. What matters to us and what doesn't in the work environment?
  - 3. They've put those things in writing so they're clear about their culture and so when they're thinking of hiring someone they can consider if the person will fit in their unique culture, or if the person might be better off in another church environment.
  - 4. The Willow culture is high-challenge, fast-changing, results-oriented, and sacrificial to the core.
  - 5. So if someone is looking for a low-challenge, status quo, emotionally coddling, rarely sacrificing culture, they should walk away. They'll never be happy at Willow.

## SESSION ONE: FROM HERE TO THERE

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- E. A fundamental of leadership is to attract, develop and retain fantastic people who will flourish in your unique culture.
1. If you got word that a staff member from your team has just resigned, you might have one of three reactions.
    - a. One reaction might be a sigh of relief, “pewh.” You see their resignation as a blessing—not because you don’t like them, but maybe they weren’t fitting, or they never became a member of your culture, or never performed at the level you hoped they would.
    - b. Another reaction would be a groan, “ugh.” This is someone who is a really good person, who’s doing a good job, and they fit well in your culture. You don’t want to lose a person like that, and now you have to find a good replacement, and that takes work.
    - c. A third response might be that you’d read and reread the e-mail and then run out and vomit. This is a fantastic person who’s doing fantastic work, with a fantastic attitude and a fantastic fit with your unique culture. You would realize that you might have lost someone who is, by human means, irreplaceable.
  2. Recently, Bill spent a full day with the top leaders of the church to comb through every single name of every employee of the church and ask themselves how they would react if that person resigned.
    - a. It took a long time to gain agreement on every staff member and eventually they did.
    - b. Over the next several months, they sat down with each fantastic person who would break their hearts if they left.
    - c. They said to them, “You’re such a fantastic person. You have great character, wonderful competence, good relationships with the team, and you fit our culture, and we’re hoping and praying that you’ll never leave. If God calls you elsewhere, we’ll throw you a party and cheer you on, but we’re hoping you’re going to be part of the core of what God’s going to do around Willow for a long time. We want to make a disproportionate investment in your talents. We want to develop you to your fullest potential. Tell us if there’s ever anything that frustrates or demotivates you, because we’d like to fix it.”
    - d. Those were some of the most powerful personnel conversations that Bill has ever had. One staff member told Bill afterward, “My parents never told me that I was valued, that I had a future in our family, or that they believed in me. I’m never going to forget this conversation.”
- F. A few months ago, Bill and a team were struggling with a special weekend service that they had high hopes for, but they couldn’t find the mind of God on what the service should look like.
1. Finally they found what they felt God wanted them to do on that weekend, and what happened took their breath away.
  2. When the services were all over, the team assembled backstage and stood in a circle.
  3. No one could even make eye contact because they were still recuperating from the power of God that happened in the room.
  4. Finally one young guy blurted out, “God rocks!”

## SESSION ONE: FROM HERE TO THERE

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5. Then it all started pouring out, people saying things like, “I love what I do,” and it got sloppy and emotional.
6. Bill went to bed that night thinking that one of the unspeakable privileges of leadership is the holy challenge of assembling, developing and inspiring a team of fantastic people, without whom none of us could ever get from *here* to *there*.
  - a. As a leader, do you see this as a leadership fundamental? Do you view the assembling of fantastic people as a privilege? Does it inspire you?
  - b. Have you defined your culture?
  - c. Are there sensitive conversations you need to have with some fantastic people?
  - d. Are there sensitive conversations you need to have with a few “phew” people, to tell them they’d probably be a fantastic person in a different culture?



3. Bill said that “one of the unspeakable privileges of leading is the holy challenge of assembling, developing and inspiring a team of fantastic people.” Your team may or may not have responsibility for leading a group of people other than yourselves. If you do, respond to the questions for Option A. If you don’t, respond to the questions for Option B.

**Option A:** Bill talked about the various reactions you might have if a staff member resigned. You might feel relieved about some and utterly sickened by others. An important task for you as leaders is to identify both groups of people and act accordingly. You may not be prepared to do a full evaluation of your staff or volunteers right now, so use this time to talk about if and how you might want to do that in the future. The following are some questions you might consider.

- How do we want to evaluate who the fantastic people are on our team? (You might consider Bill’s C’s: character, competency, chemistry and culture.)
- How will we ensure that the fantastic people are developed and inspired?
- How should we handle the not fantastic people on our team?
- Can we develop any of the not fantastic people into fantastic people by working on their character, competency or chemistry or on our culture?
- What are the elements of our culture that make people thrive there?

