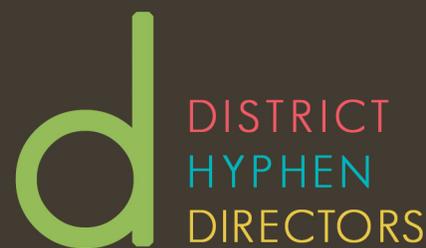


AN EXTENSION

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We've seen it happen in countless churches, no matter the denomination. Pastor appoints leader over ministry. Leader over ministry has lots of talent. Leader over ministry helps grow the ministry. Ministry grows. And grows. And grows. But that's not the only thing that's growing. Pastor and leader are now growing apart for one reason or another. Pastor and leader break ties. Church splits. Bitterness abounds. No one wins.

Why does this happen? Why do we witness so many train wrecks in leaders failing to follow the vision of a pastor? Why do our youth and ministry team leaders seem to fall off of a cliff into a black hole of cotton-candy doctrine never to return? I can't, with full confidence, answer that question for every single case; however, I believe I know where several of these issues start.

Usually the leader is trying to create his or her personal vision for the ministry to succeed instead of focusing and concentrating on being an extension of the pastor's vision already in place.

In our respective districts, this same concept and principle must apply. Clear communication with our district youth presidents regarding their vision for the entire state is not just a nice amenity, but it is vital for the growth of our Hyphens.

Three sure ways to be an extension of the youth president's vision:

- 1. Contact your youth president regularly and discuss what direction the Spirit is leading him for your state/district.** There have been several times I've talked to our district youth president about what he is feeling in regards to direction of our students. Knowing the direction the Spirit is trying to take them has always been helpful so that he and I can set the pace for how our Hyphens are to grow and, ultimately, lead. This has been an incredible reference point for measuring spiritual progress and keeping the main thing the main thing.
- 2. Communicate to your Hyphen team the vision of your youth president for your state/district.** Our teams must be able to know and effortlessly communicate to our Hyphens the vision from our district youth presidents. This creates a reference point for them, but mainly it creates unity and consistency throughout the influential voices of the team.
- 3. Verbally echo his vision with no undertones of your own.** We don't need to dive off into a lesson on submission here, but just in case there is a need of a refresher course, I refer you to Hebrews 13 regarding our attitude toward leaders as well as kindly reminding you about the way two she bears in II Kings took care of those who mocked God's appointed servant. The latter reference is pretty drastic, but we do need to remember the God of the Old Testament if our flesh gets testy regarding the vision from the man of God. Our district youth president's vision needs to be echoed with full support so no student or team member can question if we back him or not.

We often quote Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," applying it to healing or prayer. While this is rather appropriate for those times, we must remember it in terms of our leader's vision and direction. When we join with our district youth president in Jesus' name for the vision he has given us for our states, then Jesus will be in the midst of us! If we unite under His vision, He will guide us farther than we could ever dream or plan.

I encourage you to ask yourself in your prayer time, "Is the Hyphen ministry of my state an extension of the youth president's vision, or an island of my personal vision for success?" If you're wondering which it is, maybe it's worth picking up the phone and calling him now. I'll wait while you get the phone...