



FAMILY or TEAM?

By Al Ells, M.C.

Many plateaued and declining churches today have staff, volunteers and leadership that interact more like families rather than teams. A family culture is one in which the leadership has evolved into a close-knit group of people where the common declaration is, “We are just like family.”

The individuals love and care for each other even to the extent that loyalty trumps performance. Poor performing or relationally difficult people are tolerated and never called to accountability. A telltale sign of a family leadership culture is when everyone knows someone isn’t doing their job or is too difficult to deal with, yet no one takes action. The ‘family’ member is tolerated at a cost to the ministry. This mode of leadership often stems from the notion that we all members of the family of God.

The difficulty with this point of view is that no distinction is made between members of the church and people who volunteer or work for the church. Members of the church are members of the family of God. Volunteers and staff are also members of the family of God, however in their position they are called to be members of a team that accomplish tasks on behalf of the family of God. When team members value loyalty and care for each other over accomplishing the mission and tasks that serve the family of God, the leadership culture becomes dysfunctional. High-functioning ministry leadership cultures are built on a team model and produce better disciples (and more of them).

The following chart offers further insight into the two models. It’s important to note that the family vs. team approach is a continuum. Very few ministries are totally team or totally family but rather fall somewhere in between. A healthy leadership culture will be more team than family.

Compare your culture with the characteristics listed. Are you more family or team

- ⤴ **Family:** The most instinctive, fundamental social group of society.
- ⤴ **Team:** Any group organized to work together to accomplish a purpose or mission.

ARE YOU A FAMILY OR A TEAM

CHARACTERISTIC	FAMILY	TEAM
MISSION (PURPOSE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To <u>propagate</u> more of the same species. ○ To take care of <u>each other</u> ○ To <u>train, nurture, rear</u> and <u>civilize</u> its members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To accomplish a stated <u>goal, task</u> or <u>mission</u> ○ To <u>organize</u> and <u>utilize</u> its members
PERSONAL NEEDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Needs of family members are <u>first priority</u> ○ Accomplishing a task is <u>secondary</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accomplishing a task is <u>first priority</u> ○ Needs of team members is <u>secondary</u>
LOYALTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To <u>People</u> in family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To <u>Mission</u> of team
AFFILIATION (BELONGING)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone belongs - no one gets <u>disowned</u> regardless of performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone belongs - as long as they <u>contribute</u> to the team and mission success
RELATIONSHIP RULES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on the <u>leader's preference</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on what is <u>necessary</u> to get job done
AFFIRMATION (APPROVAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on the <u>leader's preferences</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on person's <u>contribution</u> towards

		accomplishing team goals and the mission
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Next month's newsletter will further explore the family vs. team model of church leadership.