

Dag Heward-Mills

How to

*Develop
Devoted
Members*

How To Develop Devoted Members

by Dag Heward-Mills

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Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible

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Chapter 1 - Your Church Needs Devoted Members

A person goes through three stages when he is becoming established as a member of your church.

As a shepherd, you must be able to distinguish between the different types of members that you have.

...he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.

Matthew 25:32

Three Different Types of Members

1. Deer stage members

When a person is initially converted, he behaves like a deer: untamed, swift-footed and difficult to keep in one place. You have to track them down through the mountains and the forest. They are difficult to handle.

It is important to move your members out of this stage. When you visit them, they play "hide- and-seek" with you. Deer are nimble creatures.

The Deer and the Assistant Deer

Seventeen years ago, I visited a deer stage member called Adelaide. Somehow, she did not want to see her shepherd at all. This was one of the deer in my fellowship.

I was trying to convert her from the deer stage to the sheep stage.

I remember one evening when I knocked on her door in Volta Hall of the

University of Ghana. A voice from within answered, "Who is there?"

"It's me Brother Dag. I'm looking for Sister Adelaide."

After a few moments her room-mate said, "Come in." This room-mate happened to be her sister, Irene.

"Hello. I am looking for Adelaide. Is she in?" The room-mate smiled sweetly, "Sorry, she's not in."

"Oh, I see. Where did she go?"

"I'm not sure, she just went out." "Alright, please tell her I came by to check on her."

"Okay," she smiled again sweetly. "When she comes back I'll tell her you were here."

Each room had its own balcony, and unknown to me, Adelaide was hiding there. I was a shepherd who was dealing with a deer and an assistant deer. Only deer dodge and hide.

However, I worked on them until they became sheep. Today, they are stable "sheep" members.

2. Goat stage members

Goats are a little better than deer. They are far more domestic and easily accessible. However, a goat is much more independent than a sheep. They do what they want to do and are less likely to follow.

When a church member graduates from the deer stage, he moves on to the goat stage. As soon as a deer sees a human being, it takes off, whereas a goat remains.

Goats are friendlier than deer, though they can often have traces of stubbornness.

3. Sheep stage members

Sheep are the best of the three groups. Your goal as a pastor should be to have your church full of devoted sheep.

These people follow the shepherd. They stay together and move with the group. Such members are much easier to pastor. Sheep are often devoted, committed, faithful, dependable and loving members.

If your church is full of devoted sheep, you will be a happy pastor. They will stay near you always, and receive your ministrations.

Chapter 2 - Ten Keys for Developing Devoted Members

They devoted themselves to the instruction given by the apostles and to fellowship...

Acts 2:42 (Moffatt translation)

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship,...

Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship,...

Acts 2:42 (New International Version)

The number one task of a shepherd is to transform the members from deer to devoted sheep. How is this possible?

But we all...are changed into the same image from glory to glory...

2 Corinthians 3:18

Now the word *change* comes from a Greek word *metamorphoo*, which means metamorphosis. The word *metamorphosis* always reminds us of a dramatic transformation that occurs inside a cocoon when a larvae changes into a butterfly. When you see a butterfly elegantly fluttering around, you have no idea what it used to be like. There has been a drastic and major change - *metamorphosis*. It is this same kind of metamorphosis, that can take place in the members of a church. People change because of the ministry of the Word. They are transformed by the renewing of their minds. Loose and dodgy Christians can become devoted and committed zealots.

Now, I want to share with you a few keys on how to develop devoted membership. **The first important thing is that you the pastor, must be devoted.** Devotion is a spiritual thing, it can be perceived. There are three main areas in which you can develop devoted membership: who you are, what you say and what you do.

1. Be a devoted pastor!

The pastor must be devoted to his church and his church members. Devotion is a spiritual thing. It is transmitted sometimes by osmosis: from person to person. *The unspoken commitment and sacrifice of the leadership is contagious; it passes from one member to another without speaking.* Why do I say this? Because not all pastors are committed to their churches.

I began my ministry as a medical student. In 1987, I was already struggling as a pastor/medical student. The tradition for newly qualified doctors in Ghana is for them to travel to America to seek "greener pastures". Medical doctors earn thousands of dollars in America, England and South Africa.

My fledgling church was full of people watching to see whether I would remain in Ghana or move out of the country. When the time came for the decision to be made, I declared boldly to my members that I was staying with them. I wasn't going to leave them. From that time onwards, I noticed a dramatic change in the commitment of the members to the church.

The sheep can sense the pastor's commitment. No one wants to follow someone who will abandon him midstream. In addition to the senior pastor being devoted, associates and assistants must be equally committed and devoted. The assistant pastors must be devoted to the senior pastor as well as to the church members.

The seed of devotion leads to a harvest of multiplied commitment from the church members.

2. Say positive things about the church.

Everybody wants to be part of a good thing. That is human nature. People are more likely to be devoted to something that is successful than to something that is failing.

I have learnt that you can make your church flourish by *using your mouth*. If you want your church to grow, tell the members that they are part of a good church.

Speak positively about the other pastors in the church. Do not criticize the pastors of the church.

That is why we call the Lighthouse Chapel International, “The Mega Church”. I am aware that this worries some people. It is just our faith confession! We know we have a long way to go. We know that we are still learning.

But we believe that we have a mega ministry with a mega impact in a lost and dying world!

3. Say positive things about the pastors.

The associate pastor must say positive things about the senior pastor.

He must say things like, “This is some of the best teaching you can get anywhere in the world.” You must tell the church, “We are blessed to have such a man of God as our pastor.” The book of Acts, chapter two says that the believers continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (teaching).

One version puts it this way,

And they steadfastly persevered devoting themselves constantly...

Acts 2:42 (Amplified version)

You can make your church members become devoted to your teaching. Let them hear that it is the best they can get anywhere. The assistant pastor must constantly make the church aware of the precious gift that God has graciously given to them in their senior pastor.

I Am the Best Preacher for My Church

I believe I am the best preacher for my church. This is not vanity, it is biblical commonsense. I am their shepherd and I know what is best for my people.

When God gives a woman a baby, He fills her breasts with milk for her baby. God does not fill another woman’s breasts with milk for that baby. Similarly, God has filled my spirit with the Word of God for my sheep. My spiritual breasts are full of spiritual milk for my spiritual children.

That is why I preach all the time to my church members. **I have other pastors, but I do ninety per cent of the preaching and teaching. This is because I am the shepherd and God gave me the duty of feeding the sheep.**

Pastors ought to take charge of the pulpit and discharge their duties honourably. Thank God for visiting ministers. Many have ministered at my church and have been a blessing, but I am the best shepherd for my sheep.

In various ways, I make my church members become devoted to my teaching and preaching. I let them know that it’s the best thing for them. If your members are not devoted to your preaching and teaching they will be devoted

to someone else's ministry, and your church will not grow.

I have watched how visiting preachers are appreciated more than a resident pastor. This is unfortunate! Visiting pastors are often hailed as superheroes, whilst resident pastors are ignored. The church members should not be deceived into thinking that the visiting minister has more to offer than their own pastor. He does not! He may have something different but he does not have anything better!

It is only because the pastor from the church has fed the sheep so well, that there is a congregation groomed enough to receive a visiting minister.

One translation of Acts 2:42 says that they were devoted **“to the teaching of the apostles and to fellowship with one another.”**

In Bible times, the Christians were devoted to two principal things:

1. Their pastors' teachings.
2. Fellowshiping with one another.

Read Acts 2:42 for yourself! Read it from different versions of the Bible. It is crystal clear! Any simpleton should be able to understand these two strategic keys of church growth.

Get your church to be like the New Testament Church and you will have the thousands that are spoken of in the book of Acts. **If you don't have an associate pastor who says good things about your teaching, then get one who does!**

4. Say good things about your church members.

In order to encourage inter-sheep relationships you must speak good things about your church members. Some people say things like, “I don't trust these church members.” “I don't want any church member in my house.”

Although some church members may disappoint you, do not maintain a negative attitude towards all other members. That would be a big mistake!

I have heard Christians say, “I'd rather employ a Muslim than a Christian.”

That is unscriptural! The Bible teaches us to do good to Christians, especially your church members.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Galatians 6:10

The fact that you have had unpleasant experiences with Christian men does not mean that you should marry an unbeliever. You are reacting in the wrong way. You are moving into foolishness!

Speak positively about Christians, especially your own church members. This will cause your church members to interact with each other. If you say evil things about them, new members will not form vital bonding relationships.

There is a principle at work here. **People are often attracted to the church by the pastor, but they often remain in the church because of the internal relationships they establish.** Never forget this! People stay in a

church because of relationships they have in the church. It is the duty of the pastor to create interaction between members of the church.

This is a very important key to implement, if you really desire to have a large church. The Bible says that they were devoted to the fellowship. Members must be devoted to the fellowship of Christians in the same church.

If you have members who hardly know each other, then introduce and influence them to develop relationships. Encourage them to be committed to the church. Teach them that it is important to attend church all the time.

Teach them not to make a habit of hopping from church to church, just to see what is happening elsewhere. Explain to them that it is only the devil who goes to and fro (Job 1:7).

5. Encourage employers to hire church members.

Practically speaking, you can also encourage the members to be devoted to one another's fellowship in many different ways.

When I have a church member who is an employer in a strategic position, I encourage him to consciously help other members to get jobs. Do not think that this will happen naturally; the pastor's involvement is important.

When one Lighthouse member secures a job in a company, you will often find several other members finding their way there.

Nowadays, this often happens naturally without my involvement. However, in the beginning I had to encourage this interaction.

Many people were put off by the bad behaviour of some church members. Do not overreact to the disgraceful behaviour that some church members display when they are employed. Church members are human beings. Keep on recommending in the spirit of love and forgiveness.

One employer said that he would not employ a member of the church because the church member would arrive at work late, claiming he went witnessing early in the morning. That is nonsense! Witnessing is not supposed to make you arrive late for work.

I would encourage you to dismiss such a person. Church members are supposed to be disciplined!

6. Encourage members to apply for work from within the church family.

When you have a member who needs a job, direct him to other church members that can help him to get a job. This increases the member's commitment because the sheep will see that you really care for them. The church then becomes an important family to belong to.

7. Encourage church members to marry each other.

Have you ever noticed how a young lady seems so committed to a church? Many of these have relationships within that church. Often it is their fiancés that act like glue which fixes them to the church. They are cemented to the church by their relationships.

This is what I call "shepherdorial cement". As I said earlier, they may be attracted initially to the church by the charismatic man of God, but they remain

because of the relationships they acquire within the church!

I repeatedly tell my church members that the person they want to marry can be found within our congregation. If they want a tall, short, fat, skinny, fair or dark person; they can find their Of course, it is not a sin to marry from outside your own church. Many people in my church do that! All I am saying is that I encourage my church members to intermarry.

Anytime one of our “daughters”, in whom we have invested, is married and taken to another church, we lose a church member. However, if this member stays on in the church, she will contribute to church growth. The couple will also have children who will become members of our children’s church, and eventually our adult assembly. You may want to argue with my theory, but it’s working very well for me!

8. Encourage members to socialize and fraternize.

The New Testament church was devoted to fellowshiping with one another! Sometimes people will accuse us of sticking to ourselves and not interacting with outsiders.

However, that is not our intention at all! Our intention is also to interact with outsiders in order to win souls.

But make sure you encourage your church members to have their friends from within the church. **If your church members’ friends are within the church, they will have two reasons for coming to church.**

Firstly, they will come for spiritual nourishment.

Secondly, they will come to meet with their friends. You can easily lose members whose friends are mainly people outside the church.

9. Develop smaller church families within the big church.

My church is made up of many small groups. Some groups have ten members, five, and even others have fifty.

It is these small groups, called ministries and fellowships, which form the nucleus of family relationships in our church. You may be surprised to discover that people are more committed to these smaller groups than to the big church.

When there is a wedding or funeral, it is usually the concern of these smaller groups. Even when there is a social event, most of the friends are drawn out of these same groups.

10. Become a father or mother to your church.

Some pastors never develop beyond being a teacher of doctrines and truths. Chicks gather around the mother hen because of her motherly security.

...I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,...

Matthew 23:37

If you want your church to grow, develop fatherly or motherly attributes. Be everything to your sheep. Be a friend. Be a brother.

Be a father. Show concern for your flock. Show interest in things that concern them. Be interested in their school. Ask for details concerning their businesses. Help them in their marriages.

Correct them when they are wrong. Rebuke them and discipline them when they need it. Don't just give them good teachings. Become a mother or a father to your flock.

The anointing to be a father or mother is the anointing to *gather*. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

1 Corinthians 9:22

Chapter 3 - Devoted Members Are Permanent Church Members

The Lord emphasized to me the need to have permanent church members. I realized that many of the young church members were vacillators.

The best type of church member is a permanent church member. A permanent member is unmovable, stable and dependable throughout the years. A very important characteristic of that member is that his mind and heart are saying, *"I am here, and I am here forever."*

I am not a fool! Of course, I know that not everybody is going to stay forever. Yet, it is important for people to have the mind of staying around forever.

I am not God. If God, by His Spirit, would lead someone away from our church, there is nothing I can do about it.

It is the same thing with marriage. No good person enters a marriage with the mind that "I am in this marriage for just a few years." Who would like to marry such a person?

My Famous Announcement

One day I told my church, "I have decided to go to America to study cardiothoracic surgery." I announced, "I am going to be a heart surgeon."

I went on to explain, "The course will last for about five years after which I will need to gain some experience on the job. That will last for another five years, making the trip a total of ten years."

The whole congregation was shocked.

"Ooooooh," they said. "It can't be possible."

They all looked very sad.

"Why are you sad?" I asked, "Don't you want me to go away?"

I asked them, "How many of you would like me to be here in three years' time?" Everybody raised their hands.

I asked again, "How many of you here would like me to be here in seven years' time?" Again, they all raised their hands.

"So you don't want me to go," I said.

They all shouted, "No!"

I began to laugh. Then I told them, "I was just joking. I'm glad you want me to stay! I realize that you want me to stay permanently!" I went on, "If you would like me to be here in seven years' time, I would also like you to be here seven years from now. Just as you want me to be your permanent pastor, preaching to you and praying for you, I also want you to be permanent members for me!"

I believe in permanent members and

permanent commitment. I would strongly recommend all pastors to teach their congregations about being permanently joined to the church.

Listen to me, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

What you teach your people is what they will believe. If you want them to be a permanent part of the ministry, teach them and they will be!

The church members want a permanent pastor and we the pastors want permanent members.

I am going to give you several reasons that you can share with any congregation as to why they should become permanent members of the church. If you teach these things, your members will stop jumping around from church to church.

Eleven Reasons Why Your Congregation Must Be Permanent Members

1. They are part of a family.

Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named...

Ephesians 3:15

The first reason why people must be a permanent part of the church is because they are part of a family. When every church member is taught that the church is a family, they will be less willing to leave.

Every family has its problems! In every family, you have conflicts and misunderstandings. But there is simply no way you can leave your family. You are simply a part of that family whether you like it or not. A misunderstanding with your uncle does not lead you to change your name.

Teach the church members that misunderstandings and hurts should not make them change their churches. Family members belong together in a lifetime commitment. Church members must belong to the same family in a lifetime commitment.

2. They are part of a building.

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

1 Corinthians 3:9

The second reason why people need to be permanent is because they are part of God's building. The Bible clearly teaches that we are God's building. Every Christian must know that he is part of God's building, which is the church.

You cannot easily remove the blocks of a building. Blocks are a permanent

part of the structure. *How would you feel if you came home and your bedroom had moved to the next house?*

Sections of buildings do not move around! I teach my church to see themselves as permanent building blocks in the building called Lighthouse Chapel International. I tell them that I have never seen a building block walk out of a building before. Such an occurrence would be magical. I trust that there is no magician amongst the members.

3. They are part of a garden.

And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: [garden] I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down...

Isaiah 5:5

Throughout Scripture, we see believers being referred to as a garden. If we are like a garden, then each of us is like a plant in the garden.

If you uproot a plant and replant it in another spot, you endanger the life of that shrub. In fact, if you do this repeatedly, you will kill the plant.

It is a common fact that planting and replanting kills plants. God has no plan for planting and replanting His people in different churches every few years.

If every time your roots go a little deeper you move around, you will kill yourself spiritually.

I have noticed that Christians who are planted and replanted in different churches often do not survive spiritually.

When the Lord asked the devil where he had been, the devil replied that he had been roaming in the earth. The devil does not sit still; he moves “to and fro” and “up and down” in the earth.

If you move to and fro, from church to church, your lifestyle resembles the devil.

And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

Job 1:7

4. They are part of a tree.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

John 15:5

Another important revelation is that you are a part of a tree. Jesus said that He is the vine and we are the branches. Everyone knows that a branch cut off from the tree is dead. Branches are intended to be permanently fastened to bigger branches or tree trunks.

If you are indeed a branch, have no plans of moving anywhere. People who move from church to church often do not flourish in the Kingdom of God.

They experience stunted growth and some even backslide and go to Hell.

Pastor Turns Rasta

Recently, I was speaking with a prophet of God. He told me how the Lord had shown him a dream, about how a pastor who had been moving from church to church, had backslidden and had become a Rastafarian. This prophetic dream was predicting that the vacillating pastor was going to fall. This was a warning to the unstable pastor.

Cutting yourself off and attempting to re-attach yourself is risky business. I believe in permanent membership. I teach permanent membership. I campaign for permanent members. *My people want a permanent pastor, and I want permanent members.*

5. They will flourish if they are planted.

Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

Psalm 92:13

The next reason for permanent membership is so that you will flourish. You will notice that I have a scriptural basis for each of these points.

What I am sharing with you is sound biblical doctrine. I am not saying that there are no grounds for a person to leave a church. Not at all! (For further study see my book, *Ministerial Ethics*).

What I'm saying is that you must teach people to be permanently attached and permanently planted for their own benefit. Sheep will follow and obey what their shepherd tells them.

The Bible tells us plainly that those who are planted will flourish. I have watched Christians and pastors who move around from place to place. **You cannot compare a planted member to a roving member.** Stay in one place. Develop roots and flourish!

As you remain in one place, you will develop businesses and business contacts. Members of the church will begin to rely on you for their business. You will develop lasting friendships that may help you during your lifetime.

Staying in one place for only a couple of years does not allow you to develop the sort of relationships that you need for a blessed life.

6. They can invest freely when they are permanent.

It is very convenient to live in one's own house. It is very different from renting a house.

When you live in your own house, you can invest freely. You can pour in your money, your time and your life.

Why is this? Because it is yours and you are going to be there permanently.

No one wants to spend any money on a house that doesn't belong to him. After all, he is only going to use the place for a few months.

When we acquired our own church building, we invested freely into the structure.

One day the contractor told me, "I want to construct this building as perfectly as possible because I am going to be here for life. I want the floor to be smooth and perfect because I intend to die as a member of Lighthouse."

He continued, "One day, when I am dead and my coffin is being carried into the church for the funeral service, I would not want anyone to trip and fall over an uneven floor."

I laughed. Though this was a joke, he was also making a serious point. He had planned to remain in the church for life. In other words, he had opted for permanent membership. Permanent members will be encouraged to give their money freely. They know that they are building a church for their children's weddings and will see the fruit of their investments.

7. They will have a family to celebrate their victories.

I preach faith and hope for the future. I tell my members that things are going to get better. Many poor people come to the church. As they hear the Word, their faith rises and they begin to see better things ahead.

If they are permanent members, they will live to celebrate their victories in the church. If they are not permanent, in the day of their victory, they will have no one to rejoice with.

Remember, that joy shared is double joy and sorrow shared is half sorrow.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice...

Romans 12:15

They will have a family to rejoice with as their new houses, new cars and new babies are dedicated.

You will stand together and remember how the Lord took them from the beginning and brought them so far!

I have often reminisced with my friends about the ministry. We ponder over how the Lord has been kind to us. We laugh about things that threatened us some years ago.

We say like the psalmist,

When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them.

Psalms 126:1,2

Who will you sit down with to quote this Scripture to one day? Will you have abandoned all the friends with whom you struggled in the early days? A permanent relationship will give you people to rejoice with in the day of rejoicing. Better days are ahead.

I teach my church that our better days are yet to come. I want them to stay around to see the better days of this ministry.

I remember when I used to speak about miracles. It was more like a dream. Today, we have real miracles abounding in our midst. The Lord has been good to us. We are seeing better days. When you are permanent, you will

have a family to go through your mourning with you. Joy shared is double joy, and sorrow shared is half sorrow.

8. They will see the fruit of their labour.

It is important for Christians to know that harvest time is coming in the future. What is the use of labouring in a church for years, only to leave just before harvest time? Some of the people who were with me in the days of real struggles are no longer around to enjoy the blessings. That is a pity! That is the price you pay for not being permanent.

Anyone who is double-minded about his commitment becomes unstable in other areas of his life. The Bible states that such a person is unstable in *all* his ways. Be stable. Be permanent. Be blessed.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

James 1:8

9. They will avoid the deception of short relationships.

Short relationships are sweet while they last. There are no quarrels, no emotional disturbances, no worrying comments or misunderstandings. Long relationships have often been through much testing.

Long relationships that have survived the tests of time are better. Greater trust develops. You also know what to expect in the relationship. I prefer to work with someone I have known for a long time rather than with someone I have just met.

Joshua Made That Mistake!

Joshua made the mistake of forming an alliance with someone he didn't really know. He thought the Gibeonites were ambassadors from a far country.

Little did he know that they had lied to him in order to secure a peace treaty. He later discovered their true identity. But it was too late! He was already bound to the peace accord, although it was made under a cover of deception.

...And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye? And they [Gibeonites] said unto him, From a very far country... And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.

Joshua 9:8,9,16

What I am saying is that longer relationships are safer relationships. Permanent members will be able to develop genuine relationships with genuine people.

As the years go by, the members will know whether they have a genuine pastor or not and they will be more committed.

10. They will have consistent pastoral care.

The church, like a hospital, cares for you. Your permanent pastor can cater for you better because he has been with you for a long time and knows your history better. He is better equipped to minister to you.

Church members often leave churches when they think the pastor has discovered their secret sins. You must want your pastor to have access to your life so that he can minister in the area where you really need help.

11. They will be rewarded for faithfulness.

The next important reason for being a permanent member is that God will reward His children for faithfulness. Faithfulness means loyalty, constancy and permanence.

Well done, good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

Matthew 25:23

Please note in this Scripture that, the servant is recommended for his faithfulness. He is not recommended for his charisma or his gifting. Being a permanent member is part of the life of faithfulness. Be faithful. Be permanent.

One day, Jesus will tell you, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

That is the day I am waiting for. I just want to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful (permanent and loyal) servant!"

I see God establishing your church with devoted and permanent members as you teach and apply these principles!