

12 PREREQUISITES

That Will Make or Break an Adults 55+ Ministry

by David P. Gallagher

Eight years ago I became pastor of a congregation specifically designed to reach people over age 50. As we have grown from a core fellowship of 23 to nearly 400 members today, I've discovered 12 prerequisites that will make or break an adults 55+ ministry.

1. Be sure you have a divine call from God. Ministry today is extremely difficult in a changing culture and with unimaginable pressures. Having a sense of divine call is very important.

2. Understand the importance of team ministry and volunteerism. Because no one person has all the skills needed to accomplish the challenge, team ministry and volunteerism are essential components for a truly effective senior adult ministry. Leaders need special skills in pastoral care, visitation, teaching, administration, communication, and conflict management.

3. Realize the value of communication and know how to solve conflicts. Ministry involves communication and certainly includes skills in conflict resolution and great wisdom and sensitivity.

4. Accept the fact that comparisons are deadly. God has called you to serve where you are, so don't compare your ministry with the ministry of others.

5. Set achievable priorities and realistic limits. You cannot do everything, but be sure you are doing what God has called you to do.

6. Allow yourself to graciously say no. Learning when and how to say no prevents burnout.

7. Grasp the sense of faithfulness. No strategy will work without faithful commitment over the long haul.

8. Keep perspective. A myopic view of senior adult ministry can be deadly, and keeping perspective is sometimes quite a challenge.

9. Maintain your own personal spiritual well-being. You cannot give what you do not have. Keep your personal devotional life fresh.

10. Learn from the storms of life. Help seniors learn how to face life's challenges as they age. Illness, loss of a loved one, financial crisis, and other issues may be devastating. Growing through the transition may change a person's life and the lives of others as he or she chooses to become a better person or a bitter person.

11. Utilize your spiritual gifts. Don't try to do senior adult work alone, and don't rob others from exercising their spiritual gifts. You'll be amazed at the doors God will open as others contribute with their spiritual gifts.

12. Work from your strengths and not your weaknesses. If you know God has called you to equip others, that alone will give you some amazing freedom.

Select two or three of the 12 prerequisites and spend time in thought and prayer, asking God which prerequisites He wants you to work on and in what sequence and time frame.

Questions to Think About

- What does it mean to grow older, especially within the local church?
- Which of the 12 prerequisites is God speaking to me about?
- What happens to the church as our members grow older?

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