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upBuilding: how to motivate your staff to serve one another

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Here's the million-dollar question for many directors—how can I take a group of self-centered, young, independent Christians and motivate them to become a team of self-sacrificing, serving, caring staff? Good question.

Many times staff members will nod in agreement that they desire team unity. Most young people coming to serve at a Christian camp acknowledge the need for mutual edification on staff. They are usually aware that love, sacrifice, care, encouragement, and prayer for one another are important ingredients. So why doesn't it always turn out that way?

Well, quite simply it's a matter of motivation. And here is where I often went wrong as a director. I knew the goal—I wanted to see my staff serving one another in love. I knew that God held me responsible to lead and instruct them towards this goal. So I threw myself into endeavoring to provide an example for them to follow, and I provided instruction on what God wanted from them during their time at camp.

Again, the familiar nods during all my staff orientation lectures. Again, the expressions of agreement when I periodically brought exhortations. But yet, when I look back on those years, I'm not aware of much, if any, actual progress or change due to my leadership. In short, I think I failed to properly *motivate* my staff teams towards serving one another.

Here's what I would do differently. I would be much more alert to my tendency to motivate by legalism. In other words, merely telling my staff members *what* to do is not equipping them to bear the fruit of the Spirit, nor is it effectively pointing them to the source of change. If all I do is talk about how my staff should be serving one another, I leave the impression with them that it's up to them to do it. And the reason they should be doing it is because it's the right thing to do at a Christian camp. In essence I've left the focus on them and on what they do.

The calling of Christianity is to remove self from the center and to put Christ at the center of everything. Let me illustrate how this can work in motivating your staff to serve one another. The key verse would be Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life

a ransom for many.” As leaders we should do more than provide an example of self-sacrificial service and give instruction on how we want our staff to engage in self-sacrificial service. We need to point them to Christ. He provided the supreme example of serving. And He does more than just provide an example to follow. What He did when He came to serve is laid down His life on the cross to save us from our sins. This provides life-transforming motivation. Meditation and reflection on what Christ did for me, motivates me to want to serve others. When I realize how much I deserved eternal judgment from God, and when I realize that the One who should be my judge became my Savior, and when I realize that for Him to serve me cost His very life, then my heart begins to melt and be motivated to want to serve others. If He did this for me, surely I will want to enter into self-sacrificial service for my fellow staff members. If I want my life to proclaim the gospel, then I will want to reflect the heart and attitude of Christ to others.

This is the difference between motivating by legalism (just telling someone what they should do) and motivating by grace (connecting them with the transforming power of Christ). So let there be lots of talk about serving one another, but let it always be motivated by Christ who served us by laying down His life for our sins.