

Effectively Inefficient Pentecostal Leadership

By Stephanie Nance (M.Div., 2008)

Administrative Coordinator for the Network for Women in Ministry

This year marks my tenth year in ministry. Over the years, formal education, reading, attending seminars, mentorship, and real life experiences impacted my development as a church leader. I also had the privilege of applying learned leadership techniques with a top quality ministry team. Despite my training and a great support team, however, I constantly struggled to complete my leadership responsibilities efficiently and remain effective in ministry. I could not find a balance between the two. Eventually, I collapsed on the sidelines, discouraged and feeling completely ineffective as a leader.

When a professor recently asked me what it means to lead “Pentecostal-ly,” I pondered how efficiency and effectiveness should look for a Pentecostal leader. I concluded that leading “Pentecostal-ly” requires inefficient leading. Sounds strange, but efficiency is not something for which Pentecostal leaders should strive. While this sounds obviously contrary to standard leadership teaching, both Christian and secular, the reality is that Pentecostal leaders are not called to lead in a standard way but by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not appear to be as concerned with efficiency as the Western World is, since He empowers people for *effectiveness* rather than *efficiency*.

After pondering the difference between efficiency and effectiveness, I determined that efficiency focuses on producing quantity by striving to limit time and energy

expenditure; effectiveness, however, focuses on developing quality by requiring an investment of time and energy.

My desire to become what I call “effectively inefficient” came about from a random yet God-ordained combination of events that began with a challenge to write my first doctoral level paper on leading “Pentecostal-ly” and culminated with the longest lunch appointment of my life.

Lunch with a guy named Chad provided the insights I needed to pull together my wandering thoughts on effectiveness and efficiency. It was six o’clock in the morning when I jumped out of bed ready to take on my efficiently scheduled day that I knew would end with a feeling of accomplishment and balance. What I did not foresee when I left the house that morning was the twist that would take place in this lunch appointment. My perfectly timed and efficient one-hour lunch with Chad turned into a four-hour conversation. The intention of the lunch was to discuss spiritual formation, but things quickly went off course when I asked Chad to share with me his spiritual journey. I assumed Chad would give me a ten-minute version. I did not expect to find myself engrossed in a two-hour story about his twenty-year run from God’s call while making a seven-figure income in the corporate world. His story amazed me, but what grabbed my attention that day were his thoughts on efficiency and effectiveness.

Chad told me of his days as a successful businessman who supervised hundreds of employees. All day he sat in his office where he met with a different employee every twenty minutes. Each would spend two minutes in the waiting area with the secretary, who would purposefully dialogue with the employee about spouse, children, and life. In the meantime, Chad sat in his office and quickly reviewed what he needed for the eighteen-minute meeting. After the two minutes, the employee would be escorted into Chad's office where he or she had eighteen minutes to discuss the purpose of the meeting. During this time, the secretary would e-mail or text Chad specific information about the employee's family, suggesting he ask the employee about his or her children or spouse. The employee, not aware of the information exchange, always responded enthusiastically to Chad's interest in his or her life. As he told me this, Chad laughed with disgust and shook his head at the extreme superficial connection.

Chad knew efficiency firsthand. He got work done and reaped the financial benefits of it. When asked how he had adjusted to ministry after years in the corporate world, he stated that the initial transition was not difficult because pastors and churches worry as much about efficiency as the corporate world. One day, however, Chad realized that Jesus could have used a chariot, yet He chose to walk everywhere. He never seemed to be in a hurry. Chad began to wonder why Jesus would not choose to be more efficient with His time. After all, a more efficient Jesus would be more effective, right?

The truth is that efficiency does not equal effectiveness. Chad realized that Jesus walked so He would purposefully meet people along the way to whom He could minister. Jesus cared about the people on the journey and not just the people at the

destination. By today's standards, Jesus was not very efficient. He became easily sidetracked with peoples' problems. He spent time with the outcasts of society instead of time with the people who could help Him get His mission accomplished. And He had a tendency to show up late. Jesus clearly did not lead efficiently.

After hearing Chad's story, I began to think about Jesus and the apostles. I realized that Jesus' disciples followed their Master's inefficient leadership style. In Acts 6, the apostles found themselves distracted from the ministry because of the practicalities of operating a food program. Instead of planning their day efficiently and setting a schedule to manage both a food program and evangelistic ministry, they elected deacons to manage the food program. The apostles knew that their purpose was not to be efficient by balancing everything. They were called to be effective in their ministries of preaching, teaching, healing, and deliverance.

My friend Joel, who pastors a growing church in New Jersey, exemplifies what it looks like to minister effectively inefficient in his ministry context. Joel spends his days at one of three "office" locations: Panera Bread, Starbucks Coffee, or Dunkin Donuts. Refusing to lock himself away in a church office, Joel finds that making connections and conducting the necessary business of ministry in the marketplace of his town is more effective for his community and church. Obviously, he would be more efficient in the quietness of a church office with fewer interruptions. Joel's effectiveness on the journey to Sunday has become as important as his effectiveness behind the pulpit. Joel has discovered what it truly means to lead "Pentecostal-ly."

Over the years, many mentors and leaders have influenced my life. The ones worried about efficiency impacted me the least. I remember a conversation with a leader who attempted to minister to me one day in his office. At the strike of noon, he abruptly stood up and said we were finished. I understood his tight schedule, but when I walked away, I could not shake the feeling that I was just an appointment on his calendar. The mentors and leaders who have positively impacted my life treated me as a person the Spirit brought into their lives in whom to invest time and energy. No doubt, there were times they were busy and found it inefficient to talk with me. They chose, however, to be effectively inefficient and, as a result, shaped my life as a person and a leader.

Leaders carry many responsibilities and face many deadlines—all of which require time and energy boundaries. Effectiveness often demands the ability to work efficiently. It is vital, however, that efficiency flow out of the desire for effectiveness. I recently completed a large ministry project that could potentially impact thousands of people. This project took a great deal of time and energy.

In order to meet the deadlines, I worked efficiently. My choice to work efficiently to meet those deadlines, though, flowed out of my desire for effectiveness. That said, I still struggle to understand how this works. I admit I bypassed several opportunities to be effective on the daily journey throughout this last project's completion.

The key is allowing the Holy Spirit's empowerment to clarify what effective leadership looks like in my various ministry contexts. To lead "Pentecostal-ly" is to choose effectiveness over efficiency, the journey over the destination, people over productivity, quality over quantity. I desire to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, the Apostles, Chad, Joel, and my effective mentors and leaders. Now, I do not try to find a balance between effectiveness and efficiency but recognize that in my quest for effectiveness, efficiency will happen where and when it must. I may have a calendar filled with appointments, deadlines to meet, and an agenda to complete, but I daily choose to give it all to God and allow the Holy Spirit to empower me with the ability to lead effectively inefficient.