

Volunteers-The Lifblood of Your Church

Bob Adams

What do you do when a church experience built on volunteers throws a “No Show Sunday”? That was the experience at all of Elevation Church’s (Charlotte NC) multiple campuses this weekend as the staff designed a unique service both to honor current volunteers and encourage new volunteers as Elevation (3 campus locations, 8 services) prepares to add their first permanent site this fall and increase the number of services at each location.

Initially crafted as a response to being “a one-man show”, the weekend services began with no greeters, no parking crew, or no signs all over the place – typical Elevation features. As a matter of fact, one of Elevation’s core values is honoring guests. Not this weekend! Participants walked in to the campus locations with only a single sign at the entrance: “Elevation Church worship today”. No welcome team of any kind. Only a couple of staff members checking in kids at the different children’s areas. No resource booth. No energetic music or hosts outside the worship center: just a single sign pointing out the printed lyric sheets. A bare stage with a couple of portable speakers and a single mic stand. At each location, a single worship leader came out and led the crowd in music printed on the sheets.

When it was time for the sermon, Pastor Steven Furtick was onscreen as usual, with a simple greeting: “Welcome to the worst Sunday ever at Elevation Church!” What followed was a powerful message for the church today, based on Jesus’ first public miracle as recounted in John 2:1-11.

- The wedding scene in John 2 reflected a time when guests received honor; today at many churches, guests show up and we have nothing prepared.
- Jesus disassociated himself, deferring to another time. He owed nothing at the event, but gave everything. We, who owe everything, give nothing.
- Mary’s “do whatever He tells you” gave us instructions for obedience.

I was reminded of a comment by Uptown campus pastor Larry Hubatka several weeks ago: “You never get the full experience at Elevation until you volunteer.” I wrote it down, and it came back full force today in the absence of all volunteers.

Elevation Church is driven by volunteers: 1,860 volunteers are in the database. Each weekend over 860 volunteers work over 3,295 hour per week in the four broad areas of Family Services, Guest Services, Production, and Administration.

The powerful close came when Furtick reminded the audience that when Jesus turned the water into wine, the only ones who witnessed the miracle were the servants. When you serve, you get to witness the power of God.

Where do we sign up?

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