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## Getting everyone involved in ministry by Dave Ping

You can see them any Sunday – crowds of fans, desperately in need of exercise, watching a small group of players desperately in need of a rest. No, I'm not talking about a football game, I'm talking about how lots of churches practice ministry on Sunday morning and every other day of the week.

Though it may be possible to win a football game with a tiny band of highly trained and exceptionally skilled professionals, Ephesians 4:12 explains that God's game plan for winning the world to himself involves preparing all of God's people to serve on his team. The stakes are simply too high for armchair quarterbacking or playing the "church as usual" game. If you want to see ministry results like those in the New Testament, *everyone* needs to be equipped to get in the game.

So here are two big questions for you as a leader. First, are you and your team members tired of carrying the ball for ministry and outreach by yourselves? Second, if you are, how can you effectively encourage the spectators in your church to get into the game? If you're ready to lift some of the burden off of the "overworked few" and turn your "pew-potatoes" into powerfully participating players – it's time to begin creating an *outflow culture*.

### The C.L.A.S.S. series

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### An outflow pastor

I know a pastor named Doug who exemplifies what I'm talking about. When he first started, some might have had said that Doug's preaching style wasn't quite "ready for prime time." But Doug was and is amazingly good at letting God fill him up until his life overflows. You can tell Doug is different from most pastors just by listening to his answering machine. It says: "I'm not here right now because I'm out doing all kinds of good things for all kinds of people and having more fun than a human being should be able to have. Go ahead and leave a message and I'll call you back."

His "outflow attitude" has infected his little church and



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Dave Ping, co-author of [Outflow](#)

evangelism/missions. The backbone of Saddleback's Purpose Driven Church strategy, these classes have been used in all corners of the globe.

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helped it rapidly grow into one of the best-attended, most life-changing, and most outward-focused places in town. Among other things, they throw big parties called "Fun Fests" that draw as many as 5,000 neighbors from the surrounding community to hang out, eat free food, play games, and have a great time with their family and friends – all to communicate the love of Jesus.

But the very best thing about Doug's church is that it's not about Doug. It's not about his speaking ability or his personality or even the cool things he or his team does. It's about everyone receiving so much from Jesus that the whole congregation can't – and would never want to – contain it. So how do you go about cultivating this kind of culture? Lecturing about the Christian's responsibility to serve usually produces resistance rather than results. Clear biblical teaching certainly helps, but the most effective way to lead your people into outflow is to do it the way Jesus did it.

### **Outflow begins with inflow**

It may sound simplistic, but everyone has to be filled up before they can overflow. And everyone includes you. Jesus modeled this over and over again. It's easy to get caught up in pouring out more and more until there's nothing left. Hard as it is, you need to heed that still, small voice saying, "Come with me to a quiet place and get some rest." There will always be one more person who needs your help, one more pressing meeting to attend, and one more family responsibility you can't put off, but that doesn't change the fact that cultivating outflow in your congregation requires taking personal time with Jesus to get filled up and teaching others to do the same.

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### **Equipping churches for outflow**

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8b NIV)

When Jesus gave his final instructions before ascending into heaven, he laid out a basic approach we can use in equipping people for outflow: First, churchgoers must be continually filled with the Spirit. This means being equipped to find their personal *Jerusalem* – where they encounter God and grow closer to him. As they witness genuine spiritual power in their own lives, it will flow into relationships with family members and friends. As the first disciples had to learn to share Jesus in their hometowns throughout *Judea*, today's Christians need to be equipped "to give an answer to everyone who asks [them] to give the reason for the hope that [they] have. But do this with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15b NIV)

We also need to equip Christians and give them plenty of opportunities to reach beyond their comfort zones. Just as Christ commanded his followers to be witnesses in *Samaria* with people they'd normally avoid, the outflow culture is about reaching a more diverse and exciting array of people than ever before. As more and more different kinds of people are reached, filled, and equipped, soon they won't only care about themselves, their families, or even their cities. As God creates an outflow momentum within your church, finding ways to reach out *to the ends of the earth* will start to become second nature.

Soon, even the Sunday morning quarterbacks watching from the back pews will begin thirsting for the living water they see splashing out all around them. It will get harder and harder not to get swept up and into the game they were born to play – on Sunday morning and all seven

days of the week.

*If you'd like to learn more about how to cultivate an outflow culture in your church, check out Dave Ping and Steve Sjogren's new book, [Outflow](#) (Group, 2007).*

### **Recommended resources**

- [The Purpose Driven Church Conference on DVD](#)
  - [The S.H.A.P.E. Central](#)
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Dave Ping is executive director of [Equipping Ministries International](#). More than 130,000 pastors, missionaries, and volunteer leaders have been equipped to reach out more effectively using Dave's practical training. He is co-author (along with Steve Sjogren) of the new book, [Outflow](#). ©Copyright 2007. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

