

## **Seven Practices for Effective Ministry** by Andy Stanley

Book review by Matthew Gunia

Andy Stanley is senior pastor at the multi-campus North Point Community Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Reggie Joiner and Lane Jones also serve at North Point, leading its Family Ministry and Member Development programs respectively. "7 Practices of Effective Ministry" describes the leadership philosophy and practice at North Point with the idea that the reader (presumably a church leader) will be able to implement North Point's strategy or at least glean helpful information to make their church more successful.

"7 Practices of Effective Ministry" is divided into two parts and each is designed to convey North Point's 7 Practices in a unique way. The first part of the book is the fictional story of Pastor Ray who skips a church council meeting to attend big league baseball game. He ends up sitting next to the wealthy, successful owner of the team who spends the game explaining the 7 Practices. The fictional story (which was well-written and enjoyable "light" read) applies each of the 7 Practices to both a winning baseball team and to church leadership. The second part of the book is a fleshed out presentation of the 7 Practices that fits the typical Leadership Book genre. The Practice is presented as well as the rationale, potential pitfalls, and anecdotes from North Point. Each chapter ends with discussion questions to make the practice more applicable to the reader's particular ministry situation.

The 7 Practices (in my own words) are:

1. Clearly define what constitutes a "win" or "victory" in your ministry
2. Recognize that programs are not ends in and of themselves, but only steps that may help you gain a "win."
3. Cut out the pretty important stuff so that the really, really important stuff is both excellent and at the forefront
4. In teaching, preaching, and communicating, talk about the really, really important things and don't cloud people's minds with less important facts
5. Make sure you're continually listening to people outside your ministry and taking their thoughts seriously
6. Make sure you're always training somebody else to do your job
7. Carve out time to step back and re-evaluate. This allows you to work on your weaknesses and celebrate your "wins."

I found this book to be an enjoyable read. During the fictional story, I found myself wanting a more formal presentation of the Practice; yet during the second part, I found myself wanting an anecdotal application of it. Because the two sections complement one another so well, I found the book's layout a definite strength. The Practices themselves are also thought-provoking and helpful. Most helpful are their insights that "less is more" in ministry so a wise pastor will look to make cuts for a leaner, meaner church, and that one should continually be training their potential replacement because it will help the mentor analyze his own work and also free himself up for different (more important?) areas of service.

Overall, this book is recommended. The 7 Practices are practical, focused, and thought provoking. Even if a church does not adopt them, reading this book will help its leaders critically evaluate their ministry.