

## Turning Pew Potatoes Into Passionate Participators

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Intro

Cadre Ministries exists to train volunteers in the church so that they can move from being pew potatoes to passionate participators!

Three common hurdles that keep many of us from the joy that comes from serving God!

### Hurdle #1 The \_\_\_\_\_ hurdle

We pay the pastor to do ministry—it's the pastor's job!

Our volunteers function as helpers to our pastor (and/or church staff).

Our church leaders train volunteers to lead and do the work of the ministry.

Place your initials on the continuum that best represents what you think.  
Place an A above what you think the average American thinks.  
Place a V above what you think the average volunteer in the church thinks.

Let's now look at what GOD thinks: Eph 4:11-12 (NLT)...

*He [Jesus] is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility [the apostles, prophets evangelists, pastors, and teachers] is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church...*

1. Whose job is it to equip volunteers to do God's work?

• \_\_\_\_\_

2. Whose job is it to do God's work?

• \_\_\_\_\_

Place a B on the right side of the continuum for BIBLE—what the Bible teaches.

**To those of you who are to the left on our continuum**—you're thinking:

*I give money to this church and I expect the pastors to do the work of the ministry.*

Let me say this to you: Giving is essential to your spiritual growth. However, God is not impressed with money! He wants you to serve him—not just put a check in the offering.

**To those of you in the center of our continuum**—you're thinking:

*The pastor is supposed to do the work of the ministry. We are his helpers.*

According to Ephesians 4:11-12, it's the other way around! God wants us—his people—volunteers in the church—YOU AND ME—to do his work—and pastors (along with apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers) are here to help equip us!

**To anyone who is tracking with me**—thinking this thing through—you may be having an epiphany right now: *Wait a minute! We're paying a pastor to train us to do the work of the ministry? We pay and do the work?*

I say—CONGRATULATIONS! You win! You understand how God desires the church to function according to Ephesians 4:11-12!

I believe Ephesians 4:11-12 is the greatest biblical omission in most evangelical churches in America today.

If you are able to leap over **Hurdle #1 The We-Pay-the-Pastor hurdle**, you need to immediately get ready to face hurdle #2:

**Hurdle #2 The \_\_\_\_\_ hurdle**

Throughout history, God has used some of the most unlikely people from some of the most ordinary places to make an extraordinary difference for him!

Look at who Jesus chose to be his disciples! In the book, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, John MacArthur writes, "Have you ever considered who Jesus didn't choose for His inner circle? He didn't select a rabbi. He didn't recruit scholars. He didn't look within the religious establishment to build his team. Instead, He assembled a ragtag bunch of folks with unimpressive resumes. The men the Savior chose were ordinary. Hopelessly human. Remarkably unremarkable."

Consider this fictitious letter that a modern day consulting company might have written to Jesus about his choice of disciples:

**To:** Jesus, Son of Joseph  
**From:** Jordan Management Consultants

*Dear Sir:*

*Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for managerial positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.*

*It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.*

*Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew had been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.*

*One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man.*

*We wish you every success in your new venture. Sincerely,  
Jordan Management Consultants*

That fictitious letter has much to teach us if we'll take the time to process it. Many of us tend to think: "God can't use me. I'm not very smart, gifted, influential, or wealthy." Those are the very reasons why you qualify to be used of God in a mighty way! Check out I Cor 1:26-29 (NLT)

*Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes, or powerful, or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God deliberately chose things the world considers **foolish** in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose those who are **powerless** to shame those who are powerful. God chose things **despised** by the world, things counted as **nothing** at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important, so that no one can ever boast in the presence of God.*

If you feel foolish, powerless, despised and like nothing, you are ahead of those who think they have something to offer God! The wise, mighty, talented, and wealthy have to go through God's grinder of brokenness before God can use them like he wants. Why? Because gifted people tend to trust in their own gifts and abilities—not God. The more gifted—the more we tend to trust in ourselves. Broken people have learned to trust in God—not themselves! If you're broken—you're poised to be used by God in a big way. Why does God often choose to use nobodies—the least likely? Because he gets the glory!

- I love it when God uses a housing project punk like me. People look at me and say, "That had to be God!"

That's why I love the prayer of John Piper: "Lord, let me make a difference for you that is utterly disproportionate to who I am."

So the next time you feel like God can't use you, just remember the Bible is full of flawed people that God used to make a difference for him:

- Noah got drunk
- Abraham thought he was too old
- Isaac was a dreamer
- Jacob was a liar
- Leah was ugly
- Joseph was abused
- Moses said he had a stuttering problem
- Gideon was afraid
- Samson was a long-haired womanizer
- Rahab was a prostitute
- Jeremiah and Timothy were thought to be too young
- David was an adulterer and murderer
- Elijah was suicidal
- Isaiah preached naked (I have a hard enough time drawing a crowd)
- Jonah ran from God
- Naomi was a widow
- Job went bankrupt
- John the Baptist ate bugs
- Peter denied Christ
- The disciples fell asleep while praying
- Martha was a worry wart
- The Samaritan woman was divorced--more than once
- Zaccheus was considered too small
- Paul was too religious
- Timothy had stomach problems
- Lazarus was dead!

Don't you love that list?

To those of you who may be tripping on **Hurdle #2 The I-Can't-Believe-God-Wants-to-Use-Me hurdle**, I want to point out that the above list teaches us at least three *very encouraging* truths:

1. We're all works in progress.
2. God isn't concerned with your ability as much as he is your availability.
3. I want to say this again so that you will understand God is talking to YOU:  
Throughout history, God has used some of the most unlikely people (flawed people like us) from some of the most ordinary places to make an extraordinary difference for him!

If you are running with me and God has enabled you to leap over **The We-Pay-the-Pastor hurdle** and **The I-Can't-Believe-God-Wants-to-Use-Me hurdle** then we have just one major hurdle left...

### Hurdle #3 The \_\_\_\_\_ hurdle

I challenge you to take two specific next steps:

1. Discover and deploy your spiritual gifts.  
*God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you.* 1 Peter 4:10 (NLT)
2. Take The Seven Day Devotional/Dialogue Challenge!  
For the next seven days, I challenge you to work through this devotional workbook I've written with a friend of mine called, *Training Makes All the Difference*. Much of the content of this message was taken from this devotional workbook. We offer the entire workbook as a FREE download at [www.cadreministries.com/free](http://www.cadreministries.com/free).

Closing thought:

The church has been compared to a football game—where 22,000 people who are in desperate need of exercise sit around watching 22 people who are in desperate need of rest.

Are you are player or a spectator?

Commissioning Prayer:

God—help us over the hurdles that keep us from the joy of serving you. Do whatever it takes to get us out of the stands and into the game—to move us from spectators to players—from pew potatoes to passionate participators—in the building of your kingdom!