

What One Concept Can Improve the Quality of Your Ministry and Life?

Dr. Mark Rutland is my favorite expert on leadership and management in the Christian community. He has a way of connecting the dots to make things that seem complex totally understandable. Recently, I interviewed him on the Charisma Podcast Network about “quality control.” I asked him why so many ministries and churches have the reputation of poor quality.

He said quality comes down to this: “meeting expectations.” There is not an objective measure of quality—everyone would see it somewhat differently—so a leader must manage expectations and then meet those expectations!

If a church advertises that it is the “friendliest church in town” but isn’t friendly, it doesn’t matter if it has a wonderful music ministry, a great youth ministry or anything else.

Sadly, for many ministries, “good enough is good enough.” Many ministries are not known for quality. It’s well-known that many churches and ministries have a reputation of poor quality.

I interviewed Dr. Rutland for my “Strang Report” podcast, which will be online in a few days. I asked him why so many ministries and churches are in this predicament. To fix it, he offered these tips:

- **Define expectations.** There is no such thing as a “quality youth ministry” or “quality music ministry.” It must be the expectations of the leadership in that church.

- **Write the expectations down.** Should the expectation of the youth ministry be to “babysit” the children of the adults in the church or reach every teenager in the county with the gospel? Is the music ministry to be more traditional or should it try every new song from Hillsong?
- **Teach the expectations.** Give an “elevator speech” of what the ministry’s goals are that people can repeat in a few seconds. This will aid word of mouth and help your ministry grow.
- **Leaders should accept responsibility** to make this happen and not expect someone else to do it. That’s when confusion reigns, and that’s anything but “quality.”

When Dr. Rutland teaches these principles, the effect he has on people is similar to what I saw with Peter Drucker, the well-known management “guru,” who died a couple of years ago. His management technique transformed many industries, particularly in the aftermath of World War II. I had the privilege of attending two of his seminars when he was close to 90. He was dynamic and was able to teach concepts that I remember to this day.

For example, he said, “New trends start as an unexpected surprise.” As a result, he looked for unexpected surprises, both good and bad, as a harbinger of things to come. However, he says, in the beginning, a trend and a fad look exactly alike. I have found that to be true.

In a somewhat similar way, I learned from Dr. Mark Rutland that a turnaround requires the same sort of energy and leadership as a start-up. That helped me when I was confronted in my career with the enormous changes in the digital world and had to incorporate digital publishing into what we had done successfully for so many years. That one phrase was life changing because I understood what a start-up involved.

I asked Dr. Rutland what an average person could do to improve

quality in their own sphere—either in the organizations they lead or the products they produce, or even simply in how they do their jobs. He said to identify what the expectations are and to communicate them widely. Then, meet with your people from time to time to see what kind of progress they are making.

Isn't it interesting that sometimes the simplest things are the hardest to pull off, yet when we have an excellent mentor and teacher like Dr. Rutland, things start to fall into place?

Dr. Rutland has been the president of two major universities. He has written many books, and he is the head of the National Institute of Christian Leadership (which Charisma Media has the privilege of co-sponsoring). I have personally gone through the course and, in the process, have seen transformation that takes place when leaders finally seem to understand some of the concepts that are necessary to successfully lead.

The National Institute of Christian Leadership is graduate-level quality. The classes are four times a year for 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ days each. At the conclusion, several universities will accept it for credit toward either an MBA or a seminary degree. I urge you to go to to find out more, including dates and locations.
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