



Serenity

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Who is Suitable to Lead a Recovery Road Ministry in our Church?

An interesting question.

Who is qualified to run a program like this?

Should he or she be an upstanding member of the church community? A person of good character and high moral fibre? Someone who is approved by the church board and the nominating committee? Who will make the decision?

Since starting our *Recovery* ministry in 2008, one thing has become apparent: often, the most unlikely people come out of the woodwork to take on this task. They can be people who would not pass muster with the eldership and committees of the church. Some are

classified as misfits and not to be trusted, perhaps unreliable and prone to rebellious behaviours.

There are some truths we have learned since starting down *Recovery Road*. First, you cannot participate in the program without being changed. Recently when filming the *Recovery Road* TV series at 3ABN, we took the studio and production crew with us as we presented each of the twelve steps, punctuated with our own personal testimonies. After a solid week of filming everyone agreed that their lives had been changed by the journey in the studio.

As ministry leader and cofounder of *Mission Serenity*, I am acutely aware that I would never have been chosen by a

nominating committee to run an outreach program like this for the church. I had a self-confessed dark past and had come newly to the church with a passion like a front row forward in a ballet school. My wife Michelle has a similar experience. There were those who said with biblical certainty that someone who had been sexually

abused in the church as a child had no place leading out in front of the church.

Second, we have long been of the opinion that we should always look beyond someone's behaviour to find the pain that drives it. Many good people have been hurt into a situation where defensive behaviour has made them unacceptable to others who know nothing of their pain or experience. *Recovery Road* is a unique ministry where the experience of personal pain and suffering may well make you ideally suited to participate.

I once had a lady of the church come to me and say that she would not volunteer if a certain man were going to be part of the team.

"Haven't you heard the gossip about him?" She asked.

I replied, "No," and she proceeded to tell me that, years ago, he had





The Real Power of Prayer

I have listened intently and somewhat bemusedly to many who expound the power of prayer.

Skepticism looms large in the mind of a new believer and I can testify to that. But there is no doubt that it was answered prayer that locked in my faith eight years ago when my beloved wife Michelle almost died as we were soon to be wed.

Since then I have lost count of the answered prayers that have concreted my faith in God. The recent birth of twins to my daughter Renee, after years of failed pregnancies, is a prime example when we consider that a church in Perth were praying for her every prayer meeting and that she would have a double blessing.

It's a while ago now when I decided to set aside a wall under the window in my study where I would post "sticky notes" with the names of people for whom I would pray each morning. I decided that as I heard that these prayers were answered, I would put a tick on the note. After a couple of months now, my wall is covered in ticks!

I studied the ways that I had prayed in the past and found a gaping flaw in my thinking and a huge hole in my faith. You see, I was always hedging my prayers with my own ideas, just in case God wouldn't respond. You know how it goes. Just in case God doesn't answer I will do this or plan that.

This just means a lack of faith on my part. God more often answers our prayers in subtle ways by giving us what we need rather than what we want.

In the fullness of time we see His hand in so many ways that lead us to where we always wanted to be in the first place.

In my early ministry I boldly proceeded ahead of God, as if I knew what He wanted of me. I went so far ahead that I had cut myself off from my much-needed spiritual supply line.

One sure indicator of this is if you find yourself asking why God is not showing you what you want. The answer is simple. He is showing you what you need, not what you want.

Remember to be careful what you ask for. If we got our yearly bread instead of our daily bread, where would we store it?

It has taken some time but I think I finally get it. Now I pray, claiming God's promises. I ask knowing it will be given and then I do what we should all do when we pray. Get out of God's way.

This has made all the difference to my life and my spiritual walk. Sometimes it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks.

God never wastes a hurt.

Graham.

assaulted his then wife.

My reply was swift and to the point.

"Thank you for telling me," I replied. "That is all the more reason I want him on the program."

In a huff she walked away and never set foot in the ministry. I ask this question: did she need recovery more than he?

The man in question participated in the program for more than two years and healed to give a brave testimony of his life to a stunned church. A church amazed at the courage of the man as much as the change in his character.

So let us examine this question again.

What if the person deemed unacceptable became healed and changed so that the behaviour that disqualified them no longer existed? What if as a result of this shift in character others turned to the program for healing too? This much is true. There is not one person on the planet who does not need recovery. It is a beatitude-based, Christ-centered sanctification process.

I have seen many of these people change before my eyes and I love the change.

Why? Because it is Spirit driven. When stating an opinion on someone's suitability to lead, we risk rejecting them again, just like Jesus was rejected. We must also remember the men Jesus chose to follow Him and lead the world to His church. Prayerful support of these people and the miracle of Christ-centered recovery will work and lives will change.

Recovery ministry must be permitted to function with autonomy within a church and not be at the mercy of well-meaning boards and committees who fail to see the inner workings of this grace-filled work. We are not meant to judge or condemn but to love and support. Pray and then get out of God's way and see the miracles that will inevitably flow. Remember that God never wastes a hurt.

Wintley Phipps once said, "It is in the quiet crucible of your own personal pain and suffering that your greatest dreams are born and God's greatest gifts are given to you in compensation for all that you've been through."

Bring *Recovery Road* into your church and then get out of God's way. You will never regret it.

Graham Hood.

Recovery Road on 3ABN

Well, the time has come when we go to air on 3ABN International. The programs are repeated at different times and you will soon be able to watch on demand, on the 3ABN Australia website, as well as our own web site.