

Turning Rejection into Redirection

A deeper look at gifts and talents

Ministry without discernment can turn into chaos, which is what Clay Hecoeks faced after coming to Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale. A common practice among churches is to have a choir that is open to all who are interested. Fourteen years ago, Clay inherited an open choir, mediocre music, and frustrated musicians. The choir had been called a “Worship Community” to emphasize the fact that it was open to all. The musically talented members of the Worship Community were not being challenged by the music. On the other side of the spectrum, those who were not musically gifted struggled to keep up.

Clay solved this problem by applying some Biblical principles to his role as Worship Pastor. He started by explaining his plan to the Worship Community. Clay says, “Ecclesiastes 3 says that there is a time for everything, including a time to tear down and a time to rebuild. “I told the choir that it was time to take a break and that we would rebuild the choir, starting with auditions.” Clay even changed the name from Worship Community to Worship Choir, not because he had a problem with community, but because he felt the choir should maintain a certain level of quality. “Psalms 33:3 says to sing to Him a new song, play skillfully, and shout for joy, so one of my soapboxes is the whole skill level. I really encourage all the musicians to invest in their talents.”

After a month break, Clay held auditions for the Worship Choir. Everyone was told to pick a song that is sung at Calvary Chapel and be prepared to sing it. Clay plays the piano for them and he is the only one in the room during auditions. “They can face the wall if they want, I’m not here to embarrass them or anything.” He applied the par-



able of the talents in a unique way that has become a part of his standard evaluation practice. (For more on this, see the article Clay wrote for VISION: “Rejection: A Gift from God?”)

With several years of auditions behind them, the worship choir, the worship team and the band have reached a level of excellence that has actually created a very positive environment. The people involved in the ministry are excited to be there, and new people coming into the church see the quality and want to be a part of it. “Last summer, we had auditions and over 70 people came out,” Clay says.

How does Clay take responsibility for those who don’t make the cut? “I see my role as turning rejection into redirection. They may have not realized where their skill level is. If this is not where God is calling them, then where is He calling him?” Clay does not want anyone to leave an audition feeling rejected; instead he hopes this experience will help them discover where God wants to use them. “I don’t want for them to just leave with their tail between their legs.” He makes an investment into each person by talking to them about the other areas of ministry within Calvary Chapel. Together they talk about where else God could be tugging at their heart. Clay asks them to pray about it for a week and then let him know. Once someone decides on an area of ministry, Clay helps get them in touch with the leaders of that ministry. The church is one body with many parts. We cannot all be voices, but we all have a ministry role. ■