

Integral to the church's vision was helping believers discover their gifts and life mission and releasing them into ministry and mission.

Master Planning at The River Church

By Ron & Geri Swingle, Founders of R@HT

The River Church, a Four Square church of 400 located in Durango, Colorado partnered with The Retreat at Hidden Treasure (R@HT) to deliver an integrated 10-week program focused on introducing and delivering Christian Life Coaching and LifePlanning services to its staff and congregants. This program, titled *Master Planning* by the senior pastor, Dwight Saunders, was part of a larger vision of the church to help its body *Go, Grow and Give*. Integral to this vision was helping believers discover their gifts and life mission and releasing them into ministry and mission.

The Tools

Two main tools were administered by R@HT. First, a faith-based strength assessment tool named *The Calltm* provided an objective, usable view of people's

God-given motivational gifts, occupational interests and personality and behavior traits. Second, a LifePlanning process, developed by R@HT, provided a framework, or roadmap, for people to discover God's plan for their lives.

What is a LifePlan?

A LifePlan is a personal strategic plan for a person's life. A personal mission statement, 3-year vision and action plan all providing a necessary roadmap for individuals or couples to walk out God's plan for their lives.

The Approach

Leaders from R@HT recommended a top down approach; meaning, start with the staff first, then work it down into the lay leaders and finally, the general



Staff Workshop



Surrender Service



Church Workshop

church population. Goals of the approach were as follows:

- Enable staff members to experience LifePlanning firsthand.
- Equip staff members to lead the application of the *Master Planning* sermon series through Small Group discussions running parallel with the sermon subject each week.
- Educate staff members on Life Coaching techniques to be used ongoing in leading the church, their individual departments and their personal lives.

The following steps were taken to roll out the program throughout the church:

1. Each staff member completed The Call[™] strength assessment and private debrief with a Call-qualified Christian Life Coach.
2. A one-day workshop was facilitated by R@HT with the church staff of seven. This workshop enabled staff members to discover or refine their own personal mission and vision for the future.

3. Pastor Dwight delivered a six-week sermon series titled *Master Planning* to provide a scriptural basis for the foundational belief that God has a plan for each of our lives.
4. During each of the six-week sermon series, the founders of R@HT were either interviewed during the Sunday service, or shown on short videos, providing practical applications and insights to Pastor Dwight's sermon topics.
5. Upon completion of the sermon series, a church-wide all-day seminar was offered. Ron and Geri Swingle of R@HT delivered a LifePlanning workshop in a large group setting. Workshop topics covered included: Strengths and Passions, Roadblocks, Life Experiences, Mission, Vision and Action Plan.

The Results

All indicators from the program were very positive, starting with participation as shown below.

What was one of your main takeaways from the workshop?

“The meaning of surrender – giving up the outcome. I’ve been struggling with how to walk in God’s will – it was an AHA moment!”

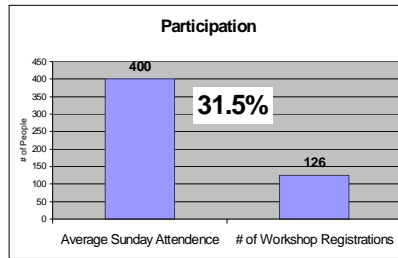
“Understanding my strengths and realizing roadblocks.”

“The mission statement and the clarity it can bring to your whole life – I love what you guys are doing and find my own passions and interests in the same area! More people need this!”

“Great process for me in transitional time in my life – New Inspirations!”

“God has a purpose for my life & wants to tell me. And it’s probably bigger than what I can see now.”

“That I am worth the vision & mission God gave me.”



Out of an average Sunday attendance of 400, 126 people attended the church-wide workshop, nearly a third of the church body!

Of the 126 that attended, the following responses were measured:

- 36 participants signed up for R@HT’s free monthly newsletter titled *Strategic Living*.
- 10 participants requested to be contacted by the church to see how they might use their gifts in ministry at the church.
- 7 participants requested follow up from R@HT regarding private Life Coaching or LifePlanning help.

Feedback from the staff has been equally positive. One member was inspired to walk out the vision God placed on his heart: to author and publish his own music. Another confirmed a calling to embrace his ministry

with teens and take it to another level. Moreover, because of the increased confidence of each staff member in his or her giftings, Pastor Dwight feels freer to step out and expand his ministry to those places in the world that draw out his passion for orphans.

Final Observations

It was quite a privilege for us to be an integral part of God presenting Himself to The River Church in such a powerful way. While the results may vary from church to church, we feel there were a few takeaways, or lessons learned, that could make this program a success in any church.

First, full commitment from the senior pastor was evident from the start. Pastor Dwight’s vision and passion to release his church for service was infectious.

Second, having the staff experience LifePlanning firsthand was critical so that they could teach others from “I know” rather than “I think.”

Third, Pastor Dwight’s six-week series provided a huge momentum-builder which was a major contributor to the large attendance at the church-wide workshop.

*Discover your God-given gifts,
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Fourth, the fit of this program into the church's mission of releasing others for service provided the necessary backdrop, ensuring this was not a one-time event; rather, it is now being woven into the fabric of the church.

About The River Church:

The mission of the River Church is to create communities of Radical Followers of Jesus who are passionate about God and His Kingdom so they *Go* to the world, *Grow* in relationship & Generously *Give* themselves to their life mission to advance the Kingdom of God.

www.iriverchurch.com

About The Retreat at Hidden Treasure:

Located in beautiful southwestern Colorado, R@HT helps men, women and married couples discover God's plan for their lives by facilitating and coaching them to exceed their own limitations.

www.retreatathiddentreasure.com