



STUFF YOU CAN USE

Hi saoumyaa!

Every team has a culture.

Even if you've never talked about it.

Even if you've never defined it.

Even if you've been too busy to think about it.

And if you're not shaping your team's culture intentionally, it's still forming—but not necessarily in the ways you would hope.

We'll be digging deeper into this together in the next [Leadership Labs workshop](#). But for now, let's talk about healthy ministry cultures and how to know if you're actively creating one.

The truth is, culture doesn't wait for your permission to form.

**The uncomfortable truth is that most teams don't drift toward great culture.**

Instead, they drift toward confusion, inconsistency, and frustration—unless a leader is intentional.

That's not cynicism—it's what research and experience consistently show.

When expectations aren't clear, people guess.

When ownership isn't defined, people overlap or withdraw.

When communication is inconsistent, people create their own narratives.

And slowly, culture forms.

## What the Research Actually Says

When Google studied high-performing teams, they expected to find that talent, experience, or resources made the biggest difference.

They were wrong.

The primary differentiator wasn't résumé strength. It was culture—specifically, **psychological safety, clarity, and the sense of doing meaningful work.**

Gallup reports something similar. Teams marked by strong trust, clear expectations, and belonging consistently outperform other teams and experience significantly lower turnover.

So the question isn't whether culture is forming.

**The question is – What kind of culture is forming on your team right now?**

Because if you don't shape it, it will shape itself.

## Great Culture Is Built on Purpose

The teams people love—the ones volunteers commit to, staff grow in, and leaders are proud of—don't form accidentally.

They are designed.

And they tend to share a few common traits.

### Trait #1: No One Has to Guess What's Expected

Guessing cultures are anxious cultures.

When expectations are vague, people overwork to compensate—or underperform because they're unsure.

Clarity creates calm by answering:

- What do we do?
- How do we do it?
- Who owns what?
- How do we behave here?

**When leaders assume alignment instead of defining it, confusion quietly begins to grow.**

Clarity is not micromanagement. It is a gift to your team.

### Trait #2: People Feel Known and Valued

Harvard researcher Amy Edmondson's work on psychological safety found something surprising. **The strongest predictor of team learning and performance is the belief that you won't be punished or embarrassed for speaking up.** Read that again.

Not talent.

Not drive.

Not strategy.

Safety.

Connection is the foundation of great culture.

And connection doesn't mean everyone is best friends. It means leaders are present, curious, and consistent.

### Trait #3: Communication Creates Shared Meaning

Most teams don't fail because they lack passion. Instead, they fail because they lack shared understanding.

Research consistently shows that poor communication is among the top reasons leaders lose their way.

Here's an important nuance—communication isn't just sending information.

**Communication is creating shared meaning.**

Great cultures communicate:

- Clear priorities
- Real feedback
- Honest conversations
- Predictable rhythms

When people understand the why, the win, and the plan, they'll be happy to run together.

When they don't, they'll run in circles.

## Trait #4: People Feel Trusted, Not Controlled

No one loves being micromanaged.

Research on empowering leadership consistently shows that autonomy and ownership increase engagement, innovation, and retention.

Ownership answers:

- Do I have a voice?
- Do I get to lead something?
- Does my contribution matter?

Teams stagnate when leaders hoard decisions. But, **teams come alive when leaders share ownership.**

Trust signals respect. Control signals fear.

And people can feel the difference.

The good news is that people don't need perfect leaders. They need available ones.

Culture isn't created with a grand gesture. It's created from small moments repeated consistently over time—remembering details, following up, listening without getting defensive, and inviting input *before* decisions are final.

## Why This Matters in Ministry

In ministry, culture isn't just operational—it's formative.

The way your team operates shapes:

- Volunteer retention
- Staff longevity
- Kids' and Students' experience
- And ultimately, ministry sustainability

You don't build culture by accident.

You build it decision by decision.

## Go Deeper in Leadership Labs!

Leadership Labs was designed with this exact tension in mind.

Not to demand more time from already overextended leaders—but to help leaders build:

- Healthy teams
- Clear communication strategies

- Strong cultures
- Sustainable ministries

A great ministry doesn't just need vision. It needs a culture that people don't want to leave.

👉 **Sign up for our next Leadership Labs live workshop [here](#)!** These workshops are designed to help you **learn, experiment, and grow your leadership skills**. With Leadership Labs, you'll get...

- Live 60-minute Leadership Labs with me (Yulee!) and some special guests
- Live group discussion
- Note sheets for each session
- A practical leadership "experiment" to help you apply what you've learned in your ministry

And it's only \$9.97 for each workshop! Sound like something you could use? Then **sign up [here](#)** and let's grow our leadership skills together!

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