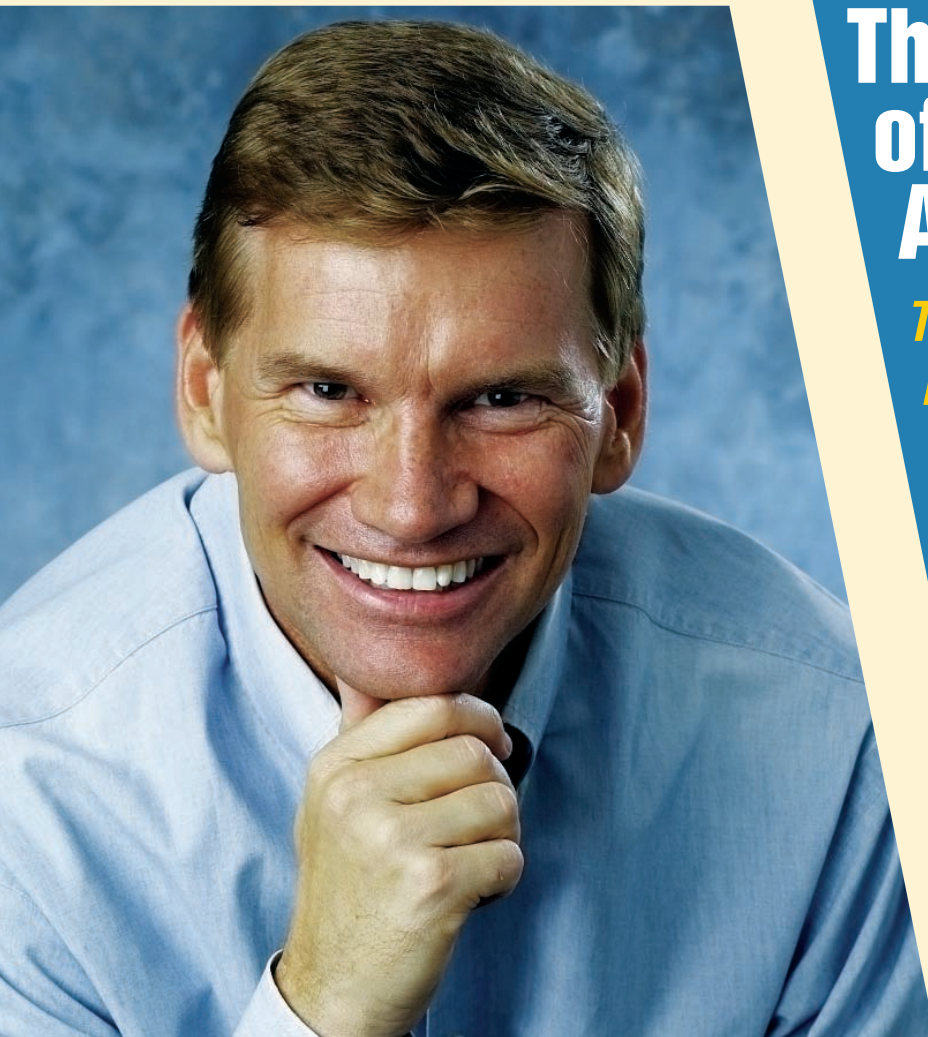


# The Ministry of Management: A High Calling

*Ted Haggard, NAE  
President and Megachurch  
Pastor, Talks About Life-  
Giving Management—  
and How to Empower  
and Encourage People*

By Steve Rabey



**Y**ou may have seen Ted Haggard on NBC's "Dateline" program, or in the pages of *The New York Times* or *TIME* magazine (which named him one of the 25 most influential evangelicals in America), or on the cover of *Christianity Today*, which featured his smiling face and the headline, "A New Kind of Evangelical."

Haggard founded New Life Church ([newlifechurch.org](http://newlifechurch.org)) in the basement of his Colorado Springs home in 1985. Today the church has 12,000 members, making it the largest church in the state and one of the largest in the nation. The church has a staff of 227 and more than 500 active volunteers.

Named president of the National Association of Evangelicals ([nae.net](http://nae.net)) in 2003, Haggard said a priority was enhancing evangelicals' image. "For many people, the stereotypical image of an evangelical is a very serious old man with an expensive suit who is against whatever is happening that day," he told one reporter.

Haggard also wants to enhance the ways evangelicals manage their churches and their non-profit organizations, and the updated version of his book, *The Life Giving Church*, devotes 48 pages to New Life's bylaws, which Haggard believes are a model for others to follow. He provided additional insights in this recent interview with *Christian Management Report*.



*Hear Ted Haggard at  
CMA Colorado 2006!*

**CMR: What are some of the key theological principles that form the basis of your philosophy of management?**

Number one is respect for people. Related to that is the belief that we should respect people's ideas and suggestions for doing things more creatively or efficiently.

I believe that the purpose of church governance is to facilitate ministry and thwart sin. But some leaders have become so consumed with thwarting sin that they inadvertently thwart ministry and facilitate sin. In effect, their church governance is so cautious that the most innovative and creative people either can't tolerate it or go elsewhere.

One corporate leader who has influenced me is Bill Gates. He said the best way to protect Microsoft's market dominance was to create an environment where the sharpest and brightest people want to stay. We do that here at New Life through our "Dream Team" meetings where we share our ideas. And whereas in most churches the default answer seems to be no, our default answer is yes. Our goal is not to find problems, but to find strengths and empower them.

That approach relates to our relationships with the news media. When the press wants to come onto our campus and ask questions, our default answer to everyone is yes, whereas some Christian groups' default with the media is a no.

I also encourage people to hire friends. They must be capable and responsible, but they should also be people they enjoy working with when they come to the office. I think Jesus did that. When Jesus picked his team, he picked people he would enjoy ministering with, walking down the road with, and having meals with.

**CMR: Do your principles work equally well in both church and parachurch settings?**

Yes and no. I would say the main difference is that parachurch organizations have specific projects that need to be fulfilled, whereas the local church needs to be more empowering of its members. So Focus on the Family (which is located nearby) doesn't have to consider everything that people suggest, but New Life does. Still, I would say that leaders in both settings need to get new, fresh ideas all the time or they're going to decline.

**CMR: Are there aspects of traditional approaches to church and parachurch management that you feel have become outmoded or possibly hinder the work of Christ?**

Yes, and I would say NAE represents some of the

challenges inherent in traditional approaches that emphasize inclusion over efficiency. NAE is a large organization that represents many groups, and its board is huge because it emphasizes inclusion. But I believe that in our post-agrarian society, people value efficiency more than inclusion.

Here at New Life, for example, guests won't hear members arguing about which people are on which committee. Instead, they will hear about the 17 New Life teams that left for Louisiana this morning to provide aid to victims of Hurricane Katrina. This gives people the feeling that as they give and participate, their action is actually going to accomplish something rather than getting lost in a black hole of meetings or wasted time and money.

**CMR: What would you say are the main contrasts between church and parachurch managers and their counterparts in the business world?**

I think there are fewer and fewer contrasts over time, and you can see that in the fact that Christians like John Maxwell speak at "secular" conferences and executives from Coke and CISCO speak at Christian gatherings. Each group is adopting the other's ideas that work.

I also believe that a major reason for the growth of megachurches is that most megachurch leaders are exceptional administrators, leaders and inspirers. It really doesn't have that much to do with their theology.

**CMR: You describe yourself as a whole-hearted supporter of "enlightened free-market prin-**

***"Pastor Ted Haggard continues to press toward the goal of making it hard to go to hell from Colorado Springs."***  
**—New Life Church website**

**principles.” And New Life’s 1,000-plus small groups are organized around “market” principles, or people’s interests. Are market principles godly, or is it merely that they work?**

They are godly principles, because in a free market, nobody can prosper unless you are providing something that someone else values. So it forces everyone to be a servant of everyone else.

In Europe, there are established churches. The government collects money and pays pastors, no matter how many people attend. As a result, Europe is full of empty churches. But in the U.S., if a pastor is unable to communicate and lead people, this church will fail. So the free-market dynamic has forced American churches to thrive or perish.

**CMR: Is there a difference between managing for growth and managing for maintenance?**

Yes. And church leaders, for example, must watch market signals to achieve a balance between growth and assimilation. At New Life, this impacts our budgeting and programs. And I would suggest to other churches that if they’ve been growing 20 percent or more a year, they need to fund assimilation. And if they’ve been growing five percent or less a year, they need to fund growth.

**CMR: How do you handle issues of disagreement and consensus in both your New Life staff meetings**

**and in your role as president of National Association of Evangelicals?**

Consensus is easier here at New Life, but the larger the group the more you have to be willing to accept the fact that you’re not going to have everybody in consensus.

In November I sent out a memo to NAE members on the dangers I saw with video-ready cell phones. This is a great technology, but pastors and parents need to discuss the fact that these phones can access pornography. I think this is something we all need to tell our congregations about.

I’m more careful when it comes to controversial issues like global warming. I believe that global warming is for real, and that humans are causing that. But I don’t say that as the president of NAE. I say it as a scuba diver who has seen tremendous damage to coral reefs around the world, and as a steward of creation, who believes we are not using our talents wisely. But this is not the position of the 30 million members of NAE, so I am more cautious when I represent NAE on this issue.

There are two kinds of leadership. One is the approach of strong, principled leadership you can see in George Bush. The other approach reads polls and represents what people believe, as you saw with Bill Clinton. I think both can be appropriate, and as a leader I need to determine which approach fits each situation I face.

**CMR: As a charismatic you place a high value on the work of the Holy Spirit. How can managers let the Spirit guide their actions and decisions?**

I think knowing the will of God is like knowing what my dad would do in certain situations. Sometimes I know what God’s preferences are without him having to speak to me. Although the Lord does speak to me, and I always love that and delight in that.

But I do not believe that being subject to the Holy Spirit is a denial of intellect or reason. I pray and read my Bible in the morning and trust that God in his sovereignty will keep his hand in all the decisions that need to be made.

**CMR: Do you have a final word you would like to give to CMA members?**

They need to know that they are important in the work of God. Everything rises or falls on them. It’s the manager who empowers the visionary. Managers are the maintainers, and without them, our organizations wouldn’t get anything done. Without them, many ministries would have collapsed.

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