

# How Many People Does It Take To Clean Your Ministry Closet?



## Key Concepts with Timestamp Ranges

*(All timestamps refer to Lead Ministry Podcast Episode 309)*

### 1. Why Cleaning a Ministry Closet is More Than a Chore

*00:20 to 03:10*

- Churches often joke about interns fetching coffee or cleaning closets, yet closet cleaning actually exposes deeper issues.
- Space is emotional, territorial, and strategic.
- A closet is never just a closet. It represents stewardship, history, and team culture.

### 2. The Danger of Turning an Intern Loose

*03:20 to 06:07 and 11:14 to 12:05*

- Interns do not know what matters, what is valuable, or what carries history.
- Unsupervised cleaning can accidentally destroy meaningful ministry items.
- Your intern should never be the cleaner. They should be the observer of a system.

### 3. The Three Personalities Required to Clean a Ministry Closet

*12:12 to 27:04*

1. **The Cutthroat Pragmatist**
  - Asks one question: “Does this item serve any practical use right now?”
  - No excuses, no exceptions, ruthless with clutter.
2. **The Sentimental Hoarder**
  - Sees history and meaning in objects.
  - Protects ministry items tied to stories, significant events, or milestones.
3. **The Budget Minded Realist**
  - Asks, “What does it cost to keep this vs what does it cost to replace it?”
  - Considers both money and space.

These three are constantly in tension, but together they produce wise decisions.

### 4. The Negotiation Process

*26:16 to 32:01*

- Closet cleaning requires debate, pushback, and discussion.

- Items go into keep, purge, or negotiate piles.
- The closet always gets messier before it gets cleaner.
- Doing this twice a year prevents crisis cleaning and creates order.

## 5. What Interns Must Learn From This Process

*30:22 to 33:12*

- Interns learn team dynamics, stewardship, ministry rhythms, and how the body of Christ functions with different personalities.
- They see strategy, not busywork.
- The goal is to teach them how ministry truly operates.

## How to Teach This to Your Team

### Frame the Closet as a Stewardship Tool

- Explain that closets represent time, money, history, team culture, and ministry strategy.
- This is not housekeeping. It is stewardship.

### Identify Your Team's Three Personalities

- Ask people which role they naturally play.
- Give examples and let the team laugh at themselves.
- Normalize tension. Use it, do not avoid it.

### Walk Through a Real Closet Together

- Demonstrate the three person negotiation model.
- Point out how the pragmatist pushes, how the hoarder preserves, and how the realist balances.
- Show how a team protects resources rather than wastes them.

### Model the Intern Role

- Explain why interns must observe not execute.
- Emphasize that the learning is in the process, not the task.
- Tell them explicitly: "This is how ministry decisions get made."

## Exercises and Implementation Guidelines

### For Personal Leadership

#### 1. Assess Yourself

- Which role are you by default?
- Which role do you avoid?
- What blind spots come with your default personality?

#### 2. Set a Rhythm

- Choose two dates each year for closet resets.
- Put them on the calendar now.
- Decide who your three voices will be for each reset.

### 3. Prepare Your Intern

- Before cleaning, brief your intern on what they will observe.
- Give them questions to answer afterward:
  - What did the pragmatist see that others missed?
  - What did the hoarder protect that mattered?
  - What did the realist save the ministry from wasting?

## For Team Application

### 1. Create Clear Tubs or Zones

- Keep, Purge, Negotiate.
- Move everything into one of these piles.
- Do not store unknowns. If no one can defend it, it goes.

### 2. Build a Closet Charter

- One page that defines:
  - What gets stored
  - What never gets stored
  - Who makes decisions
  - When resets happen

### 3. Document History Items

- For sentimental pieces, label the tub with the story.
- Sentimental items are allowed, but they must be identified and purposeful.

### 4. Calculate Replacement Cost

- For any borderline item, have the realist answer:
  - “What would this cost to replace?”
  - “Is it cheaper to store it or rebuild it?”

## Action Oriented Closing

Ministry does not fall apart because of bad theology or bad volunteers. It falls apart because of bad systems. A messy closet is a symptom of a messy ministry. This episode is not about hangers and tubs. It is about stewardship, team unity, and raising interns who understand how ministry actually functions.

Do not let an intern clean a closet. Teach them the strategy behind the closet. Show them how the body of Christ collaborates, debates, protects resources, and makes decisions. They will remember that lesson far longer than any Sunday curriculum you hand them.

Take the next step. Schedule your two cleaning days. Identify your three voices. Walk your intern through the process. You will feel lighter, cleaner, and more in control of your ministry than you have in years.

Now go do the work.