

Fulfilling God's Will For His Church

[Part 1]

There is a guiding force, a controlling assumption, a directing conviction behind everything that happens in a church.

A church will show its main reason for existing by what it does as a group of people.

a) **A church that emphasises tradition**

Favourite phrase is *"we've always done it this way"*.

The goal such a church has is to perpetuate the past, change is almost seen as negative and stagnation is interpreted as stability.

b) **A church that is following a personality**

In this church the most important question is *"what does the leader say we should do or what does he want"*.

One problem is that the agenda is determined by the background, needs and insecurities of the leader rather than God's will or the needs of the people.

Another problem: the church comes to a standstill when the driving personality leaves or dies.

c) **A church controlled by finances**

The question foremost on everyone's mind is *"how much will it cost?"*

The most heated debates are over the budget.

While good stewardship and healthy cash-flow are essential for a healthy church, finances must never be the controlling issue.

The bottom line is **not** *"how much did we save?"* but *"who was saved?"*

d) **A programme following church**

All the energy of the fellowship is focused on maintaining and sustaining the choir, women's groups, youth groups, etc., etc.

The original goal of developing people through such programmes shifts to just keeping the programmes going.

e) **A church that focuses on its buildings**

Paying for and maintaining the building becomes the biggest budget item.

Funds needed to operate ministries reaching out to the community are diverted to pay for the buildings.

Such a church stagnates and dies.

f) **A church that seeks to reach unbelievers**

In an honest attempt to reach unbelievers for Christ and be relevant in today's culture, some churches allow the needs of the unbelievers to become the driving force.

While we need to be sensitive to the needs, hurts and interests of unbelievers, and it is wise to design evangelistic outreach to target their needs, we must not allow this to be the total agenda of the church.

God's will includes evangelism but not to the exclusion of "feeding the flock".

Be seeker-sensitive but **not** seeker-driven.

g) **A church that is fulfilling God's reason for their existence**

This type of church looks at everything it plans or does through the lens of the five missions for the church as stated in the New Testament scriptures.

These five missions will be covered in future articles.

First I want to emphasise the need for a clearly defined mission.

Plans, programmes and personalities don't last but God's mission will always last.

Nothing should proceed God's mission.

The starting point for every church should be the question "why do we exist?"

Until we know the reason for our existence as a church we have **no** foundation, **no** motivation, and **no** direction for ministry.

We need to recapture a clear vision of what God wants to do in and through our church fellowship.

Strong churches are built on a clearly defined mission statement.

The church's foundational mission statement will determine the size and strength of the church.

You cannot build larger than your foundation can handle.

A solid foundation is laid by clarifying in the minds of everyone involved exactly why the church exists and what it is supposed to do.

This needs to be clearly defined in a mission statement that all can understand.

This will yield several powerful benefits for the church.

1 It will build morale

Mission and morale always go together.

1 Corinthians 1:10 [NIV] *"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought."*

United in mind and thoughts as a result of a common goal.

Proverbs 29:18 [NIV] *“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.”*

A church **without** a mission eventually becomes a museum of yesterday’s traditions.

The quickest way to re-invigorate a plateaued or declining church is to reclaim God’s mission for the church.

2 A clear mission statement reduces frustration

A clear mission statement not only defines what we are to do, it also defines what we do not do.

The secret of effectiveness is to know what really counts, then do what really counts, and **not** worry about all the rest.

Well-meaning people are always saying *“I feel the church ought to do this or that”* and many such suggestions can be noble activities.

A clearly defined mission statement can filter all such suggestions and if the activity meets its criteria, it can be considered.

If it doesn’t pass the test it can be rejected without personal offence to the one who brings it.

Trying to lead a church without a clearly defined mission statement is like trying to drive a car in the fog.

If you cannot see clearly where you are headed you are likely to crash.

James 1:8 [Phillips] *“... the life of a man of divided loyalties will reveal instability at every turn.”*

When a church forgets its mission, it has a difficult time deciding what is important.

In a mission driven church, once the course has been set, decision making becomes far easier and far less frustrating.

Any goal that fulfils part of the defined mission gets automatic approval.

3 A clear mission statement allows concentration

Focused light has tremendous power, while diffused light has no power at all.

Like a laser beam, the more focused our church becomes, the more impact it will have on society.

Philippians 3:13-14 [Living Bible] *“... I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing; forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us heavenward because of what Christ Jesus did for us.”*

Note “one thing” we must avoid the distraction and diffusion of involving ourselves in too many activities, events and programmes.

Being efficient is **not** the same as being effective.

Efficiency is doing things right.

Effectiveness is doing the right things.

You can generate a lot of well run activities and end up with little productivity.

It is like rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic.

It may look nice and well organised, but does it really matter when the ship is sinking?

God wants churches to be effective, producing fruit.

4 A clear mission statement attracts co-operation

People want to join a church that knows where it is heading.

This is because everyone is looking for something that gives meaning, purpose and direction to life.

Ezra 10:4 [Living Bible] *“Tell us how to proceed in setting things straight, and we will fully co-operate.”*

When Ezra told the people exactly what God expected of them, they responded positively.

A clear mission statement assists evaluation

2 Corinthians 13:5 [NIV] *“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you, unless, of course, you fail the test?”*

How does a church evaluate itself?

Not by comparing itself to other churches, but asking two questions.

a) Are we doing what God intends us to do?

Matthew 28:18-20 [NIV] *“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”*

A very clearly stated command for every Christian fellowship, which must be the major part of the church’s mission.

b) How well are we doing what God intends us to do?

What are the fruits of our effort that show we are fulfilling God’s purpose for us?

John 15:8 [NIV] *“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

Size is not always the issue.

A church can be big in numbers but unhealthy and flabby.

Or a church can be small but strong and healthy.

Becoming a mission-driven church will take time.

It will **not** happen overnight, or even in six months; it may even take years.

But the church will become stronger and healthier by being mission driven.

God may then cause it to also grow numerically, when He sees it as a church where He would like others to join and mature as part of its fellowship.

To become a mission-driven church we have to pass through four critical phases:

1. We have to define our mission clearly in a written statement.
2. We have to continually remind everyone in or coming into the fellowship of our mission statement.
3. We have to organise all we do in the church around our mission statement.
4. We have to always apply our mission to every facet of our church and personal lives.