

Fulfilling God's Will For His Church

[Part 5]

Organising the Church around the Mission Statement

Revelation 21:1-4 [NIV] *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. **He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**”*

God is in the work of renewal with the ultimate goal given to us in the wonderful vision statement

Matthew 26:26-28 [NIV] *“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. **This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**”*

Christ introduced a New Covenant that was centred in His Body which is now The Church.

Matthew 9:16-17 [NIV] *“No-one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”*

Christ is telling us that “new is not naughty”, but **new has to be really new, not a patched version of the old.**

1 Corinthians 9:19-27 [NIV] *“Though I am free and belong to no man, **I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.** To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. **I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.** I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but **only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.** Everyone who competes in the games goes into **strict training.** They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever. **Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.** No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*

Paul is telling us here three things:

- a) there are many ways to reach people with the same gospel message;
- b) do everything we do 100% expecting to succeed;
- c) plan and use wisdom in everything we do.

Luke 16:8-9 [NIV] *“The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. **For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the***

people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”

We are **not** the greatest or the most “worldly wise” people whom God has chosen to do His work.

1 Corinthians 1:26-27 [NIV] “*Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.”*

This passage indicates to me that using proven worldly ways to relate to worldly people is **not** frowned on by God “*for the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.*”

For any church renewal to last there must be a structure to nurture and support it.

Without a system and structure to balance the five tasks, a church will over-emphasise the mission that expresses the gifts and passion of its pastor.

I can see this looking back over the many years I have spent in the ministry.

I feel the major gift God has given me is that of a teacher and I have neglected the other needs of the churches that I have served.

Most evangelical churches do already incorporate the five missions of the church in measure but not in a balance form.

Different churches emphasise one more than others.

1 The Soul Winning Church

The pastor sees his primary role as an evangelist and the terms you’re most likely to hear in this church is *witnessing, evangelism, salvation, decisions for Christ, baptisms, visitation, altar calls and crusades.*

2 The Experiencing God Church

The pastor’s passion and gifts lie in this area of worship.

Key terms in this church will be *praise, prayer, worship, music, spiritual gifts, spirit, power and revival.*

In this church the worship service receives more attention than anything else.

3 The Family Reunion Church

The pastor serves more as a chaplain than anything else.

He loves caring for members.

Key terms in this church are love, belonging, fellowship, caring, relationships, pot lucks, small groups and fun.

This church may **not** get much done as far as preaching the gospel to the world, but it is almost indestructible.

It can survive poor preaching, limited finances, lack of growth and even church splits.

Relationships are the glue that keep the faithful coming.

4 The Classroom Church

The pastor sees his primary role as being a teacher; preaching and teaching are emphasised.

Members come to church with notebooks, take notes, and go home.

Key words for this church are *expository preaching, Bible studies, Greek and Hebrew, doctrine, knowledge, truth and discipleship.*

5 The Social Conscience Church

The pastor sees his role as prophet and reformer, and is out to change society.

It is full of activists who are “*doers of the word*”.

Important terms in this church are *needs, serve, share, minister, take a stand and do something.*

The above portraits are painted with broad strokes; some churches are a mixture of two or three of the above.

But unless there is an intentional plan to balance all the above five missions the church will embrace one mission to the neglect of the others.

Members of all the above types of church will consider themselves to be the most spiritual.

This is because the people in them are attracted to the church that affirms own passion and giftedness.

To be a healthy church we need to be a balance of all the above important missions.

Over the past 40 years God has raised up specialised movements to emphasise each one of the missions of the church.

- a) **The Lay Renewal Movement:** Re-focussed the church on the ministry of all Christians.
- b) **The Discipleship/Spiritual Formations Movement:** A re-emphasis on developing believers to full maturity has been the focus of this movement.
- c) **The Worship/Renewal Movement:** Has taken on the task of re-focussing the churches on the importance of worship.
- d) **The Church Growth Movement:** With its focus on evangelism, missions and corporate growth.
- e) **The Small Group/Pastoral Care Movement:** Bring a re-focus to the church of fellowship and caring relationships within the body of the church.

Each movement has a valid message and has given the Body of Christ a wake up call.

All such movements specialise in order to have impact, emphasising just one part of the big picture.

A healthy and growing church needs a balance of all these five missions.

1 Corinthians 12:12-31 [NIV] *“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if*

*the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. **But God has combined the members of the body** and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. **Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.** And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way."*

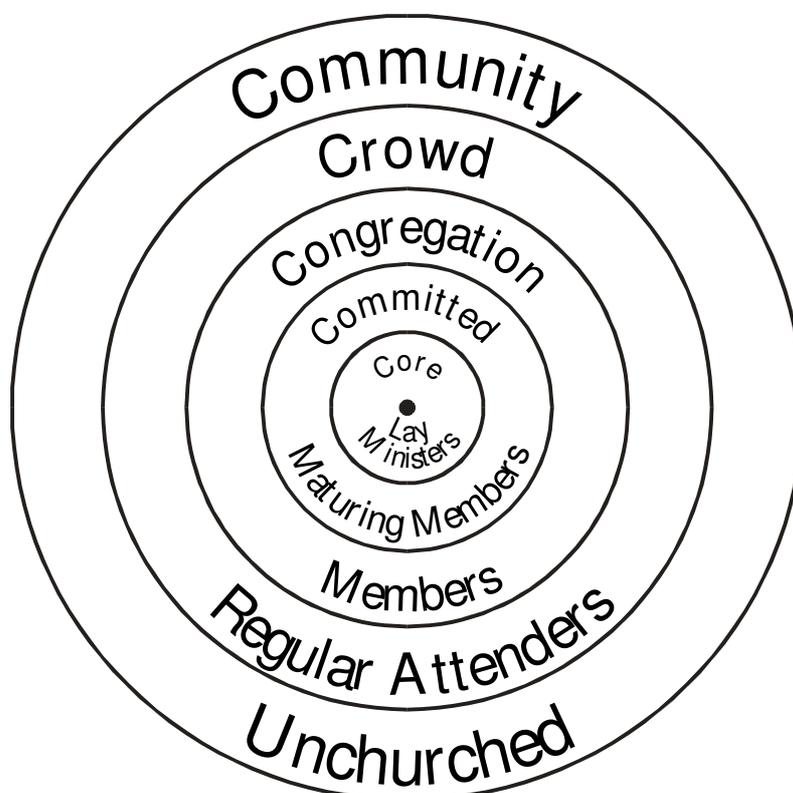
Paul makes the same point very vividly.

When all the systems and parts of our body are in balance with each other we call that "healthy", any imbalance is called "illness".

Likewise, balancing the five New Testament missions for the church bring health to the Body of Christ.

1 Circles of Commitment

5 Circles of Commitment



A diagram such as the above helps us to understand the different levels of commitment and maturity in the church.

Not all people attending the church will be on the same level of commitment or maturity.

When we recognise this we are then able to help people move from one level to a more committed and mature level.

If I describe these five different groups of people you will recognise that they exist in every church.

1 The Community

This is the starting point of any church growth.

Easy travelling distance of our church meeting place.

These are the people who have made **no** commitment at all, either to Jesus Christ or to the church.

It is among these people that evangelism takes place.

This is the largest group of people as illustrated by the largest circle in the diagram.

As the church grows this group should be narrowed down to those who have responded to our evangelism in some form.

For example, attending one meeting and filling out an attendance card, or have made some financial offering to the church.

This list of people are then the “hottest evangelistic prospects” and regular contact needs to be made with them to inform them what is taking place and inviting them to join in.

2 The Crowd

This group includes everyone who are regular attenders, who are a mixture of believers and non-believers.

The **only** commitment this group has is attendance which is **not** much but something we can build on.

When someone moves from the community to the crowd the church has made major progress in bringing them along the path to maturity.

Once a person in this group has made a commitment to Christ, the goal should be to move on into the next level, “*the congregation*”.

3 The Congregation

These are those who are official members of the church.

They have been baptised and made a commitment to the church family.

This can be done by their taking *membership classes* and signing a membership covenant.

As long as this group remain active as members in the fellowship and seek to mature spiritually, they remain on the membership roll.

But if these people are slack in attendance (other than for age or infirmity) or show **no** desire to seek maturity through discipleship, they should **not** remain on the membership roll.

4 The Committed

These are the group of people who are Godly and growing.

They take their faith seriously: they pray, give and are dedicated to growing in discipleship.

These people have taken and applied “*the spiritual maturity classes*”, and have signed the maturity covenant promising to form the habits of

- a) having a daily quiet time with God in prayer and study of His Word;
- b) tithe and give offerings;
- c) are active in small groups.

These three are essential for continued spiritual growth.

5 The Core

The smallest group, that represent those who have the deepest level of commitment to Christ and His Church and are dedicated to serving others in the Body of Christ and in the community.

Their lives have been empowered and enriched by taking the “*discovering my ministry*” classes and have found their personal ministry in the church.

These people are the “*heartbeat*” of the church that assist the vitality and growth of the church.

These are the people who can be used to minister to the “*community*” in various forms of evangelism.

Jesus realised that every person is at a different level of spiritual commitment.

Mark 12:34 [NIV] “*When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no-one dared ask him any more questions.*”

Not far?

I take this to mean that Jesus recognised degrees of spiritual commitment and understanding, in this case even among unbelievers.

Jesus’ ministry included ministering to the “*community*” feeding the “*crowd*”, gathering a “*congregation*” challenging the “*committed*” and discipling the “*core*”.

We need to follow His example.

John 1:39 [NIV] “*“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.*”

Jesus didn’t lay any heavy requirement on those early disciples, He just invited them to check Him out.

To watch His ministry without asking for a lot of commitment.

He was creating interest.

Mark 8:34 [NIV] “*Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*”

This was after 3 years of public ministry.

Jesus challenged the crowd to a kind of commitment.

This was only after He had demonstrated His Love for them and had earned their trust.

To a stranger or first time visitor to the church I believe Jesus would be more likely to say this.

Matthew 11:28-29 [NIV] *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

Jesus knew it doesn't work to use the same approach with all people.

The same idea is behind the “*circles of commitment*”.

It is a simple strategy that acknowledges we minister to people at different levels of commitment in different ways.

They have different needs, interests and spiritual problems, depending on where they are on their spiritual journey.