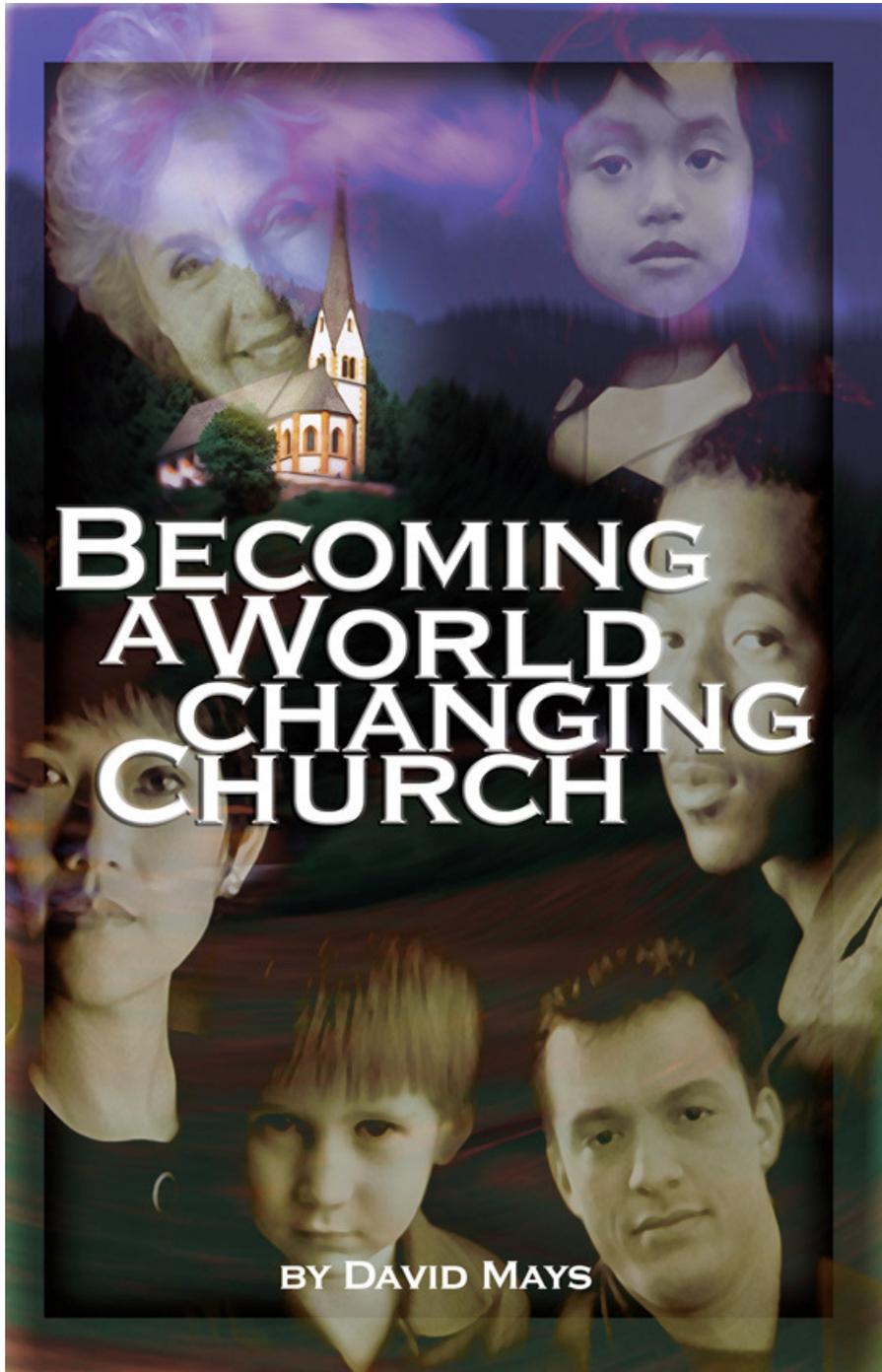


Becoming a World Changing Church



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David Mays

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BECOMING A WORLD CHANGING CHURCH

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Foreword

A few years ago when my son was in high school I went to watch him run the 400 meter race on an indoor track. I had borrowed a video recorder that I hadn't used before. Balancing myself on the top row of a set of risers in the infield, I watched my son through the postage stamp-sized eyepiece, turning round and round on the narrow step, trying not to fall off while keeping my son in the field of view. My son was running second and I tried to keep the first runner in view as well. When they crossed the finish line, I held the camera steady. As the third place runner crossed the line, he looked a lot like my son and I jerked my head up to see that it was. I had been videotaping the guy ahead of him for the whole race! That was a reminder to me that amidst the pressures of life, it is easy for our vision to get fuzzy and to begin focusing on secondary matters.

Church leaders are extremely busy and they are under much pressure. In the race of daily responsibilities, it is easy to lose sight of the goal. Many people are writing books today about how to "do church." My objective is to remind pastors and leaders that each church is part of a bigger picture. In this age at least, the church is God's primary means of redeeming a lost world, of extending his glory among all nations. When our vision of the big goal gets fuzzy, it is easy to be overwhelmed and conflicted with the competition of many good things. I fear too many of us are like the young man of whom it was said, "Having lost sight of the objective, he redoubled his efforts."

Let us refocus the church so that we can be God's instrument to change the world!

-- David Mays

Part 1

Rediscovering the Mission of the Church

In Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Church*, he wisely writes, "Nothing precedes purpose. The starting point for every church should be the question, 'Why do we exist?' Until you know what your church exists for, you have no foundation, no motivation, and no direction for ministry."

Yet church leaders are often cloudy about the overarching mission of the church. When I teach workshops I often ask the participants, "What are some reasons the Church exists?" I've heard many responses, including:

- to glorify God
- to declare God's glory
- to make Jesus visible in the world
- to be a house of prayer
- to develop disciples to use their spiritual gifts
- to share the Good News
- to win the lost and make disciples
- to make more and better worshipers of God
- to know Christ and make Him known
- to take care of the believers
- to be a lighthouse in the community and the world
- to worship
- to have fellowship among Christians
- to equip the saints
- to make disciples
- to teach them to observe all things Christ commanded
- to reach the lost
- to proclaim the Gospel

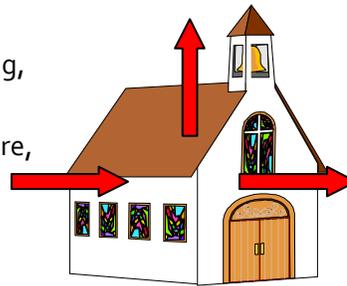
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These all are truly responsibilities of the church. But which are purposes (reasons for existence) and which are tasks (which help achieve the purpose)? The local church is called to carry out many tasks. But is there an overarching purpose for those tasks?

Purpose versus Mission

Historically church purpose statements have stated that the church exists to bring glory to God through three dimensions, that is, through three relationships or responsibilities:

- *upward* in worship, prayer, listening, obedience,
- *inward* in nurturing, edification, care, fellowship, and
- *outward* in service, ministry, evangelism, missions.



A traditional church purpose statement might read:

*"The purpose of our church is to exalt the living God,
equip the saints, and evangelize the world."*

The Church has traditionally viewed its ultimate purpose as 'God's glory.' Many church purpose statements begin, "To glorify God by...." If the overarching purpose is to bring glory to God, what does that mean? Glory is not a common word in our contemporary vocabulary. I suggest it means something akin to respect or honor. Perhaps our overarching purpose is to honor God, to uphold his reputation.

In the last several years the American Church has increasingly focused on worship. Many seem to say that worship is the overarching purpose of the Church. Is it? If so, what is worship?

When we speak of worship we sometimes get fuzzy-minded. We tend to think of singing in church or the Sunday morning program in the church as worship. However, worship is much

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more than what we do when we gather at church. The Old Testament speaks of people who worship God with their lips while their hearts are far from him. Perhaps worship, too, is like honoring God, or living a life honoring to God. We can compare it to a child honoring his parents.

A child certainly honors his parents when he says good words to them or about them. But such honor may or may not be genuine. He authenticates the verbal honor when he incorporates into his own life his parents' ideals, values and purposes. That truly honors them. Similarly we worship God when we live our lives according to His design and commands; in other words, when we live to fulfill His purposes. We worship God when we fill our will with His will, when we align our lives with His desires, when we set our goals according to His agenda.

Some have suggested that the Church's purpose consists of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. The Great Commandment exhorts us to love God and to love our neighbors. It is noteworthy that when Jesus was challenged as to who was a neighbor, he provided a cross-cultural or an "international" example. The Good Samaritan was the "neighbor" to the Jew. Of all the ways we can love our neighbors, perhaps the greatest love we can show is to introduce them to the God who loves them. As has been said, "There are only two things important in life: God and people – and getting the two together."

When I think of the purpose of the Church as glorifying God, it gives me perspective if I think of it as His glory, His reputation, in all the earth. When I think of the purpose of the Church as worship, it gives me perspective if I think of it as the worship of God, or the honoring of God, among all peoples. If I think of the purpose of the Church as loving God and loving others, it gives me perspective if I think of it as loving God by carrying out His desire that our neighbors in all nations and cultures experience His love

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and love Him in return.

When the reputation and honor and love of God in all the earth is seen as the overarching purpose, then the key role of the Great Commission is clear. The Great Commission is the great task or mission of the Church. The Great Commission is the Church's marching orders, the primary means for the Church to bring Him glory.

If the purpose of the Church (the reason it exists) is God's glory, or worship, or loving others, then the mission of the Church (its primary task) is to give itself toward the realization of the day when He is worshiped, honored, loved, and obeyed by all peoples on earth. A clear understanding of this purpose can bring great focus to a church.

What does the Great Commission Require?

The "all nations" of The Great Commission can conveniently be thought of in three major groups:

- people like us nearby
- people unlike us nearby
- people unlike us far away

A major issue for our churches is how much effort we are giving and how much effort we should dedicate toward evangelizing and discipling each of the above categories. Which category gets most of our attention? And are we neglecting any of the three?

People unlike us, far away

Historically many conservative churches have given primary emphasis to serving the people already within the church and reaching people in other parts of the world while giving very little attention to reaching lost people in their own communities.

People unlike us, nearby

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Until a couple of decades ago, most communities in the United States were more or less homogenous. It was unusual to see people from other nationalities except near major universities. This has changed dramatically. A few years ago I spoke in a rural community in Michigan. As I exhorted them to build relationships with internationals nearby, my mind was at the same time telling me there were unlikely to be any. After the service two people approached me. One worked in a cubicle next to an international and the other employed migrant workers from Central America. Anywhere we go there are people unlike us. God has brought opportunities to accomplish the Great Commission within our personal reach. How much effort do our churches give toward reaching this growing population of people unlike us nearby?

People like us, nearby

A rapidly growing number of churches, including some very influential churches, are focusing intently on reaching unchurched middle class people of their own culture in their own communities. This is a welcome and overdue reaction to the days when we assumed our neighbors were Christian. However, the highly intentional, focused, labor-intensive outreach to people like us sometimes results in the consequent neglect of people unlike us, both nearby and far away. (And sometimes it neglects discipling those brought into the church.)

If anything, the Great Commission applies more to people unlike us than to our own people. The word for “nations” in the New Testament is the word “ethne,” (peoples) the plural of “ethnos” (a people), from which we get our word “ethnic.” To the Jews, the ethne were people who weren’t Jews, that is, people unlike them – strangers. The Jews were people just like us. For the most part they didn’t care much for strangers. They looked down on some and had derogatory terms to describe them.

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Usually they took the long way around so they wouldn't have to go through the land occupied by Samaritans. That's why the story of the Good Samaritan was offensive. It made a hero out of someone they really didn't like. These "nations" (or tribes or families) are the ones referred to in the Great Commission. Jesus counted on His followers to disciple their own people. That was taken for granted. He went out of his way to make clear that all these others were also part of the assignment.

In all of life there is the question of balance. How should we balance our efforts among the three groups of people? For the most part, as we will address in the next chapter, the great preponderance of our efforts as churches are directed toward ourselves and people like us in our own communities. In the next section we will consider how to discover our actual distribution of efforts among these three groups as well as principles for deciding what would be a good balance.

Summary

If the purpose of the Church is God's glory in all the earth, then the primary mission or task of the Church is to see that He is known, honored and obeyed in the entire world by every group of people. This requires the evangelism and discipling of people unlike us, both nearby and far away, as well as people like us in our communities. Well-crafted church purpose statements clearly communicate this commitment. And church ministries that focus on people unlike us contribute to this task.

Discussion Questions

As you read your church's purpose statement, can you clearly see an overarching purpose? How would you state it in different words?

Does your church purpose statement clearly specify a

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commitment of the church beyond its community or culture?

Where would you rate your church on the Priority Scale (P-Scale)?

The "P" Scale

What priority do churches give to the Great Commission?

Churches range greatly in the priority they give to the Great Commission. The following Priority Scale (P-Scale) describes a hierarchy of missions priority in the local church. (The Missions Assessment Profile [MAP], available on-line at www.CalebResources.org, is an excellent tool for assessing twelve key areas of missions in your church.)

1. Missions as a Possibility

Often where missions is a possibility, the church is small or young and trying to get established. In such a church, some funds may be given to a missionary but the church has little serious interest in ministering to people unlike themselves. It is not a common topic of conversation or a visible church ministry. Church leaders may hope or desire to get involved in cross-cultural outreach in the future.

2. Missions as a Project

A number of churches or groups do periodic outreach or missions activities. An individual or a group may occasionally get involved in a missions project or go on a short term missions trip.

3. Missions as a Program

Missions is one of the regular church programs. An individual or committee is responsible for maintaining the missions program. There are regular meetings and perhaps a missions policy. The

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church gives ongoing support to missionaries or the denominational mission program. The church has periodic missions emphasis events.

4. Missions as a Priority

Church leaders and the congregation recognize the importance of reaching lost people at home and abroad. The missions ministry receives more funding, leadership and backing than many other programs. Missionaries are given prominent exposure. Reports on needs and progress in the world are a common feature of all-church gatherings. A significant portion of church income is devoted to cross-cultural ministry.

5. Missions as a Purpose

Discipling the nations is either the overarching purpose or one of the core purposes of the church. The pastor, staff, and church leaders model God's heart for the world through awareness, teaching, enthusiasm, and personal involvement. Church leaders work to educate and involve the whole congregation with regard to people unlike us at home and abroad who need Christ. The church has a strategy for mobilization that touches all ministries and age groups.

6. Missions as a Passion

Church leaders agree that the church exists to see God glorified in all the earth. Church leaders and the congregation understand, commit to, participate in, and extol their efforts to reach people like us and unlike us, both at home and abroad. Personnel hiring, ministry plans, budgets, calendars, communications, prayer life, and many casual conversations focus on reaching the lost of our own and other cultures. The guiding question for every ministry decision is, "How will this help us reach the world for Christ?"

Part 2

What Demonstrates a Church's Priorities?

In the Part I, we examined the issue of what the Bible tells us about the purpose of the Church. Typically we agree that our purpose is to "glorify God," but what does that mean? A major facet of what it means to glorify God is to extend His glory to the nations. The Great Commission directs us to evangelize and disciple three groups of people: those like us/nearby; those unlike us/nearby; and, those unlike us/far away. In this section, we examine how church leaders can discover how they actually prioritize their resources among the three groups.

As I travel and interact with pastors and church missions leaders across the country, I often ask them how their church is doing in missions. Their natural reaction is to think of the church budget. What percentage of the church's income is used to support missionary efforts? Many churches spend a large portion of their budget on missions, typically 10 to 20%. In some cases the missions budget reaches 25, 30, or even in rare cases 50%! How much a church spends on missions can be an indicator of the priority of missions in the church, but it is not the whole story. There are additional questions to ask.

For example, a church may give 20% of its budget to missions. Yet a careful analysis of the missions budget may find that a substantial amount of that budget supports a Bible school or seminary, church planting efforts in the U.S., a local Christian camp, projects in the local community, a Christian grammar school, and/or the pastor's radio ministry. All of such efforts probably reach people much like the people of the church—in

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some cases, people who are already Christians! However, what distinguishes missions from other church ministry is the crossing of culture, language, or worldview barriers. Missions is that part of a church's ministry that deals with the two groups of people *unlike us*.

I would propose, then, that the church that wishes to analyze its current priorities must answer two questions.

Question #1: How is the church stewarding all of its resources?

Most every local church has a great variety and depth of resources and how it uses them reveals the church's priorities. Money is but one resource. I would encourage your church leaders to make a list of all the resources in the church or available to the church and evaluate how the church utilizes them among the three categories of people. For example:

1. Finances

It is relatively easy to examine a church's budget, but what about the personal wealth of the congregation? As Christians we understand that everything we have belongs to God and we are simply the stewards of it. So how do we steward it? In the United States, church members give less than three per cent of their income to the church. How much of the remainder is utilized for the evangelism and discipleship of any of the three categories of people?

In addition to earned income, Christians have accumulated massive amounts of wealth such as property, investments and retirement funds. The point is obvious. Even if the church has a large missions budget, often the proportion of a congregation's wealth that is utilized for The Great Commission is quite small.

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2. Facilities

The church's property, building and facilities can be used to reach people unlike us far away, but only to a small degree. The church building may be used for preaching and teaching about missions, for missionary prayer meetings, missions team meetings, for the discipleship and training of potential missionaries and similar functions. These make up a very small proportion of the building's use.

The local church building may be used to a greater degree to minister to people unlike us nearby. The church may invite such people to be part of the congregation. It may host English- as- a- Second-Language classes, or have a food pantry, a benevolence ministry, an inner city sports program or any number of ministries for people unlike us. The church may own a facility in another location that is better suited to minister to people unlike us. But the overwhelming majority of church use is for us and people like us.

3. Prayer

Prayer can be applied to any of the three groups. So how does your congregation pray? It is natural to pray for yourselves and for people you love. But how much do you pray for people unlike you whom you don't know, for the nations, for world leaders, for the unreached, for the efforts of your missionaries, for the refugees and immigrants in your community? This kind of prayer requires training and education and modeling and encouragement and reminders. How you pray is a good indicator of your priorities.

4. Staff

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What proportion of each staff member's time and effort is committed to benefit each of the three categories of people? Consider each individual staff member individually: the senior pastor, the worship pastor, the youth pastor, the children's minister, the church administrator, the church secretary and so on. Estimate how much of each person's time is directed toward people like us versus the other two categories. In most cases the preponderance of their responsibility is for us and for people like us.

You could analyze a number of other resources, such as lay leaders' sphere of influence, talents, skills, vocations, etc. How is the overall balance? Is your church doing as much toward reaching people *unlike us* as you originally thought? Is your church well-balanced in your efforts among the three groups of people represented in the Great Commission?

Question #2: What factors might indicate how you need to shift your current priorities?

If the Great Commission requires that churches minister to these three categories of people (like us/nearby, unlike us/nearby and unlike us/far away), what principles should guide you in deciding how much of your efforts and resources to commit to each group? Let's think about some possible considerations for guidelines.

Proximity to the church

Just as I have more responsibility for my family and my neighbors than you do, so your church has more responsibility for your community than do churches in communities further away. The closer people are to you, the more they are your responsibility.

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Local concentration of churches

On the other hand, your responsibility to your community must be viewed in light of other local churches that share this responsibility. No church is relieved from the responsibility to reach its neighborhood, but neither should any such church arrogantly assume that it is solely responsible for reaching its community or city.

For example, my church is a regional church on the northwest side of Indianapolis. According to the Yellow Pages there are more than 1000 churches in the greater Indianapolis area. That means we are "in competition" with 500 churches for the northern half of Indianapolis, or with 250 churches for the northwest quadrant. We share the responsibility for reaching Indianapolis with many other churches.

This has implications for the distribution of our efforts. If 1000 churches share our responsibility for Indianapolis, our church can afford to expend more effort outside Indianapolis than if we were the only one. That means we can shift resources to efforts in other parts of the globe where the Church is weak.

Access to the gospel

Approximately 25% of the world's people have little or no access to the Gospel. Not only do they not know that Jesus loves them, but they have virtually no opportunity to find out. They are beyond the life and witness of the Church; they are the "unreached." Churches have a great responsibility to this category of people.

Understanding of the global picture

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Surprisingly, a large number of church leaders have little awareness of the imbalance of the availability of the gospel around the world. Those who have some awareness of the world situation and understanding of the priority God gives to the nations have more responsibility to attempt to reach the unreached.

Geographical concentration of lost people

How many unbelieving people live in your community? Are you in a large community or a very small one; one dense or sparse in population; in a very church-ed community or very unchurch-ed? How many same-culture people are in your direct reach?

How many people unlike you are nearby? A couple decades ago, there were relatively few. Today we are witnessing a huge influx of people unlike us from all over the world. There are people of different nationalities, different languages, different cultures, different religious backgrounds, as well as people who are unlike us because of their inner city environment and culture or for other reasons. Perhaps your church is in a highly multicultural city.

What about the populations of people unlike us far away? As we look at the different people groups where the Church is weak, how many are there? Some unreached groups have as many as 40 or 50 million people. Asia has perhaps 60% of the world's people. The 10/40 Window includes about 2/3 of the world's people. Most of the world's non-Christians are not white Westerners. The more there are, the greater your responsibility.

Opportunities God has given you

To whom has God connected you through unique bridges?

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Perhaps the suburbs have moved away from your church, leaving you near the inner city. Your church may be located near a major university with a large number of international students. Maybe God has brought a high concentration of migrant workers, refugees, or immigrants to your community. Perhaps God has located you in a highly multi-ethnic neighborhood.

The amount and types of effort you direct toward people unlike you/nearby may be related to who those people are, where they are, what kinds of people and resources you have and how you can relate to them.

Resource Distribution

Believers in much of the world are rich spiritually but extremely poor materially. Some of the poorest people in the world are highly responsive to the Gospel. In these areas the Church can grow very rapidly, but the Church is extremely handicapped because even the most rudimentary forms of church require finances for pastors and training and facilities and benevolence, etc. Even though believers may be very dedicated, it is very difficult for the church to reach out and evangelize its own people because of the costs.

However the western Church, by comparison, is very wealthy. God has located vast amounts of material resources among Christians in North America. It is hard to escape the idea that those with large amounts of resources have greater responsibility for reaching the farthest.

Using your resources: fixed assets and portable assets

Fixed assets are those which cannot be readily moved or relocated and must be used in the geographic location where they exist. They include church property – land, buildings and

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equipment – and most of the church people.

Portable assets include money (until it is converted into land and buildings), prayer, and some of your people who can go elsewhere for ministry, either for short periods of time or longer term. Portable assets also include information, relationships, influence, communication and resources that can be physically shipped.

The obvious observation is that fixed assets are most useful for people nearby. They can be used only in a marginal capacity to minister to people far away. Portable assets are much more flexible. They can be used anywhere.

However, portable assets deployed locally are no longer available for work at a distance. So when the church decides to expand or build a new building it is committing portable assets (and future portable assets) that will not be available for use elsewhere. When a local church makes local, same culture ministry its overwhelming focus, it proportionately invests in property and staff. To the degree that the church commits its funds to buildings and to finance local ministry that the congregation could do, it limits the ministry that can be accomplished far away.

In balancing efforts between people nearby and people far away, consider the following principle: For local ministry, maximize the deployment of people and minimize the dollars. Of course, some funds are required to train, support and supervise the deployment of the people. For global ministry maximize the portable resources to support the few people who go.

Use fixed assets locally.

Use portable assets globally.

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Summary:

A church's written documents and public statements may state the church's aspirational priorities, but observation of a church's activities and use of resources show its actual priorities. Based on these observations, church leaders can consider course corrections to give higher priority to world evangelization. One way to do this is to maximize the availability of portable resources to minister to people far away by utilizing fixed resources more effectively to reach people nearby.

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Part 3

**What Would a Globally-Focused Church
Look Like?**

In the preceding section, we examined how churches prioritize their resources and suggested factors for a better balance. In this section, we discuss what a church would look like if it wholeheartedly pursued the evangelizing and discipling of all nations.

ACMC conferences attract many participants who dream of the day when their churches will be fully engaged in missions. In my workshops I often ask them what it would actually look like if their churches were Great Commission-focused. Their answers vary widely: “We’d see world flags in our sanctuary”; “Our church would be ethnically diverse”; “The pastor would preach often on missions;” and, “The church library would have plenty of missions books—and those books would all be checked out.”

Description of a globally-focused church

Churches are different and the way churches manifest their commitment to the Great Commission will be different. In general, I believe that a globally focused church is one that utilizes every possible avenue to maximize its impact in the whole world. Where this is the situation, I’m convinced that several areas of the church’s life will be affected.

A globally focused church utilizes every possible

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avenue to maximize its impact in the whole world.

I. Leadership and Management

The extension of God's glory in all the earth is the overarching theme that gives focus and direction to all planning, budgeting, decisions, and ministries. In leadership meetings, it is common to hear purpose-focused questions. It was said of Frank Barker, founding pastor of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, AL, that he challenged every proposal with the question, "How will this ministry or project help our church reach the world for Christ?"

Church leaders at all levels (staff and volunteer) integrate missions into their ministries. For example, the children's ministry includes missions education in its overall educational plan. Small group leaders lead their small groups in studying what the Bible says about the nations and in praying for missionaries. The youth pastor plans for how students will engage in cross-cultural outreach, locally and globally.

When individuals become involved in any given program or ministry, they discover the leaders have designed and planned the ministry to include and contribute to the discipling of the three kinds of people (people like us/nearby, people unlike us/nearby, and people unlike us/far away). Their involvement in the ministry contributes to that end.

Winning the world to Jesus Christ is the concern of every staff member, board member, and lay leader. Pastors, other staff members and elders are personally involved in both local and world evangelism.

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II. Communication

The Great Commission is a major focal point and the ubiquitous backdrop for all church communication. Global outreach and discipleship is communicated through a multitude of means to all ages, through all ministries, in ways that develop world Christians at all levels of spiritual development. God's heart for all peoples and the church's involvement in that commitment are exhibited at every level from the pulpit to one-on-one mentoring.

The church's purpose statement clearly states the church's global commitment. It is unambiguous in its requirement that cross-cultural outreach is necessary to fulfill the church's purpose. Compare, for example, two actual church purpose statements:

"To help people begin and grow in a personal relationship with
Jesus Christ."

"To create and disciple mature followers of Jesus Christ
worldwide."

These two churches' purpose statements are essentially alike, with the exception of the word worldwide. In the first purpose statement, discipling the nations is allowed but not required. The addition of one word moves the discipling of the nations from being optional to being required.

The congregation hears about the nations from the pulpit, not only in the pastor's message and in missions moments, but in prayer, in the interpretation of the worship music, in reports and announcements, and in attention to important world events. Perhaps the worship leader has the greatest opportunity to focus the congregation on God's global purpose through interpretation of the many great hymns and worship choruses acknowledging

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the greatness of God over all the earth.

The congregation responds to many subtle as well as overt visual signs of the church's international focus. When the church's missionaries visit, they are recognized by most of the congregation who, perhaps having never met them, have seen their pictures and heard about them. Missions and outreach events and activities are promoted in a quality manner – as consistently, as visibly, and as high quality as any of the church's top priorities.

A few weeks ago my wife and I visited our home sending church. We visit about twice a year and, having been gone from that community for more than twenty years, we don't know most of the people. While we were standing in the foyer talking with the executive pastor prior to the Saturday evening service, a couple who were handing out bulletins at the door walked over to us and introduced themselves. "We pray for you faithfully," they told us. We had never met them before.

Pastors paint a picture for the congregation of what they trust will happen among various groups of people as a result of their involvement in the world. This picture is reinforced constantly from the pulpit and in the leadership of the various ministries of the church. Pastors not only preach missions, but frequently use anecdotes and illustrations drawn from international, cross-cultural, and missionary situations. God's heart for the nations fills them and "leaks out" in a myriad of ways as they carry on their normal pastoral functions.

III. Prayer

Congregation members regularly and naturally pray for lost people at home and abroad. They pray for family members and

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neighbors. They are knowledgeable of and pray for issues such as the expansion of the Kingdom, the least reached in the world, missionaries and national workers, and for believers in difficult circumstances world-wide.

Prayer of this kind is part of their personal time with God and scattered throughout their days. Such prayer is triggered by contact with internationals, news reports, local events, and circumstances. It is often supplemented with regular readings from prayer guides for missionaries and nations such as the *Global Prayer Digest* and *Operation World*. The international news serves as nudges to pray for people and places of concern to God throughout the world.

Prayer for peoples and nations is a major focus of the prayers and prayer meetings of every ministry regardless of their other objectives. Wherever and whenever prayer is offered it includes, indeed is focused on, God's reign in all the earth.

IV. Spiritual Formation

Church discipleship and education programs are all oriented in part toward developing Christians with a heart for the whole world. The church teaches its people about God's great purposes, the theme of the nations in Scripture, the lives of missionaries and heroes of the faith, and how the Church is growing worldwide through the congregation's efforts.

As the church introduces people to Christ and helps new believers develop as His followers it instructs them in the personal sacrifice and world perspective that discipleship entails. It helps them see that involvement with lost people, both in our culture and among other cultures, is part of the normal Christian life.

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The church's progress in spiritual formation is evaluated in part by how well it has developed world Christians who become involved in God's global purposes. The church proactively prepares and assists individuals to reach lost people in its own culture. Further, church leaders identify and recruit individuals with cross-cultural aptitudes for training and deployment to reach people of other cultures, languages, and nations, both nearby and far away.

V. Congregational Involvement

A large and growing number of individuals in the congregation are personally involved in building relationships and sharing Christ with people like them and people unlike them in their neighborhoods. Several people each year go to various parts of the world to contribute their time and talents to missionary work.

The congregation gives generously to mission-related causes. In addition many individuals are finding creative means to exercise their skills, gifts, talents and vocational experience in contributing to various ministries involved in global outreach.

The involvement of each individual in same-culture and cross-cultural outreach is understood as the norm for church members of all ages and all levels of spiritual development.

VI. Strategic Ministries

The globally focused church gives freedom and encourages individuals to engage in ministry to reach and disciple people within their reach, both on their own and through local

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organizations.

At the same time church leaders carefully select or design ministry efforts that are reasonable, responsible and strategic. They select ministry partner organizations carefully and partner with them fully. The church is interested in more than how much money can be raised and deployed for missions. It wants to be both faithful and effective. It is especially concerned about accomplishing genuine results, whether results require a short or long time. In short, church leaders are interested in return on investment.

Individuals sent and supported by the church to do cross-cultural ministry are carefully nurtured, developed, screened, and selected. Such individuals are directed toward organizations, locations, ministries, peoples and strategies that are relevant and strategic.

These ministries are supported by the prayers, interest, and personal involvement of the people in the congregation as well as those deployed in the ministry.

VII. A Global Ethos

The look, sound, feel, and atmosphere of the church – its design, décor, programs, and ministries – convey an integrated awareness of a global purpose in a global context. People of all ages and all levels of spiritual development sense, respond to, and contribute to this atmosphere.

The Perfect Church

Obviously what I have been describing in this article is “the

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perfect church,” at least in regard to world evangelization. When one Philadelphia area pastor teaches classes for new members, he regularly makes the statement, “We’re not the perfect church, but I’ve seen the perfect church.” He proceeds to tell the story of the time when he was walking to a major league baseball game in another city, and passed a church that is literally named “The Perfect Church.” He found out later that this church had chosen this name based on Jesus’ command in Matt. 5:48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” It turns out that this church calls its members to earthly perfection, and is quite legalistic about how it approaches this call. Sadly, there is no perfect church, even in regard to its missions ministry.

Most churches are doing well in some areas of ministry and less well in others. A globally focused church is ever seeking to analyze its strengths and weaknesses and make improvements. For the church that seeks to make the Great Commission its primary commitment, it would be helpful to undertake a semi-quantitative assessment of how it is progressing in missions.

A Globally-Focused Church is observed through its...

- **Leadership.** Church leaders at all levels focus on reaching and discipling people “like us” and “unlike us” through their personal involvement, their interest and enthusiasm, and their ministries.
- **Communication.** Vision for global evangelism and ministry is communicated through a multitude of means to people of all ages and levels of spiritual formation, through all ministries.
- **Prayer.** Congregation members frequently and naturally pray for lost and hurting people at home and abroad.
- **Spiritual Formation.** All ministries and efforts to grow

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disciples are aimed at producing world Christians.

- **Congregational Involvement.** A large proportion of individuals are personally involved in local evangelism and cross-cultural outreach, investing their time, talents and resources in global outreach.
- **Strategic Ministry.** The church supports and is vitally involved in strategic cross-cultural and international ministries by investing its financial support, prayer support, and people's time and talents.
- **Global Ethos.** The look, sound, feel, and touch of the church - its leadership, programs, ministry, and facility - convey an integrated awareness of a global purpose in a global context.

To assess your church's missions strengths and weaknesses in twelve key areas, use the Missions Assessment Profile ("MAP"). Obtain the "MAP" from www.CalebResources.org.

- Biblical Foundations
- Local Outreach
- Congregational Education
- Church Leaders
- Missions Leadership Team
- Individual Participation
- Prayer
- Giving
- Short-Term Missions
- Missionary Care
- Missions Strategy
- Missionary Training

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Part 4

Purpose as the Guiding Principle for Ministry

So far we have observed:

1. What the Bible tells us about the Church's purpose and mission: *"If the purpose of the Church (the reason it exists) is [for] God's glory...then the mission of the Church (its primary task) is to give itself toward the realization of the day when He is worshiped, honored, loved, and obeyed by all peoples on earth." This includes reaching three types of peoples: those like us/nearby, those unlike us/nearby, and those unlike us/far away.*

2. How we can observe a local church's priorities in light of its Biblical purpose and mission: *"A church's written documents and public statements may state the church's aspirational priorities, but observations of a church's activities and use of resources show its actual priorities."*

3. What a local church true to its Biblical purpose and mission looks like: *"A globally focused church utilizes every possible avenue to maximize its impact in the whole world." This will affect the church's leadership, communication, prayer, spiritual formation, congregational involvement, ministries and ethos.*

Before coming to work for ACMC I worked at a major pharmaceutical company. At one point a consulting company was employed to work with the mid-level managers. One of the changes directed by the consultants was rewriting our job descriptions. Henceforth, everyone's job description had to begin with the same words:

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It is the purpose of the job of (your position) to contribute to the growth and profitability of our company by _____ . Every position was expected to help accomplish the purpose of the company – its growth and profitability. If it wasn't clear that your job contributed to the purpose, you were in danger. Your job was expendable.

Similarly, every ministry and individual in the church is expected to contribute to the purpose of the church. Because the purpose of any local church is to extend God's glory, honor and knowledge locally and globally, that purpose should guide all of its thinking, visioning, planning, executing, rewarding, and celebrating. Unfortunately, many churches have confused their purpose with their programs, and programs have become the ends rather than means to an end. The result is ministry comprised of loosely related programs, many of which contribute only marginally to the church's true purpose.

Purpose and Programs:

Purpose Precedes Ministry

In order for a church to be centered on its purpose, church leaders must understand the difference between purposes and programs. Church leaders are so accustomed to thinking in terms of programs that it is very difficult to act consistently according to purpose. A purpose is different from a program. In most churches, the task of reaching the world for Christ is one of the programs. This mindset is so prevalent that it is very difficult to imagine what a church would be like if the Great Commission were to become its primary purpose.

In many churches some programs have taken on a life of their own, enhanced and reinforced by individuals or a group vested in

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the program. These programs become sacred cows, having their own independent agendas. Sometimes they far outlive their usefulness. An accumulation of such programs results in inertia and an addiction to the status quo (which is Latin for “the mess we’re in now”). To maintain peace, ministries must be kept “in balance” since anything which threatens to compete with, minimize, dethrone, or marginalize a favorite program will be ignored, resisted, undercut, or defeated by vote. Competition grows for leadership, funding, participation and promotion. Ministries vie for bulletin space and pulpit time. If the women’s retreat is announced from the pulpit, every other ministry demands similar exposure for its event. Church bulletins can rival catalogs in size as each ministry and event demands more space.

Ministries in a program-driven church can be visualized as pieces of a pie. As a church adds programs, the pie has to be divided among more pieces. When one program expands or receives increased funding and attention, the others feel squeezed. To most people one program is little more important than another. And “the program that I’m in” nearly always deserves more attention and funding than it receives.

Most churches are doing well in some areas of ministry and less well in others. A globally focused church is ever seeking to analyze its strengths and weaknesses and make improvements. For the church that seeks to make the Great Commission its primary commitment, it would be helpful to conduct an assessment of how it is progressing in reaching people unlike us/nearby and unlike us/far away.

Note how programs differ from purpose:

Purpose	Programs
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independent, primary• Necessary• Why we exist• Direction, Aim• All Encompassing• Broad, fundamental• Principle-based• Enduring, never completed• Purpose is our 'North Star.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dependent, secondary• Optional• Serve purposes• Pragmatic• Self-contained• Particular and specific• Practical-based• Temporary, expedient• Programs are our next steps.
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Purpose Belongs to Everyone

Programs are optional. It is not expected that every member of the congregation will be part of every program. Individuals are expected to participate in whatever programs they choose based on the current needs and their skills, interests, and preferences.

By contrast, purposes are fundamental, enduring, and all encompassing. Individuals who become part of an organization “buy into” the business of the organization. Everyone is expected to contribute to the organization’s purpose. Only those who commit to the purpose are truly part of it. The rest are guests.

This is what the consultants who worked with management at our pharmaceutical company were communicating to us. Everyone was called to buy into and work toward the company’s mission.

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Purpose Affects Every Ministry

This understanding of purpose has two major implications for churches. First, the purpose belongs to every part of the church; it affects every ministry. The purpose belongs to every person and every program. It is integrated throughout the church so that it permeates every program. If world evangelization is the purpose then it is part of the plan and operation of every ministry. Every program and ministry contributes in some way to world evangelization. This might occur through educating its participants, or influencing them, or involving them, or deploying them. But it is expected of every ministry on an ongoing basis. Further the purpose is expected to become part of the life of every individual, regardless of age, economic status, abilities and skills, or stage of spiritual maturity. Church leaders motivated by purpose aspire to make the purpose of the institution a part of the life of every member.

Purpose Guides Every Ministry

But the purpose of the church is not just a *part* of every program and ministry, it is the *purpose* of every program and ministry. Every individual program and ministry not only makes a contribution to the purpose, but also is guided by the purpose. Every individual ministry designs its ministry to maximize its contribution to the purpose. That is its primary aim.

The Purpose of the Whole is the Purpose of the Parts

The unifying theme or overarching purpose of each ministry or department in the Great Commission-centered church is discipling the nations. It is not an add-on to the ministry or an activity of the ministry, or a piece of the ministry, but the direction-giving focus, the guiding principle of the overall

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ministry and of every individual ministry or program. Any program which does not ultimately contribute to the purpose is superfluous and a distraction of energy and talent. A church focused on its purpose does not tolerate programs that are non-contributors to the purpose. Such programs are adjusted or dropped.

This all sounds very good on paper, but the practical question remains: what would it take to operate a church in this fashion? The answer is that it takes leaders gripped by God's purpose, continually inspired and informed by the Holy Spirit, and operating according to a system that continually reinforces the purpose. But first, substantial changes must occur in the perceptions and habits of church leaders.

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Part 5

Leading the Shift Toward a Globally-Focused Church

In previous sections we have concluded:

- 1. The Church's mission is to glorify God in large part by extending His honor to all the nations.*
- 2. We can assess how well a church is focusing on this mission by observing its activities and use of resources.*
- 3. A globally-focused church utilizes every possible avenue to maximize its impact in the whole world. This will affect the church's leadership, communication, prayer, spiritual formation, congregational involvement, ministries and ethos.*
- 4. A globally-focused church insures that its individual ministries all align with and contribute to the global purpose of the Church.*

Is it your desire to help your church align its life and ministry with its Biblical purpose? Will this refocusing, as in most changes, require a substantial amount of change? What you seek to undertake by God's grace is no small feat.

The story is told of a young pastor who innocently thought that the church's worship services would flow more smoothly if the piano were on the other side of the platform. So one Saturday morning he moved it. This action triggered a cascade of events that eventually ended in his resignation. Ten years later this pastor returned for a Homecoming and to his great surprise found the piano exactly where he had put it. He couldn't wait to ask the current pastor how he had managed to move the piano.

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The wise old pastor smiled and said, "I came in at five o'clock every Sunday morning and moved it half an inch."

Change brings a sense of instability that interferes with the need for security, continuity, and predictability. Many of us find unbalancing change occurring so rapidly in our job, family, community and every other area of life that we long for a place of refuge and stability. Surely our church could provide that place? But the church too must change or become an ineffective anachronism.

Preparing to Lead the Change Process

The qualities needed for leadership in general, and change management in particular, would be considered overwhelming to most people. (And those who aren't overwhelmed probably overestimate themselves.) On the other hand, God uses ordinary individuals for extraordinary tasks. Thus an individual cannot rule out the call to leadership because of perceived lack of particular qualities. That said, the following are attributes that facilitate the change process.

Godly character and integrity are essential. People want to know if you can be trusted and if you know where you are going. People tend to believe in your vision if they believe in you! Leaders move people to action partly because of their example and partly because of their energy and enthusiasm. They are contagious.

Great leaders have "moral authority," an alignment between their convictions and behavior that makes them persuasive. It is a credibility that comes from "walking the talk." It is demonstrated in a consistent determination to do what is right before God, regardless of the consequences, even if it jeopardizes the vision. It's a determination to please God rather than succeed. It is the

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overflow of character throughout real living. Moral or ethical compromises destroy moral authority.

The change agent must maintain a delicate balance between being a strong pioneer leader and an integrated group member. Synergistic teamwork, developed through open discussion in an environment where every worker's input is considered valuable, is critical for successful, long-term implementation.

Change leaders must be able to accept and manage conflict – to expect it, to encourage it, to receive it, to acknowledge it, to listen to it, and to let everyone have their say. Such constructive conflict requires trust among the group. An artificial harmony breeds deeper conflict. People need to express conflicting opinions and know that those opinions have been heard and considered.

Discovering God's Direction

If you are seeking to align your church's activity with its Biblical purposes, you are well aware that there is no shortage of popular ideas. Today's best selling books about the Church advocate the primacy of reaching unchurched people in your community, either by attracting them to your facility, by starting new churches or satellite campuses similar to yours, or by getting your church and your people involved in community activities. Not stated, but generally assumed, is that these unchurched people are people like you. Other books commend church health as the major goal, but the underlying expectation of church growth is revealed in their prescriptions, measurements and examples. If God has something more global in mind for your church, you will only discover it by going outside the normal channels of books and conferences.

"If the leaders of the congregation are not spending

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significant, consistent time seeking God's direction – through prayer, Bible study, meditation, solitude, and fasting – it will be impossible for meaningful and lasting transformation to occur...God has a much bigger plan, and our task is to create openness in our lives where we can begin to see this."¹ The key challenge is carving out the time and space to discern God's voice and direction and living with the tension that this creates.

Andy Stanley writes, "Prayer is critical to vision development. Here's why: We see what we are looking for; we often miss what we don't expect to see....[Prayer] keeps us on the lookout for His intervention."²

To get a grip on the big picture of God's perspective on the world, His desire and plans, and our part, read *Let the Nations Be Glad* by John Piper and spend several weeks meditating on Scriptures that refer to God's heart for the nations. Selected Scripture passages would make good material for an extended series of devotionals for your church board or session, for intentional leadership development, for small group discipleship studies, and for a sermon series. In this way, the leaders and congregation begin to sense the big picture of God's sovereignty and activity in the world.

How do we distinguish between good ideas and "God" ideas? "A God-ordained vision will eventually feel like a moral imperative....The idea simply will not go away....A God-ordained vision will be in line with what God is up to in the world."³

Guiding the Change Process

Assemble a leadership team

Most likely you will need to carefully select a group that will lead the major change in vision and operation. In some churches the church's board or session should be that group. In others a special steering team may be appointed to assume this role. John

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Kotter suggests assembling a team that passes several key tests:

1. Position power: Are enough key players on board so that those left out cannot easily block progress?
2. Expertise: Are sufficient various points of view relevant to the task at hand adequately represented?
3. Credibility: Does the group have enough people with good reputations in the [church] so that its pronouncements will be taken seriously?
4. Leadership: Does the group include enough proven leaders to be able to drive the change process?⁴

Build bridges to ministry leaders, stakeholders and influencers

At this writing John Roberts has just been confirmed as the new Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Leading up to this vote, he spent untold hours seeking to listen to senators' concerns, communicate with them winsomely, and win their hearts and minds.

This is because stakeholders and opinion leaders require a great deal of maintenance. You will spend what seems a disproportionate amount of time eliciting their views and drawing them into consensus, or attempting to do so. But the effort pays. They are vital to the improvement process because of their influence. They are the ones who will persuade others to go either for or against proposed change.

Prepare the church for change

One pastor admitted, "Our biggest mistake was that we did not establish a foundation of values for why we were doing what we were doing. This takes time. Take enough time to make sure

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your people understand and support what you're doing. We should have spent more time in teaching, preaching, reading, and talking with people."⁵

Respect continuity with the past

Everyone resists new ideas that threaten their understanding of why they are part of the organization in the first place. Therefore, determine first what we stand for, why we exist, and what cannot be allowed to change. "Effective change builds on the existing culture. A group will reject a foreign system of values the way a healthy body rejects a virus."⁶ James Collins well writes, "Contrary to popular wisdom, the proper first response to a changing world is not to ask, 'How should we change?', but rather to ask, 'What do we stand for and why do we exist?'"⁷ This should never change. And then feel free to change everything else – judiciously.

Clearly define changing roles

As you are helping every ministry in your church align its purpose and activities with the Great Commission, you need to understand the depth of change necessary. Operating by purpose means functioning differently. It may mean stopping some activities and beginning others. But even more necessary is changing the presumptions underneath the "doing." Most likely your ministry leaders view their ministry as an end rather than a means to an end. For example, the youth ministry may see its goal as winning students to Christ and discipling them, developing healthy, mature Christian adults. But there is a bigger purpose: to produce world Christians who will also extend God's glory to the ends of the earth. In most cases you will need to help your ministry leaders understand their ultimate purpose, and to

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determine practically how their roles and ministries will change to focus on that purpose.

Operating with a global focus means that ministry leaders are expected to plan, carry out, and evaluate their ministries in reference to the mission. For example, an elder board or session will select, prioritize and consider its agenda differently. It still must deal with urgent issues, personnel issues, financial issues, etc. But its underlying premise is that all issues are looked at in the light of progress toward the mission. This view must be constantly reinforced.

Empower by granting permission

For ministry leaders and individuals to truly embrace the Great Commission as the mission, they need freedom to experiment with fresh ideas. It is not possible to change the focus of your church without doing new things and the church staff cannot come up with all of the ideas. Although not all ideas will be successful, or even reasonable, your objections to trying things must be minimized. Unwritten rules that keep people in a spectator mode, or communicate what they can't do, must be abandoned. Taking risks and trying untraditional ideas must be encouraged.⁸

Measure progress

It is important for both the leaders of change and the performers of change to be able to measure progress. Those who don't know if they are making progress tend to revert to earlier ingrained behaviors. It becomes imperative, therefore, to measure "the right stuff." Measurements should be developed along four lines:

1. Relevance – Does the measurement reflect what we are

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trying to accomplish?

2. Reliability – Will the measurement help me know our strengths and weaknesses? Can I trust it?

3. Availability – Are we able to gather the information we need?

4. Accountability – Who will gather it, process it, debrief the appropriate people, and take actions to make corrections?⁹

Measurements help leaders recognize what is going well and what needs to be improved; who needs to be rewarded and who needs to be coached. Communicating the conclusions helps the whole organization begin to see the fruit of the changes.

Celebrate victories

One of the most valuable means for building and sustaining momentum for change is to identify steps in the right direction and celebrate them. Many such steps may be small and would go unnoticed. But recognizing and rewarding the people who are successfully implementing the vision encourages others to take similar steps. As fruit begins to appear, celebration further reinforces the new behaviors.

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Part 6
**Church Leaders' Roles in Light of the
Mission**

In the previous five sections we have noted that:

- 1. The Church's mission is to glorify God in large part by extending His honor to the nations.*
- 2. We can assess how well a church is focusing on this mission by observing its activities and use of resources.*
- 3. A globally-focused church utilizes every possible avenue to maximize its impact in the whole world. This will affect the church's leadership, communication, prayer, spiritual formation, congregational involvement, ministries and ethos.*
- 4. A globally-focused church insures that its individual ministries all align with and contribute to the global purpose of the Church.*
- 5. To make the shift to a globally-focused church, Godly leaders with high personal standards must carefully navigate the change.*

The first step to becoming a church that mobilizes its members for the Great Commission is to begin with the highest levels of leadership. In particular, unless the (senior) pastor is fully gripped by a passion to "make disciples of all nations," a church will rarely reach its mobilization potential, despite the efforts of lay leaders and supporting staff. How, then, can key church leaders "keep the main thing the main thing?"

I. The (Senior) Pastor

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A myriad of people, tasks, requirements and opportunities pull relentlessly at a pastor's heart and time. Leading the church in reaching the world is but one important aspect of the (senior) pastor's job. But to carry out this role of leading the church toward its big picture task, he must be given to some key disciplines.

1. Personal Development. During his personal study or devotional time the pastor revisits the Biblical theology of God's heart for the world. He intentionally steps out of the smaller world of his church and focuses on God's world through a variety of regular activities. Regular reading includes occasional missionary biographies, books that trace the Biblical thread of God's mission to the nations, missions periodicals, and missionaries' prayer letters. Many pastors have found the course "Perspectives on the World Christian Movement" (www.perspectives.org) revolutionary in their personal development.

2. Personal Involvement. One saying advises pastors, "If you want your congregation to bleed, you've got to hemorrhage." The pastor models what it means to be a global Christian through his personal and public prayer life, use of finances, involvement in missions opportunities (such as short-term trips and local cross-cultural relationships), and friendships with those reaching across cultures.

3. Keeping other church leaders on track through discipling and vision casting

George Barna's research has discovered that leaders of churches growing in depth and numbers have one thing common: a clear, positive vision of where God is taking them. Such leaders

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wear their vision like clothes. Their behavior embodies their ideals. Their style pulls people along. They engender an enthusiastic attitude. They are genuinely enthusiastic about the potential of the church.

The (senior) pastor seeks to influence and disciple key leaders regarding God's heart and purpose for the world. This includes church staff members, elders and other lay leaders. The pastor shares his heart with other staff pastors and elders of the church. As the (senior) pastor, he challenges each of the leaders to join in the pursuit to understand, embrace, and act on God's global purposes. This is done in formal church meetings, in devotional or instructional times during staff and board meetings, and in personal and small group discipling. The pastor might ask everyone to read the same book or articles, or he might ask leaders to explore the topic in different ways and then share what they learn with the group.

4. Keeping the congregation on track through vision casting

The (senior) pastor has primary responsibility for vision casting and communication in the church. While most pastors are dissatisfied with the amount of influence they perceive they have on the lives of church members, people listen to and follow the (senior) pastor more than anyone else in the church because the pastor is usually the lead teacher and the recognized leader. Therefore, the pastor has the responsibility to keep the big purpose in view.

The pastor has ongoing opportunities to influence leaders and the congregation formally through sermon topics, sermon illustrations, prayer topics, personal experiences, announcements, heroes studied, people interviewed, world events mentioned, and many other things.

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The pastor also highlights at major regular junctures (such as the annual congregational meeting) the church's past year of influence and casts vision for the coming year. The progress to which the pastor calls attention explains much of what he deems the mission of the church, whether Sunday School attendance, local outreach, financial giving, or world evangelization.

It is very difficult for any leader to espouse with sincerity, conviction, and consistency a cause that has not personally gripped him or her. On the other hand, when an individual is full of a burning cause or vision, it leaks out in every setting and circumstance. A pastor whose heart aches for the world will infect his congregation both deliberately and incidentally with the Great Commission.

II. Church Staff

In churches that have multiple pastors or ministry directors, how do these staff members help fulfill the church's central purpose of reaching the world for Christ? How do they incorporate the purpose into their ministries? Further, how do they orient their particular ministries to primarily serve the purpose?

In some cases, it may be obvious. Take, for example, the job of the worship leader, who helps the congregation honor, revere and adore God through corporate worship. He or she has a natural opportunity to lead people to worship the God of the nations, the God of the universe, the God who loves all kinds of people, the God who deserves to be known and worshipped and obeyed by all peoples. However, even though the words of the songs express these thoughts, it is possible for people to miss much of the message. We sometimes sing thoughtlessly. And we miss what we are not already predisposed to see and hear. The worship leader has the opportunity to highlight and interpret the

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words for the congregation. If God's heart for the world fills him or her, then he or she will find it natural to reinforce these concepts for the people. In my estimation, the worship pastor has the second best platform (next to the preaching pastor) for championing the missional focus of the church for the congregation.

What about the youth pastor? What is the primary goal of most youth ministries? Should it be to help young people navigate the hazards of their teenage years and become responsible adults with a good education, a strong marriage, and a reasonable career? These are good goals, but they are insufficient. More intentional youth pastors want to produce young adults who are strong disciples. But there is still a bigger purpose. The ultimate goal of youth ministry is to develop World Christians whose whole lives will be given to making the greatest possible contribution to discipling the nations. Youth pastors and youth leaders focused on this goal will do some things differently. They will use different curricula, engage in different activities, focus on different themes, encourage young people in different directions, and live different lives.

Some churches are fortunate to employ a staff counselor who deals with hurting and recovering people all day. Like any other legitimate ministry of the church, counseling must contribute to the purpose. Perhaps a good analogy for the counselor's role is a doctor in an army hospital. Such a doctor seeks to cure sick soldiers with the objective, wherever possible, to return them to the battle front. Likewise, the Christian counselor is doing his or her best not only to produce healthy individuals but, in the process, to orient them toward God's cause in the world.

And so it goes with every staff member. The position, the goal, the responsibilities, the activities – the job – is looked at

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from the perspective of the big global goal. Each church staff member asks, "How do I direct this ministry toward making progress in the world for Christ?" Some jobs may be even more distantly related or obscure than the counselor's job. But each one has a role to play in view of the purpose.

III. Elders' and Lay Leaders' Roles

I met with an elder board recently and we went through a quiz together that provided a global update on the world situation with respect to the Gospel and the Church. Summarizing the answers, I pointed out some of the major obstacles to (or opportunities for) fulfilling the Great Commission. After we finished one of the elders asked a very good question that I wasn't expecting: "What do you think we should do with this information?"

I suspect the elders would have liked a recommendation of three steps or decisions that would have discharged the obligation they sensed. But one or two actions or decisions made in isolation will accomplish little. Like the pastor, the church's governing leaders cannot give their entire time to leading the church in missions. What I hope is that these elders will see themselves, the church's members, and the whole church's life and ministry in the context of a world for which Christ died. I want them to make all of their decisions in light of how those decisions will influence the involvement of the whole church in reaching the nations. I want their lives to be so permeated with the missional purpose of the church that they cannot help but be affected in how they act, plan, evaluate, communicate and lead.

Often in leading the church it isn't clear which option will be the most effective course in the long run. Decisions must be made with inadequate information. We never know enough. But we frequently fail to make decisions in light of the church's

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ultimate purpose of world evangelization. Let's take for example the process of building or expanding the church's building. Most leaders are primarily concerned with the question, "If we do a major building addition, will the short-term cost be offset by long-term growth and consequent income?" A question more aligned with the church's true purpose would be, "If we do a major building addition and suffer a short-term plateau or loss in missions giving, will this be more than made up by long-term growth and subsequent increases in missions giving?" However, it is easy to rationalize and assume a positive answer. The best question is whether building an addition is the best possible way of maximizing the church's ministry to the three groups represented by the Great Commission (people like us/nearby, people unlike us/nearby, and people unlike us/far away). The simultaneous question is whether any alternative scenario will more effectively achieve the same purpose.

In some cases major building campaigns are key elements of expanding the church's influence in the world. In some cases they aren't. But it is easy to misunderstand our motivations. Recently a pastor told me that his church is going to double the size of its facilities on its current property. After that the church is not going to build any more, and will gradually increase its missions giving to forty percent of total giving. I asked the pastor if he had considered raising missions giving to forty percent first and then expanding the building. I don't know what God wants that church to do, but I have heard many church leaders say they planned to build and then increase missions involvement. In the process many churches have cut their missions giving in order to pay for the building. They intend to increase missions giving when the building is completed. But buildings create additional expenses and new congregation members may not be generous givers. Many churches have built or expanded facilities and never regained their former percentage of missions giving.

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Leaders have the responsibility to make planning and expenditure and ministry decisions based on what best contributes to the purpose. Sometimes this means making unpopular decisions. Sometimes it means postponing things that are urgent. Sometimes it means changing course when the results aren't working out as hoped. The purpose is the guiding factor for leaders.

The role of leaders in leading the church in missions

A missionary church will not be built apart from a purposeful and persistent commitment on the part of the pastor to preach the missionary message of the Bible. He will not do that until he personally is convicted of the centrality of that message. It must overwhelm him, motivate him, and control him."

--Daniel Vestal

Ministers and elders have the central responsibility for ensuring that missions are a principal passion of their congregations (and not a peripheral program for the super saints).

--Michael Griffiths

It is one thing for a minister to be an advocate and supporter of missions: it is another and very different thing for him to understand that missions are the chief end of the church, and therefore the chief end for which his congregation exists. It is only when this truth masters him in its spiritual power that he will be able to give the subject of missions its true place in his ministry.

--Bishop Hendrix, World Missionary Conference, New York, 1902, as quoted by Andrew Murray in *Key to the Missionary Problem*

Becoming a World Changing Church

God wants your church to make an impact in the world—not just your world, but the greater world—for His glory in all the earth. He will accomplish this as you clearly understand your purpose and organize your church around fulfilling that purpose. Becoming a World Changing Church will give you a new perspective on what that means and how to begin.



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For more missions information or a consultation on the Great Commission-Centered Church, visit www.davidmays.org or contact David at DMays@TheMissionExchange.org.