



The Missing Dimension in a Sense of Mission

**What you may never have been told
Jesus expects you to do - and the
basis for revitalizing a congregation**



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“An infant is learning to crawl. She begins by pushing herself backward around the house. Backing herself around, she gets lodged beneath the furniture. There she thrashes about - crying and banging her little head against the sides and undersides of the pieces. She is stuck and hates it. So she does the only thing she can think of to get herself out – she pushes even harder, which only worsens her problem. She’s more stuck than ever.”

“If this infant could talk, she would blame the furniture for her troubles. She, after all, is doing everything she can think of. The problem couldn’t be *hers*. But of course, the problem *is* hers, even though she can’t see it. While it’s true she’s doing everything she can think of, the problem is precisely that *she can’t see how she’s the problem*. Having the problem she has, nothing she can think of will be a solution.”

“Self-deception is like this. It blinds us to the true cause of problems, and once blind, all the “solutions” we can think of will actually make matters worse. That’s why self-deception is so central to leadership – because leadership is about making matters better. To the extent we are self-deceived, our leadership is undermined at every turn – and not because of the furniture.”
- *Leadership and Self-Deception*

“A definition of self-deception is doing the same thing over and over but expecting different results.”



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Are You Riding a Dead Horse?

Dakota tribal wisdom says that when you discover you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount. However, in government we often try other strategies with dead horses, including:

1. Buying a stronger whip.
2. Changing riders.
3. Saying things like "This is the way we always have ridden this horse."
4. Appointing a committee to study the horse.
5. Arranging to visit other sites to see how they ride dead horses.
6. Increasing the standards to ride dead horses.
7. Appointing a tiger team to revive the dead horse.
8. Creating a training session to increase our riding ability.
9. Comparing the state of dead horses in today's environment.
10. Pass legislation declaring the "This horse is not dead."
11. Blaming the horse's parents.
12. Harnessing several dead horses together for increased speed.
13. Declaring that, "No horse is too dead to beat."
14. Providing additional funding to increase the horse's performance.
15. Do a CA Study to see if contractors can ride it cheaper.
16. Procure a COTS (Commercial Off The Shelf Software) dead horse.
17. Declare the horse is "better, faster, and cheaper" dead.
18. Form a quality circle to find uses for dead horses.
19. Revisit the performance requirements for horses.
20. Say, "This horse was procured with cost as an independent variable."
21. BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) the horse farm where it was born.
22. Promote the dead horse to a supervisory position.
23. Commission a study to identify ways to improve the product through incremental enhancements, such as adding wheels.



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Are Our Congregations Alive or Dead?

What do people say about attending church?

- All form, no substance
- Too much politics
- Too many cliques
- Boring
- No sense of authentic spirituality
- I am a Christian – I just don't like church and don't get anything out of it
- I go to church because it is my duty, not because I like it
- I go to church to see my friends
- Why would I bring my friends to listen to a tape or watch a video?
- Attending church is a duty and a law – I don't expect it to be good

These are statements from people who are:

- Disenfranchised
- Disillusioned
- Disappointed
- Disgusted
- Disconnected
- Dismayingly correct



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Why was Paul so committed to evangelism and we are not?

- Evangelism was his passion
- Examples of the beatings he took
- We are tempted to give up with a cross word or a complaint
- Paul's passion is inflamed by:
 - An overwhelming belief that what he did was important and valuable
 - A realization that if he didn't do it, it won't get done
 - He had the authority to act
 - He was accountable to God, his people and the churches for his actions
 - Woe to me if I don't preach
 - I would die to save my people
 - A burning desire to see results. His preaching, teaching and counseling:
 - Incited riots
 - Inflamed passions
 - Split synagogues
 - Seized opportunities
 - Followed the lead of God's Holy Spirit
 - A deep sense of gratitude for what he had been given
 - Forgiveness for persecuting the laity – the people of God
 - A place of service to those whom God is calling
 - A deep sense of personal responsibility to obey the Great Commission
 - A clear vision of the value of what being a Christian represents

What do WE do?

- Argue about what is the gospel?
 - A message about salvation?
 - About the coming Kingdom of God and the return of Jesus Christ?
 - A message from Christ about the Kingdom?
 - About Christ and the Kingdom?
 - Too much "Jesus" or not enough "Jesus?"
- Argue about who is allowed to "preach" the gospel and how?
 - Ministers
 - Selected ministers
 - Members
 - Magazines, TV, radio, Internet
- Argue about who is in control of what is done, how it is done and what is said?
- Argue about whether it is better to have a large corporate organization or small "independent/interdependent" congregations to preach the gospel?

New Testament Evangelism

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- Avoid the idea that our mission is to “make disciples” (a quantifiable result) and focus instead on proclamation (a quantifiable activity)
 - Proclamation is fine if we are planting fertile seed, watering it and expecting growth – or baptisms.
 - Proclamation intended as a witness only misses the mark. It was only when people did not respond with action – becoming a disciple, that the apostles shook the dust off their feet when leaving town.
- Tolerate boring church services and a lack of engagement of the membership?
 - Said of the role of the laity in Catholicism at the time of the Reformation: “Pay, pray and obey.”

How Confused Are We About Our Mission?

- Mission confusion
 - Preach a warning message – a prophetic gospel?
 - Preach a gospel of a coming kingdom and preparation for future rule?
 - “Get people saved?”
 - Act like Christians and hope some becomes a Christian as a result of our example?
 - Believe that you should NOT “teach” others because you are not a minister, therefore not qualified?
 - The only way to evangelize is through a pre-approved formula or method?
- Mission Confusion
 - Values confusion
 - What is important to us? What are our personal values?
 - Where do we spend our time?
 - Where do we spend our “treasure?”
 - Where do we spend our mental energy?
 - What truly excites us – what gives us energy and renewal?
 - Work? Hobbies? Personal entertainment?
 - Where does evangelism rank in our personal values?
- Mission Confusion
 - Is evangelism a duty or delight?
 - Hot stock tip – tell others?
 - Great shoes at 75% off retail price – tell others?
 - Share with others because everybody wants a great deal
 - Appeals to human nature – positive responses

New Testament Evangelism

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- Share good news
- Mission Confusion
 - Is evangelism a duty or a delight?
 - Luke 7:47: Forgiven much or forgiven little? Love much, or love little?
 - Why is evangelism not a delight? Are you embarrassed:
 - By your congregation?
 - By your youth activities
 - By your leaders?
 - By where you meet?
 - By what is said?
 - Do you like your own church?
 - Competition with other Christian churches – even those who recently split from our own congregation!
 - We don't agree doctrinally on every issue
 - We don't want to mix with them because we are mad at them
 - Our church frowns on us working together
 - So we keep our kids apart, don't cooperate in evangelism and build wall after wall
 - Same Sabbath. Same building. Same time. One watching a videotape and the other hearing a sermon. No common activities because they might "infect" us or "they left us" or "they didn't leave when we left."
 - What ever happened to cooperating to advance the mission? What ever happened to enlarging the circle of friends for our young people so they can have hope in finding a mate who shares a common foundation of belief?
- When was the last "Super Sabbath" where all the different "splinters" in your area got together for church services?
 - A time for young people to meet old friends and make new ones
 - A time to share ideas with others who are trying to do the same thing
 - A time to hear some good, live preaching
 - If not, why not?
 - Is the answer that we have lost our sense of mission and are allowing human nature to divide us?
 - Are we afraid that one of our members might leave our congregation?
 - Are we afraid that someone might be tainted if they hear a sermon from the pastor of another Sabbath keeping congregation – or even their former pastor, former local elder or a former friend?
- The answer may be yes to some or all of these questions.

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- How many of our congregations are so weak and the quality so poor that church leaders are afraid of mixing with others who believe 99.44% of the same doctrines?
- What divides us is greater than what unites us.
 - Our differences in administration, often minor doctrinal differences and personal hurts are greater than our love of making disciples for Jesus Christ, providing fellowship for our young people and cooperating to fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ.
 - Other denominations maintain their own congregations and their own unique identity while working together for the value and benefit of their young people and the evangelism of their city

Mission Confusion Solution:

- Renewing our personal passion for Jesus Christ - we are all bought with a price – our lives are no longer ours alone to decide what we do
- Preaching, teaching, relationships, magazines, TV, radio and all the rest are tools of preaching the gospel and “doing the work.” They are NOT the work itself. They are a means to an end.
- The Work of God is this: “To seek and to save that which was lost. The tools God uses are the leadership of Jesus Christ, what we do and what His Holy Spirit does.
- Making it our PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE mission is to make disciples and help them learn Christ’s ways
- Sense of personal responsibility and accountability for the mission in your community and beyond:
 - God wants your neighbors, your friends, and your community to hear the good news.
 - If not you, then who?
 - If not now, then when?
- Adding our skills together for a common purpose where and when it is helpful
- Simplifying to sound doctrine
 - Paul’s reaction to those who overemphasized doctrines: “Knowing nothing but Christ crucified”
 - Doctrinal purity = righteousness = Pharisaism
 - Paul’s warning to Timothy: stick with sound doctrine
- Focusing on THE Mission:
 - Jesus’ job: Seek and save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10)
 - He works through Christians as His eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, hands – His body is active fulfilling THE mission.



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- Preach in such a way as to make disciples of those whom God wants to call and then teach them what Jesus taught.
- We are not given the choice of who should or should not hear the gospel: Mark 16:
¹⁵He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.
¹⁶Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

MAKING DISCIPLES IS THE REASON YOU ARE CALLED TODAY RATHER THAN 1,000 YEARS FROM NOW.

If your church is not growing, could it be because it is not committed to making disciples?