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# Missional Ministry

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**W**HY DO WE NEED TEACHING on missional ministry? Isn't it a given that we are called out by Christ to serve His mission in our world? Yes, we affirm this truth enthusiastically, but when it comes to living it out daily, things become a bit muddled. The concerns of the moment can speak louder than the call of Christ. Even when we reflect on the fact that we are called to a mission, we do not each have an explicit set of instructions telling us exactly what that mission is and how to act on it today.

In fact, the day-to-day can be the most challenging. It is easy to fall into the habit of being reactive rather than moving forward in a missional way. We can lose entire days responding to emails, putting out fires, and deciding on event details that feel far-removed from spiritual matters. These are some of the necessities of our work, but how can we design a ministry that is proactive rather than reactive, that pursues a Biblical mission rather than getting swallowed up by program and administrative detail?

## **Purpose**

This chapter will explore the Biblical basis for our call to missional ministry, what that mission is and how we might apply it in a wide range of ministry contexts. It will provide foundational principles that underlie all

of our ministries and questions to ask when seeking to apply these principles to a particular church ministry.

### **Suggested Use**

This study would be useful in either designing or evaluating the direction of a women's ministry or a particular program within that ministry. It is intended to provide a starting place for women's ministry leaders as they seek to apply Christ's mission for the Church to their particular ministry.

## **I. Obstacles to Missional Ministry**

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Why is missional ministry so difficult? When we as the church know that we are called to live missionally, why is it so hard to do? As members of the 21<sup>st</sup> century evangelical church in the United States, we cannot help but be influenced by our postmodern American culture.

Postmodernism rejects objective truth, standards, authority...those things that unite us in thought and belief. Instead, truth is subjective, located in individual experience. Add to this ethos the value American culture places on individualism, and we find a church very much focused on "me and Jesus". Ask most Christians to describe the purpose of Christ's life, death and resurrection, and you will hear some variation of the theme: "so that I can be saved and have a personal relationship with Him." This leaves us without a sense of corporate purpose and even without a personal mission outside of ourselves.

The gospel does change our lives here on earth. This is good news indeed! The problem is that our view of Christ often stops here, neglecting so much of the richness of this good news. First of all, the promises of the gospel of Christ are corporate. God calls us into the body of Christ, His church. In reading our English Bibles, we can often miss the fact that so many of God's promises, His descriptions of the redeemed life and **His commands that we read as speaking to "you" singular are actually given to "you" plural.**

Our southern brothers and sisters have a leg up on us northerners in understanding these truths. The word, "y'all", seldom-heard north of the Mason-Dixon line, provides a much clearer translation of many of these promises and calls. If only at least some of our English translations origi-

nated in the South! God's promises are to y'all! He cherishes "y'all" as a body! He is growing "y'all" into His likeness and refining "y'all's" gifts to be used to His glory! These promises are not complete in us alone! This changes how we view our church and our community. Our church is not a helpful group that members can take or leave depending on how difficult it becomes, but it is a body, apart from which they cannot survive. Does this change how we care for one another? Does it affect the way we confront people (or whether we confront people)? Does it change our ministry emphases?

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But there is still more. Even with a healthy view of the corporate nature of the promises of God, our mission remains unclear and incomplete if we fail to look at the final goal or ultimate purpose of our redemption. **We are not simply redeemed so we can spend eternity in heaven.** If this were the case, why not just be whisked off to heaven as soon as we accept Christ?

We are here on Earth for a purpose. Unlike some of the views of the end times, the Lord is not planning to scrap the Earth, pulling us all off to live in spirit form with our wings and halos in heaven for eternity. No, He will redeem His creation. One day there will be a new heaven and a new earth where we will dwell. He calls us to care for the earth - to reflect Him and His character as we interact with the world and with those who inhabit it - to spread the gospel that others may come into the kingdom. As we look at our ministries, then, we must look at what is our end. What is the goal or purpose of all we do in ministry? **Are we shaping our ministry to proclaim the gospel in both word and deed?**

Before we begin looking at the "how-to's" of missional ministry, we must soak in the mission itself. Living out this mission will look different in each of our churches. We must begin with our call, prayerfully questioning what this call might look like in our church, in our community, in our heart. Ministry does not equal program, but rather our programs are the context of our ministries. We must, therefore, begin with the principles of

missional ministry before they can flow out into any particular program.

## II. What is Our Unique Mission?

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To minister missionally is to carry out Christ's mission. But how do we define Christ's mission? Fortunately, we are not left in the dark on this. To shed some light on our mission as the church, let's look at Christ's charge to His disciples as He ascended to heaven, leaving them on earth to carry on His ministry.

### Great Commission

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Mt. 28:18-20*

### **This is Christ's mission in which the disciples are allowed to participate.**

All authority has been given over to Christ. He determines the mission; He is the one who calls those who are to carry the mission forward; and He is the only One with the power to fulfill the mission. "Therefore" indicates that the disciples' call and ability to make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them, hinge on Christ's authority with which He commissions them.

We so often make the mission and authority our own. We try to manipulate people into the kingdom or reach them on our own strength, through our own cleverness. As Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians, the power is always the Lord's and not our own as "...we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." (2 Cor. 4:7). Our weakness is the Lord's strength (2 Cor. 12:9-10). The authority and power are His.

### **This is the mission of the Church**

Before we go any further, it is important to note to whom Jesus is speak-

ing as He gives this commission. We can err greatly when we as Christians apply any passage of Scripture directly to ourselves before noting the original recipient of the words. We see from vs. 16 that Christ is away on a mountain with the eleven remaining disciples after His resurrection. The Apostles are, in some ways, representative of all disciples of Christ, but in other ways, they are unique in their call and ministry.

As D.A. Carson notes in his commentary on Matthew, “[t]he injunction is given at least to the Eleven, but to the Eleven in their own role as disciples (v. 16). Therefore, they are paradigms for all disciples...it is

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binding on all Jesus’ disciples to make others what they themselves are—disciples of Jesus Christ.” As the Apostles are the first “officers” of the early church, it is safe to say that the Great Commission is the call of the Church. As individuals, we each have unique roles within our corporate mission. While each individual member of the church is not called to baptize people or to teach (1 Cor. 12, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus), we are called to bring people into the body where these things are happening.

### **This mission is to all nations**

All people are included in God’s plan of redemption, as has been the case since the beginning. But this call to take the gospel to all nations goes out to all the church. Your particular church is not called to reach all the nations. This would be impossible. We together, as the church are called to reach all tribes, tongues and nations, including those in our backyard. But we are called to be intentional about the way we participate in this corporate mission. Each church is called to a particular place at a particular time. **Christ was always strategic in His ministry plans and He called the disciples to do likewise.**

In the Greek, we find that the only imperative found in verse 19 of the Great Commission is “make disciples” (*matheteusate*). The other verbs

in the sentence, “go,” “baptizing” and “teaching”, are all participles, which means they are dependent on the main verb. This means that the primary emphasis in the sentence is not “go” but “make disciples”. This is not to say we are not called to go, as this is clear in the call to make disciples “of all nations”, but it does mean that there is legitimacy in the call to make disciples “as you are going along” as well. In other words, if you are

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called to live in Washington, DC or rural Nebraska or the Sudan, you are fulfilling your mission if you are striving to make disciples in your neighborhood or work or school. Likewise, your church is fulfilling her call just as powerfully by reaching out to her neighbors and immediate community as she is by sending missionaries overseas.

It is important as a leader to prayerfully look at the gifts, passions and calling of those you are leading, (both their strengths now and where they could grow). From this information, you’ll get somewhat of a picture of where the Lord might be calling your church to make disciples. If you are serving in a wealthy suburban church, it would not make sense for your primary outreach to be to the inner city. This is certainly not to say you should not seek inner city ministry (both as a way of caring for the poor as we’re called to do and as a way of stretching your people towards growth), but primarily we should encourage people to begin ministering where they are. The reverse would be true of an inner-city ministry. All of her energy should not be poured into overseas ministry to the exclusion of the homeless person on the street corner.

### **The Content of the Mission**

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”*

## Make Disciples

Our primary call as the church is to “make disciples”. That is the foundation upon which all else rests. We must remember this, or we risk making secondary calls central to our ministries, diverting the focus from the Gospel.

What does it mean to “make disciples”? D. A. Carson describes, “To disciple a person to Christ is to bring him into the relation of pupil to teacher, ‘taking his [Christ’s] yoke’ of authoritative instruction, accepting what He says as true because He says it and submitting to his requirements as right because He makes them.” The Master is not giving a command that will merely secure nominal adherence to a group, but one that will secure wholehearted commitment to a person,” (Morris, 746).

Jesus includes two important aspects of this type of relationship: 1) conversion (baptism) and 2) growth in grace (through teaching). Baptism signifies new entrance into a covenant relationship with God. When we think of the Great Commission, this is often where our minds go. But Jesus includes, equally importantly, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Our desire is to hold both of these commands in tension and pursue them simultaneously as Christ calls. As Glen Hoburg of Grace Presbyterian in Washington, DC, says, the desire of the church is to be “inwardly-growing and outwardly facing.” This reflects both parts of the Great Commission.

It is easy for the church, and for us personally, to err in favor of one side or the other. On one side of the pendulum swing, a church can preach the Gospel boldly, have solid teaching and disciple their people well into future leaders of the church, but neglect outreach to those outside their walls. When this happens, we are effectively hoarding the Gospel for ourselves. **A true relationship with Christ should lead to the kind of love and joy that it cannot help but overflow to those around us.** When we stop short of reaching others with the good news of God’s grace in Christ, not only do we fail to fulfill our mission from Christ, but we do not fully teach our people what it means to follow Christ. Christ calls us to die to self and live for Him. Reaching outside of ourselves requires the kind of sacrifice (of time, comfort, security, sometimes resources) that is only possible through Christ’s power at work within us.

The other extreme is also dangerous. It is also possible for a church to

believe so passionately about outreach, missions and/or service to their community, that they effectively equate these things for the Gospel. It is very true that real faith must work itself out in these ways, but these are not the things that save us. Perhaps a church would never say this in so many words, but when the application of every passage of Scripture becomes caring for the poor or reaching your unbelieving neighbor, it would be easy to imply a works-based salvation. If this is the case, our seeking to love our neighbors will either end in despair (due to our inability to carry this call out sufficiently) or pride (when we are able to check our acts of outreach or service off our lists) rather than in glory to God. It will also lead to anemic Christians.

**The work of pouring into and discipling believers is less glamorous than being instruments of conversion.** It is, therefore, often not as appreciated. Just think about the letters we receive from missionaries. To know that our support is making an impact on the kingdom, we want to hear that that missionary has converted “x” number of people. It is much less exciting to read that 20 people continue to walk in the Christian life, growing in grace and repentance, as they have for the past 10 years. But if we are simply converting people and then leaving them to their own accord, we are only fulfilling half of our call. We are leaving them vulnerable to error, heresy, vast misunderstandings of the person of Christ and our call as Christians. One of the staff members of the campus ministry Reformed University Fellowship used to say that the mark of the success of our ministry was not how many students attended our group on a given Wednesday night, but rather how many are still walking with the Lord in 10 years. This is the second half of the Great Commission.

We must, therefore, hold fast to both parts of this commission. Paul is a prime example of what this balance looks like. Paul was the quintessential missionary. He went to the ends of the known world preaching to the unreached and those openly hostile to the Gospel and to him. He suffered beating, jailings and multiple brushes with death because of the immense importance of carrying the Gospel to unbelievers. But he also poured into his converts. The vast majority of the New Testament epistles are those written by Paul back to the churches he started, clarifying theology, applying the Gospel to particular spiritual struggles those churches were facing, and encouraging the believers to press on and grow in the

faith. He poured his heart into this ministry as much as he did into making new converts. But how do we do this?

## **The Promise**

*“...And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Christ being with us here is not the kind of “with you” of a cheerleader standing on the sidelines and encouraging her team on to victory. It is not even the “with you” of a friend who is there for a loved one on the other side of the country who is going through a hard time. This is the “with you” of a father teaching his child to ride a bike. Our dads didn’t

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put us on a bike and tell us “you can do it” and let us struggle on our own. He held onto the seat himself, running with us and holding us upright as we struggled to peddle and balance. The place where this analogy breaks down, however, is that God never gives us a final push and let’s go so that we might continue on our own once we’ve gotten the hang of things. He is always the hand pushing us and directing us. He, in the person of the Holy Spirit, is the only way we are ever able to minister missionally.

This is the promise on which we and the whole Church stand. It is not a conditional promise, but a promise that precedes and enables this mission. Without this promise, we would be doomed to failure in this call. Again, lest we make even a balanced pursuit of the Great Commission the work upon which our righteousness rests, we are reminded that this is not about us! The call is from the Lord, empowered by the Lord and the content of the message is the Lord Himself.

### III. How Do We Minister Missionally?

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#### Scriptural Principle:

#### Being Witnesses through Word and Deed

Now that we have a picture of what the mission of our ministry is, how do we live it out? If we are called to the work of making disciples, yet recognize God as the only one who can change hearts, what is our role? Acts 1:8, a parallel call to that of the Great Commission, gives us further guidance.

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Christ calls the disciples to be His “witnesses” first where they are, then in concentric circles outward to the ends of the earth. **What does it mean to be a witness?** Throughout the rest of Acts, we can see the ways the Apostles seek to live out this call, which can give us a hint as to the word’s meaning. While the redemptive-historical and cultural contexts of Acts, as well as the role of the original Apostles are unique, the principles that underlie their methods are the same now as they were then, even if the methods themselves cannot be copied exactly.

Throughout Acts, the Apostles show us that being witnesses of Christ means revealing Him to others through the inextricable pairing of Word and deed. These men 1) preached the Word, 2) healed, 3) cared for physical needs, and 4) lived in intentional, deep community. Let’s look at each of these in turn:

#### 1) Preaching the Word

While the Apostles revealed Christ through their actions, these actions were always paired with God’s Word. In our country, the majority of people are Biblically illiterate. They have no concept of God’s Word and what it means, and often have negative impressions of what it means to be a Christian. With such people, we must invest a great deal of “pre-evangelism” before speaking the Gospel to them. We must build relationships, love them with Christ’s love, and earn the right to speak. Yet there must

come a time when the Gospel is taught in words or unbelievers will never know the Christ to whom our actions point. **They must know that we are not just “nice people”**. God Himself witnesses to us through creation, but He did not leave us there, wondering what all of this glory points to. He gave us His Word, that we might clearly know His character, our role in creation, His requirements of us and, most importantly,

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His Son who is the only one able to fulfill those requirements. In order to image the Lord in this, we must teach the Word in our churches and speak it to those in our community.

The Apostles also show us how we might share the Gospel in words with unbelievers. They met people where they were and applied the gospel them in that place. In Acts 17, Paul speaks to the men and women of Athens. These people were Gentiles and did not have an understanding of God’s work throughout redemptive history. Having done his research Acts 17:16-17, 23 show that Paul spent time walking around the city, talking to the people there and learning about those things important to the Athenians), Paul begins his speech connecting the Truth with the culture in a way that the Athenians would understand. He builds a bridge from where they are to Christ, affirming the things that are true about their thinking and completing those things that are not with the truth of Christ. We see a very different type of speech in Acts 3 where Peter speaks to Jews. Here he is able to begin with the things the Jews know to be true about God, His work in their midst throughout redemptive history and His relationship to the Jews, explaining finally that all of the things they believe find their fulfillment in Christ.

Whether we are staff members or laypeople in our churches, we have the responsibility and the honor of teaching others about Christ. People are longing for fulfillment, for someone or something to worship. We have the privilege of being able to tell them where they can find it. We must therefore ask whether our programs have the Word as their center.

Do the things we do belong uniquely in the church, or could they just as easily be accomplished in other settings? Are we teaching and encouraging our people to be witnesses of Christ?

## **2) Healing**

The apostles also confirmed their words through action. Our actions both validate our words and act as pre-evangelism, showing people Christ's beauty before they are ready to hear about Him in words. Like Christ Himself, His apostles healed many and cared for their physical needs. Why was healing a vital part of the ministry of the Gospel? First of all, we cannot discount compassion. Our God has compassion on His creatures. But this was not the sole reason for healing.

As we discussed before, God's work in our world does not stop with salvation but extends to the redemption of the earth. Healing is a way the Lord revealed the character of the Kingdom of God and the character of God Himself. These acts embodied the coming of the kingdom of heaven to earth. While miraculous healings may or may not have a place in our churches today, we can and must be instruments of healing in our churches and world in other ways. We must strive for spiritual healing for people through applying the Word to their lives and through prayer. We must help them toward emotional healing through our counseling ministries and by educating ourselves regarding the emotional struggles our people face that we may be lay counselors to them, applying the Gospel of grace and healing to their hurts.

We must be agents of relational healing by confronting others when called for, by being leaders in repentance and forgiveness, but reaching out and bringing those who feel outcast into the fold. Our doctors, nurses and healthcare workers pursue physical healing. In each of these ways, we image God, imitate Christ, subdue the earth and show our neighbors the character of the kingdom that Christ brought to earth at His coming and will consummate at His second coming.

## **3) Caring for Physical Needs – Mercy Ministries**

In Acts 6, we see that the apostles valued the care for the material needs of their people enough to set aside deacons to focus on that task. We are, likewise, called to be Christ's witnesses by caring for physical/financial

needs. In our churches now, we often call this “mercy ministry”. Why is this so important?

**Mercy to others overflows from and responds to the mercy we have received from God through Christ** (I John 4:7-12). The primary motivation for mercy must be the greatness of God’s mercy to us. If God showed mercy to us, who are not only needy, but wicked and rebellious, how can we not show mercy to those in need around us? Tim Keller, in his book *Ministries of Mercy*, explains it this way: “Spiritually I was **just** like these people, though I never was where they are now...” The person who knows that he has received mercy while he was an undeserving enemy of God will have a heart of love for even (and especially!) the most

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ungrateful and difficult persons. When a Christian sees prostitutes, alcoholics, prisoners, drug addicts, unwed mothers, the homeless, the refugees, he knows that he is looking in a mirror. Perhaps the Christian spent all of his life as a respectable middle-class person. No matter. He thinks: ‘Spiritually, I was just like these people, though physically and socially, I never was where they are now. They are outcasts. I was an outcast.’ “Mercy is spontaneous, super abounding love which comes from an experience of the grace of God.” (Keller, 60, 63).

**Not to earn favor before God or others.** We must guard particularly against mercy ministry becoming a work because it can be something that is tangible or seems measurable. All of the favor due Christ already rests upon those who believe in Him, so mercy ministry cannot possibly earn anything for us. Rather, it will flow naturally out of a changed heart and will evidence a healthy relationship with Christ, not cause it. Subordinate to and depending on this experience of God’s grace, the following reasons further explain why mercy ministry is important:

**We must preach the Gospel in word and deed.** Without deeds, our words will be meaningless (James 2:14-20).

**Mercy is a central aspect of the Kingdom of God.** Christ inaugu-

rated the coming of God's Kingdom to earth. When the Kingdom is one day consummated on earth, the fall will be rolled back, the earth will be redeemed and all things will be made new. Spreading mercy and justice is a key reflection of the Kingdom that is both here and is to come.

**We are commanded to love and serve those in need.** While a simple 'because God says so' will not change hearts to be instruments of mercy, we cannot discount the fact that we are called to mercy ministry. What does mercy ministry look like in your women's ministries in your church context?

## *Mercy is a central aspect of the Kingdom of God.*

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### **How do Christians do 'mercy ministry'?**

The Church has a call distinct from that of culture. We are called to be Christ's witnesses on earth (Acts 1:8). 'Mercy ministry' is a part of this call, but must never be divorced from the Gospel of Christ, whether this Gospel is preached in word or deed. Jesus' ministry on earth was one in which both word and deed were constantly paired together. His deeds illustrated and fulfilled His words, and His words explained His deeds. **Our mercy must be a mirror of God's mercy through Christ to the world**, which is:

**Sacrificial:** Showing mercy to others will require a sacrifice of our time, resources and emotional energy. Bearing one another's burdens means taking some of the burden on oneself (Tim Keller, *Ministry of Mercy*, 74-75). But Christ, who loved to the point of death, not only inspires our sacrifice, but enables it through our union with Him.

**Relational:** In the most incredibly relational act ever, the God of the universe chose to come down to earth personally through Christ to pour out His mercy on His people. Once on earth, Christ was extremely relational with those to whom He ministered. He touched the leper who had probably not been touched for years (Matthew 8.1-4), sat down with the woman at the well without concern for the cultural rules. He was break-

ing (John 4), and endured scorn by spending time with prostitutes, tax collectors and social outcasts (Luke 7:36-50, Luke 19:1-9, Matthew 11:19). Even now, Christ desires a relationship with us, not simply a series of impersonal religious acts. Our mercy to others, therefore, should be relational if we are to mirror God's mercy.

**Honoring:** God's mercy to us through Christ gives us a completely new status. It clothes unworthy wretches in Christ's righteousness and makes orphans children of God. Our mercy to others must also restore dignity to those made in the image of God. We must treat people with the respect befitting an image-bearer of God.

**Not based on merit:** People often make a false distinction between the "deserving poor" and those who are not. There has never existed a Christian deserving of God's mercy, yet He chose to lavish it on us anyway to His glory. Christ met people where they were, whether they were prostitutes, tax collectors or Pharisees.

**Transformational:** Christ met people where they were, but He also did not leave them there. As God's love and mercy are transformational, so should ours be. Our mercy should not breed dependence or become a crutch, but rather should help heal the person toward wholeness. The unexpected aspect of mercy ministry, however, is that it transforms not only the person being served but also the one serving. Loving others as Christ loved, through the power of the Holy Spirit, finding that those seemingly very different are really the same, and seeing people through God's eyes cannot help but change us.

**Habitual:** (Matthew 25) "Mercy is a lifestyle, not a project." (Duke Kown, Pastor at Grace Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC)

## **Living in Gospel Community**

Christ's disciples in the Acts community lived in radical community. While we may not be called in the same way—all of our possessions and live together—we are called to Biblical, sacrificial community that looks radical to the world. Real, self-sacrificial relationships are at the context for and part of the content of our mission. Such community is characterized by bearing one another's burdens, whether they be physical, emotional or spiritual, by transparency, where we trust that our justification is in Christ and not in appearances, by repentance, forgiveness and con-

frontation, where the spiritual good of another is put above our pride, by life investment, not just going through motions, and by openness in inviting others into our community.

Why is this type of community a vital part of being Christ's witnesses? First of all, such relationships require the Gospel and image the Gospel. They require the Gospel in that we must trust in Christ's justification rather than self-justification in order to let people see our sin and short-comings. Such community requires the kind of trust in the Gospel that leads sinners to repentance and forgiveness that is counter to pride. They mean desiring the spiritual growth of a brother or sister more than one's own comfort when confrontation is needed. Such relationships are costly, requiring the sacrifice of time, emotional energy, and resources, which means we must be filled with the love of Christ that His love may overflow when ours runs dry. In all these ways, Biblical community reflects the Gospel to the world as well.

### **Applying Scriptural Principles:**

How do we apply these principles in our church, that our ministry might be more missional? Like all other aspects of the Christian life, there are no "10 easy steps" to get us to our goal. Each of our churches minister to a unique set of people in a distinct culture and community and, as such, must prayerfully apply these scriptural principles in ways unique to them. The following, therefore, are some suggestions to guide the application of these principles to one's ministry.

#### **1) Be planted by streams of living water**

It is easy for us to take our plans for ministry and "baptize" them in prayer after we've crafted them, rather than humbly submitting to the Lord and constantly seeking His direction before and throughout the process. But these are the Lord's ministries, and we are simply His vessels. It is freeing as a leader to remember that GOD is the one at work. He honors us by allowing us to participate in His ministry, but it is His ministry. This frees us to love people rather than manipulating them into our vision for their transformation. It also frees us to be the leader God made us to be rather than coveting the gifts of others.

As ministry leaders, it is also vital that we be planted by streams of

living water. It is our communion with God through the Word and through prayer that will give us that which we need to give to others. We must be filled up by Christ in order to pour out to others. We do not have the love or grace or wisdom or energy needed to minister to people on our own, but rather must receive them from the Lord that we might pass them on.

## 2) **Craft a mission statement for this season of ministry**

As we have discussed, it is important to have a purpose to focus and propel our ministries. This step may seem redundant, as we just spent a great

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deal of time exploring what our mission is as Christians and as the Church. It is true that our mission is to make disciples, but each of us is called to make disciples in ways appropriate to the gifts, calling and ministry context of our church.

As you begin considering the mission of your ministry, spend a great deal of time listening. Ask questions of your women. Learn about their gifts, their passions, their needs and the perceived needs of those around them. Look at how your ministry fits into the mission of the larger church and what unique role it plays. Learn about the community into which your church is called to minister: their culture, demographics, strengths and needs. Have all of these things in mind as you pray through the mission Christ gives His disciples and the Biblical principles described above. Your mission should both utilize the gifts of your congregation and promote growth in areas of weakness. In doing this, it should balance equipping the saints and reaching out, as well as balancing word and deed.

It is also important to remember that this statement will encapsulate the vision for your ministry **as it stands now**. As your women grow and change, aspects of the mission must grow and change as well. While the

broad principles that drive your mission will remain the same over time, your goals in working these principles out in your ministry will change. Targeted areas of weakness will become strengths, and new concerns will come to the surface. When crafting your mission statement, then, think of it in two parts: the broader mission that will not change often and specific goals in pursuing that mission for the next 2 or 3 years. Your statement does not have to include every aspect of discipleship, but rather those areas that need to be emphasized now. Reevaluate this statement after those 2 or 3 years, changing emphasis as appropriate. Perhaps it will remain the same for many years, or maybe it will need tweaking fairly quickly. This is meant to help your ministry by giving it focus and direction, not imprison it, and so let it be a fluid process.

### **3) Talk about the mission regularly**

Cast this vision for ministry to your leaders often. Be transparent as to why this is the mission for your ministry now, fleshing out what the different aspects of the vision mean. Start with Scripture and remind leaders of the beautiful mission Christ calls each of us to. You want this to be the ministry's mission, not just yours, so include your women in its development and implementation. Your desire is that your entire ministry be moving in the same direction, ministering out of the same motives. Just as we need to be constantly reminded of the scriptural call for all we do amid the details of everyday life, so do your leaders.

### **4) Test all programs, new and old, against your mission**

The only purpose for programs is to promote and provide contexts for ministry. Our programs must flow from our mission, not drive it. If a program is no longer serving your mission, it is time to either reshape it or cut it. When considering new program ideas, take careful consideration of how this program will contribute to your mission before jumping on board. Even if an idea is good, that does not mean it will necessarily fit the particular emphasis of your ministry at this time.

### **5) Develop programs that are missionally well-rounded**

While no one program can meet every ministry goal, you also do not want to segment each aspect of your mission into a separate program. We

do not want one program to be the service program and one to be the program to develop community and one to be the program where we study the Word any more than we want to make disciples who one day pray and another day love their neighbor and a third day develop community among believers. Discipleship includes all of these aspects at once.

An example of rounding out your programs could be including outreach or service as a part of any program that is focused on pouring into believers. Encourage Bible study leaders to replace a study once every month or every-other month with a time of community service as a group. Emphasize prayer for and support of missionaries as part of your retreats. Create contexts where believers can easily invite friends while still growing themselves. Keep the Word and prayer as vital aspects of fellowship-centered gatherings. Again, our desire is to balance “in-reach” and outreach, word and deed.

#### **6) Expect the Holy Spirit to show up!**

Pray boldly that the Holy Spirit will move in powerful and even unexpected ways in your ministry. We so often make small plans, not actually expecting God to do His amazing work of transformation in our midst. Make plans that are bigger than you. Make the kind of plans that require the Holy Spirit to show up in order for them to work! As Paul reminds us in Ephesians 3:14-20:

*“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

## Core questions

- When you think of “missional ministry”, what comes to mind?
- How would you summarize 1) Christ’s mission and 2) the mission of His disciples in a couple of sentences?
- What aspects of Christ’s mission are you...your women...your ministry...your church currently pursuing?
- Which aspects are lacking?
- How does your ministry fit within the larger context of the church in this area? Is your work parallel? Compatible? Filling in gaps?
- Whom are you reaching?
- Do you—does your ministry—lean more toward word or deed? In what ways?
- What motivates your women in this? How do you motivate them?
- How do you motivate yourself?

## Assignment

Answer the above questions to evaluate the missional nature of your ministry now. What gaps do you see?

Write a mission statement for your ministry for the next 2 to 3 years. This statement should have a broader piece that will not change and some shorter-term goals that address the gaps you’ve found in the way your ministry pursues Christ’s mission.

On a sheet of paper, make columns for each of your ministry goals (both the continuing and the changing ones). Then look at each of your programs, listing them in the column representing the goal it is addressing.

Do programs appear under multiple headings? If not, is there a way to mold the program so that it is more well-rounded in its scope?

How are these goals being communicated to the women participating in each program? How do these goals fit within the larger context of your church’s ministry?

## **Get To Know The Writer**

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## **For Further Reading: Missional Ministry**

**Life Together** by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, “Matthew”** by D. A. Carson

**The Enduring Community** by Brian Habig and Les Newsom

**Ministries of Mercy** by Tim Keller

**“The Church and the Advancement of the Kingdom”**

by Richard Pratt 2007 EPC General Assembly

([www.epc.org/sermon/the-church—the-advancement-of-the-kingdom](http://www.epc.org/sermon/the-church—the-advancement-of-the-kingdom)).

**The Missional Church** by Darrell Guder

**The Centrality of the Gospel** by Tim Keller

**The Missional Church** by Tim Keller

**God’s Missionary People** by Charles Van Engen