



# **Introducing the because approach**

**1 Corinthians 3:1-15**

What's the source of church growth?

What is God's role and what is our role in church growth?

What might God be asking us to do as his co-workers in our church context?

How might the knowledge that God brings the growth and we're his co-workers change our attitudes towards:

- Our role in church growth?
- The sort of church growth work we should aspire to do?
- Our calling as part of the people of God?

**Matthew 28**

What is the church's main reason for being?

How does the Old Testament anticipate the commission to make disciples of all nations?

**Deuteronomy 10**

**Matthew 16**

**Ephesians 2:19-22, 5:25-32**

**1 Peter 2:4-10**

**2 Timothy 4:1-2**

What makes a church gathering different from a social club or any other kind of gathering?

On what distinct activities do churches focus?

When I was a strategy consultant, my boss consistently wrote two words on presentations I'd prepared: 'so what?' It's a great question to ask. You may be involved in lots of activities, but can you answer the 'so what' behind them? The danger for churches that are involved in lots of activities is that their answer to the 'so what?' question will be more along the lines of 'we've always done it' or 'other churches do it' instead of a thought-through strategy. Strategy is about being involved more intentionally in church growth. Strategic planning is intentional planning—knowing why you do what you do. Though the default mode is to do things because they've always been done, our activities have so much more significance when we do them because we know God has prepared and called us to do each of them. Strategic churches do things because there is a clear reason for doing them based on the church's clear reason for being.

In the film *Gladiator*,<sup>1</sup> Caesar is old and he knows death is imminent. So he calls his most trusted general, Maximus, to come to him. Caesar tells Maximus, 'When a man sees his end he wants to know there was some purpose to his life.' Caesar's purpose is the dream of Rome. As he goes on to say, 'There was once a dream of Rome. You could only whisper it. Anything more than a whisper and it would vanish ... Maximus, let us whisper now, together, you and I.'

There was once a dream of church—the church in Jerusalem. The people were full of devotion to God and each other, and many others heard the whisper and joined them. Our church, too, can make this dream a reality. We can be a people:

- Who know where we're heading and what we're doing
- Of deliberate intention and vision
- Built by Jesus into a church that prevails.

Christ wants to build a prevailing church with the very same mission and vision in your community. Let's whisper the dream together and give God the glory as he brings the dream to life.

# Because.

## Every church needs a why.

In the film *Jerry Maguire*,<sup>2</sup> the title character is a sports agent who wakes up in the middle of the night to the realization that, in all the rush of life, he's lost sight of the simple pleasures of the job and why he chose this line of work in the first place. He says, 'With so many clients, we had forgotten what was important.' We can be a bit like that—we can become frenetically busy without necessarily knowing why we're doing all the things we're doing.

Children are excellent at asking 'why?', but answers such as 'just because' or 'don't ask why, just do what you're told' can suppress that youthful curiosity. The Because Approach believes in the power of asking 'why' in order to identify a clarifying 'because' answer. It goes beyond *asking* why to *knowing* why so that every person involved in every activity in your church can complete the following sentences: 'I'm doing this because ...' and 'I'm not doing that because ...'

The Because Approach raises three 'why' questions and offers three 'because' answers:

*Why do this at all?*

Because Scripture says ...

*Why do this here and now?*

Because our setting is ...

*Why do it this way, not that way?*

Because the solution we've agreed is ...

### **Scripture and setting are both important**

The foundation of the Because Approach, therefore, is the because of Scripture. But we need to apply Scripture's principles to context, so we ask the 'why' question of both Scripture and setting. Sometimes churches want to be strategic but jump straight into developing or implementing strategic plans that may have a basis in Scripture but don't take account of all that God is already doing in their context. Rather than jumping straight from Scripture to solutions, the Because Approach will help you develop solutions that best fit your particular setting. If we don't consider our setting, the danger is that we'll choose one of the solutions Scripture might support based on personal preference, on an ambition to build something that makes us look good, or on pragmatism (doing what's easiest to gain the quickest or most financially stable 'results'). Decisions that consider both Scripture and setting will be wise and will reflect Christ's calling for you as a church.

**The God the Scriptures reveal is personal, purposeful, and goal-oriented. The opening account of creation portrays God working toward a goal, completing it with satisfaction, and resting, content with the result. And from the great promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 we know this God to be totally, covenantally, and eternally committed to the mission of blessing the nations through the agency of the people of Abraham. In the wake of Genesis 3-11, this is good news for humanity—such good news that Paul describes Genesis 12 as 'the gospel in advance' (Gal. 3:8).**

## Why strategy is important for the church

The Greek word we translate 'church' is *ecclesia*. When it appears in the New Testament, the word simply means 'an assembly'. For example, in Acts 2:32 a riot was brewing in the local stadium and Luke writes that the *ecclesia* was in confusion. But what makes a church gathering different from a social club or any other kind of gathering? God's church is a gathering of people who are oriented toward kingdom goals. What sets these people apart?

- God's people belong to one heavenly Father (Eph. 2:19)
- God's people have one Lord, Jesus, as their foundation (Eph. 2:20–21)
- God lives in his people by his one Spirit (Eph. 2:22)
- God is building his people into the fullness of the likeness of Christ (Eph. 4:13)

The first 'church' gathering was the assembly of God's people in the desert at Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:17). Deuteronomy 10:4 describes that landmark event as 'the day of the assembly', and in the New Testament Stephen describes that same desert assembly as the day of the *ecclesia* (Acts 7:38). Church has always been about God's people gathering to hear from him—an expression of heaven here on earth.

Strategy is about intentional and joined-up thinking—and so strategic process is a friend of growing healthy churches. Sometimes people in churches say, 'I want to be free to go as the Spirit leads', but the Spirit of God is the person who made everything according to an order and with absolute intention and pure goodness. God didn't say, 'Let's throw some atoms and molecules into the air and see where they land.' He did say, 'let there be', and it was so and it was good. In Genesis 1, 'good' means 'just as God had intended'. Healthy churches are intentional churches.

The Because Approach starts with three convictions about the local church:

1. Each local church carries out its divine commission to a lost world backed by Christ's personal guarantee that his church will prevail. (Matt. 16:18)
2. Each local church carries out Christ's commission, as outlined in Scripture, in its own unique context. (1 Pet. 2:12)
3. God calls the local church to develop strategies that will enable it to proclaim hope clearly to a world lost in mistranslation. (Matt. 5:14)

Basing strategy on a biblical mandate *and* a contextual calling turns strategy from a worthy but dull military campaign into an exciting journey of adventure with God. As Jesus told the disciples, when we go with his authority and the clear intention of making disciples, he will be with us.

**'Sound contextualization means translating and adapting the communication and ministry of the gospel to a particular culture without compromising the essence and particulars of the gospel itself. The great missionary task is to express the gospel message to a new culture in a way that avoids making the message unnecessarily alien to that culture, yet without removing or obscuring the scandal and offence of biblical truth.'**<sup>3</sup>

## Because.

### Biblical strategy isn't just business as usual.

The key principle of the Because Approach is that biblical strategy is rooted in God's mission mandate and built from the ground up, rather than being driven by human ambition or pragmatic wisdom. As Lesslie Newbigin points out, the error of the 1970s was thinking that the church's business 'is not to promote the mission of the church, but to get out into the world, find out "what God is doing" and join forces with him.'<sup>4</sup> But that approach led to churches focusing on a variety of political and cultural concerns that were rarely part of their core competency and that generated very little mission opportunity, which in turn led to churches becoming increasingly irrelevant. David Bosch, in his book *Transforming Mission*,<sup>5</sup> suggests that the *missio Dei* ('God's mission') is to restore creation by alerting people to the reign of God rather than just recruiting them to our brand of religion. Church is a mission station proclaiming Christ in a secular context.

The advantage of biblical strategy, therefore, is that Scripture has already set much of an individual church's strategic plan. We don't have to sit with a blank sheet of paper and work out what our church is going to do. Instead, our strategic role is to discern with wisdom and prayer *where* we're called to do what God has already instructed us to do and *how* we're called to do what God has already instructed us to do in the particular context we're called to do it.

#### **Biblical strategy is about following Jesus' example**

Jesus didn't go through his day randomly, reacting to any and every situation he encountered. Because he knew what he was and was not called to do each day, he made a beeline for some situations and avoided others. At the beginning of Mark's Gospel we see Jesus under pressure and facing demands at every turn. He works through the pressure by getting up early, before the demands hit him, to speak to his heavenly Father. Then he forms a plan for that day (Mark 1:35–39).

'That is why I have come' (Mark 1:38)

'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6:10)

'Not my will but yours be done' (Luke 22:42).

Jesus was intentional about the way he invested his time—he had thought-through, goal-oriented plans. He went from village to village proclaiming the good news. Jesus also taught his disciples to be strategic. He sends them on a mission, for example, with instructions to focus on the 'person of peace' (Luke 10:1–18).

#### **Biblical strategy is about cooperating with Jesus**

We learn to be strategic and intentional as we understand more deeply our calling to be Christ's co-workers. We plant and water as God's fellow-workers (1 Cor. 3:6, 9) but it's God who makes churches grow (1 Cor. 3:6).

Preparing a strategic plan, therefore, isn't about usurping Jesus' role as the Master Builder. It's about cooperating with him as we follow his intended growth plan for our church. It's also about recognizing that our activities will only produce growth and fruit if we depend on him. Like any gardener, we work with our hands with what we have while accepting what is out of our hands. We love to 'make our mark' and create new things. But there's nothing new about why churches exist. When we seek to build a church, we start with practices the first Christians tested in ancient Rome that are based on God's principles (which existed before time began).

### **Biblical strategy is about taking responsibility for what God gives**

Planning honours God by using wisely the resources of time, money, and energy that he gives. The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–28) gives us an example of how God calls us to use what he has entrusted to us. We, who are 'God's workmanship', need to discern the 'good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do' (Eph. 2:10).

### **Biblical strategy maximizes God's kingdom value**

Business strategy is all about creating and capturing value for a company's shareholders. Church strategy contrasts with that of businesses—churches don't create shareholder value, but rather kingdom value. A church may therefore invest resources including people, skills, and money in a project and see no benefit to their 'bottom line' of the number of people attending or the amount of money given. But the church will continue to invest in that project with enthusiasm when they know it will reap an eternal harvest.

### **Biblical strategy is about vision with confidence in God's growth plans**

Vision is at the heart of biblical strategy:

- **Vision is defined by mission**—our vision comes out of our mission and focuses on contributing to our mission, which is to make and grow disciples.
- **Vision is shaped by values**—our values are the beliefs that compel us. Compelling vision, therefore, stems directly from what people value and the kinds of things to which they will give themselves.
- **Vision is rooted in context**—our vision cannot exist outside of a deep understanding of our context—both now and how we imagine it to be the future.

Planning our contribution to the redemption purposes of God for his earth each day demonstrates our trust in God as the kingdom builder who has powerful purposes for us. Planning, therefore, begins and ends with prayer.

**'The church both transcends culture and immerses itself in particular cultures. Here again, the church has trouble maintaining a balance. In its mainline forms the church has tended to value uniformity over particularity, universality over locality, cultural transcendence over cultural incarnation, and stability and predictability over innovation. Sometimes it has gone to the opposite extreme.'**<sup>6</sup>



## **Because.**

### There are resistors to biblical strategy.

While churches are on a mission that God himself calls them to carry out, the danger is that churches allow themselves to be shaped by the patterns of the world instead of heeding the calling of God .

Churches can be influenced by strategies that take them away from God's calling and freedom in several different ways:

#### **The turnkey mentality**

Preparing a strategic plan involves engaging in a complete overview of current activities. It means taking a long, hard, and honest look at your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Some churches may see this task as too big and more than a little painful and threatening. Others may think that a strategic review is unnecessary and a distraction from getting on with the work. For these and other reasons, churches often opt for 'off-the-shelf' solutions. In the business world, these are called 'turnkey', or 'plug-and-play', strategies because you plug them into your organization, turn the key, and let them play out their agenda. But there's a danger in thinking that 'one size fits all' for churches. While every church has the same scriptural mandate from God, each individual church also has a unique calling to carry out that mandate in their own unique setting. And nothing short of this comprehensive review will equip a church to shape solutions to their setting.

#### **The excess of choice**

There are so many possible church activities but so little time. Christian conferences everywhere present an enticing menu of seminars, and resource areas often feel like toy shops. 'I'll take half a dozen of these resource packs and a couple of those new ideas while I'm at it, and all these programmes look so good I'll buy one of each.' When endless products and programmes compete to help us with each ministry, how can we avoid idea overload? A clear mission, however, enables us to focus and select wisely.

#### **The skill shortage**

Many churches have leaders who are intuitively strategic—they have no formal training but formulate visions and plans naturally. The rest of us, however, need training in how to discern, articulate, and implement strategic plans.

### **The confidence threat**

Some churches don't have a strategic plan because they've lost confidence:

- In the irresistible power of the 'foolish' gospel
- In the redemptive potential of the local church as God's distribution channel of grace to the world.

When confidence goes then vision dissipates. People begin to see church as a leisure pursuit that they opt in or out of as they like. A strategic plan encourages commitment by showing how every member's offering of time and talents makes a valuable contribution to a clear and confident kingdom-building vision.

### **The new big idea cycle**

Another major reason why churches often don't have a long-range strategic plan is that they frequently change direction. One of the keys to strategy is building momentum for a single, overarching vision. Each time a church's vision changes, it loses momentum. Waves of fashion about 'the big new thing' have made this a particular problem. The 'new idea bandwagons' can be dangerous—Alpha one year, seeker services the next, cell church the year after, followed by planting, café church, and the rest. But while all of these ideas may be great in particular contexts, they all require concentrated amounts of vision-casting and encouragement—and neither of these resources replenish quickly. Once a church has cast a vision for something new and poured energy into getting it off the ground, it will be some time before that church is ready to cast a vision for something different.

Churches also tend to change direction with the appointment of new leaders. The temptation for anyone coming into a church in a leadership position is to want to make their mark. But making your own mark often involves rubbing out the mark someone else made before you arrived. In some cases this will be a good idea, but sometimes the foundation that someone else has laid is a good one.

But when you've agreed a clear and strategic plan, you can test new ideas against this plan. That way the plan, rather than the new idea, sets the agenda and maintains the direction. In the same way, a new leader who accepts the overall plan that's in place builds on the church's existing momentum instead of stalling everything and starting from zero.

**'God's calling to "multiply" (Gen. 1:28) ... is an expression of God's desire to see the earth crowded with prophets, priests, and kings unto God, a desire that shall not be thwarted by the arithmetic Satan (Gen. 6:1ff.), but will be performed in the covenant purposes of grace which God himself will undertake for His Abraham (Gen. 16:10, 17:2), reiterate to Jacob (Gen. 35:11), fulfil in the slave race Israel (Exod. 1:20), and ultimately in the suffering servant and his seed (Jer. 33:22).'**<sup>7</sup>

## Therefore.

### Review your mission statement.

A classic business school exam question goes like this: ‘How do you get a group from a tiny island they’ve never left to a mainland of which they’re unaware?’ Most people’s answers involve drawing a map and giving the group instructions on how to build and operate a boat of some description. But the best boat in the world and the clearest charts possible won’t be of any value if the islanders don’t want to use them. Before they’ll get involved in the journey they have to get excited about making the journey. They need to be captivated by exotic tales of all that awaits them on the far-off mainland. Their hearts need to be engaged by the destination before they will engage their minds in boat building.

God’s people have the most amazing destination—Eden restored. The Bible starts by describing our beginning as a place of beauty where all is pleasing to the eye—a place of relationship with God and each other and a place of responsibility without drudgery. Throughout the Bible, God promises that ‘in the beginning’ will one day be our new beginning—the day when we will be with God in a place without death or pain or tears.

**‘One day the firstfruits into God (Rev. 14:4) will be sealed (Rev. 19:1, 6). Until that time “we must work the works of him that sent ... while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work” (John 9:4). We plough in hope.’<sup>8</sup>**

As part of God’s church, we act in the light of knowing where we’re heading. One of the amazing images the Bible gives of what the church will one day be is that of a bride beautifully dressed for Christ, her husband (Rev. 21). Imagine the scene. The groom is waiting at the front of the church when the organ swells with the fanfare. The church doors swing open, and the groom looks down the aisle to see his bride coming towards him in a sparkling white dress and with an adoring smile. What is he thinking at that point? ‘Wow! That’s the woman I love and want to spend my life caring for, and I’m so glad she’s marrying me.’ Revelation 21 says that’s how Christ will one day see us. In fact, every day we’re closer to the place where there will be no more tears or pain and where we’ll be in full fellowship with God for ever.

Church is God’s perfect intention—not some sort of necessary mechanism for keeping us in check. Church is about people on the way home. That’s what motivated the Apostle Paul, who said, ‘for me to live is Christ, to die is gain’ (Phil. 1:21). He saw life as a race to the prize of being with Christ (Phil. 3:14)—a prize that Peter reminds the church is an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade—it’s kept in heaven for you (1 Pet. 1:4).

The Bible thoroughly equips every Christian for every good work, but it does not give us a specific blueprint for how to implement any given activity. We're called to do the work of applying universal biblical principles to God-given vision for our God-given context. Our context includes the positive aspects of our situation as well as the barriers we face. 1 Corinthians 7 reminds us that while our situation may be far from ideal, it's the reality we're called to at the present time. As a result, however difficult our context might be, we can always choose to do what counts: keeping God's commands (1 Cor. 7:19). That's the lesson the exiles learned when they were living in a foreign land. As Jeremiah explains:

**'Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.'" (Jer. 29:4-7)**

Christians today also experience a radically changed context, and rethinking is essential. The church is no longer in a 'Christendom model', building the promised land top down from a position of power. Rather, the church today follows Jeremiah's 'blessing model' as a grassroots movement of exiles getting involved in a pagan culture and proclaiming Christ in daily life.

The pivot strategy is a move away from 'promised-land-exile' thinking towards an acceptance of our changed context as an opportunity rather than as a threat or a reason to give up. Yes, it's hard to go against the flow. W.C. Fields once said that 'a dead fish can float downstream, but it takes a live one to swim upstream'. It's a favourite quote in management books because it challenges people to go against the flow. But going against the flow is a difficult path to follow—the whole point of the flow is that it's easier. It takes far more energy to be distinct, and it's a lot more comfortable to conform—especially when we're conforming to norms that are deeply embedded in society.

Biblical mission is about building a people within a specific context:

- **A context for using our gifts together**
  - Church is a construction site where each member is involved in building up others so together they become like Christ (Eph. 4).
- **A context for growing in holiness together**
  - Church is Christ's bride, becoming holy, blameless, reconciled together in Christ (Eph. 1-2).
- **A context for going into the harvest fields together**
  - Church is a combine harvester, sending workers into the harvest field (Eph. 5; Matt. 9:38).

Gathering as church should always be electric—a taste of heaven, a home away from home. The idea of being in a room with a whole group of people called to freedom from the slavery of sin and heading for the reality of home with Jesus should give us goose bumps.

## 1. Understand your divine disturbance

Moses was living a comfortable life farming a long way from Egypt. But when he heard of his people's slavery, the call of God spurred him to go and to act. Nehemiah was a successful cupbearer to the king a long way from Judah. But when he heard of the disgrace and great trouble of the exile survivors he wept, mourned, fasted, prayed and then acted. As Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he wept when he saw the context of blindness to what would bring them peace (Luke 18:42). Jesus wept for Jerusalem but then walked into Jerusalem with the joy set before him of giving his life to make peace between us and God (Hebrews 12:2).

Do we similarly weep for the cities, estates and rural communities in which we live and breathe? Vision is ignited when we look at our situation and feel distressed by the gap between the order and shalom of God's glory and the reality in the world. That gap is the distance between our current position and the end point of our mission. Seeing that gap and caring about it build a divine disturbance inside us, and that disturbance compels us to action. Jesus provides us with the classic example of divine disturbance in Matthew 9:36. He's filled with compassion when he sees how harassed and helpless the crowds are. He identifies the gap between where people are and where God wants them to be, and in Matthew 10:1-16 he announces a plan to send workers into the harvest fields.

Vision begins with a divine disturbance and becomes clearer as we pair the motivation to act with a clear idea of why and how God has called us as a church to act in a particular way. In other words, vision is established when we understand the unique kingdom-building contribution God is calling us to make and the resources he has given us for the task. There are often many different people a church could be serving and reaching out to, and it's not uncommon to find that other churches in a given vicinity have similar mission plans. But a church with vision is not threatened by other mission partners. Rather, a church with vision has confidence, knowing that God himself has entrusted this church with specific mission fields and evangelistic ministries. Intentional churches know where they are heading and have a clear reason for being, based on the unchanging mission purposes of Scripture.

**'Recognizing our missionary context means that we can no longer assume that the church understands the culture. We need to rediscover or relearn the culture. We need to get to know our neighbourhood, its people, their stories, values, world-view and culture. We need to ask the kind of questions that missionaries ask when they enter a new culture.'**<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Clarify your mission statement

**‘Successful businesses will be those that market experiences which change people’s lives. And of course that’s the business the church is in. For the past 2,000 years, far longer than any corporation today, the church has offered people the opportunity to have their lives transformed—by Jesus Christ ... the very thing that our society craves is at the centre of the church’s mission statement.’<sup>10</sup>**

The Because Approach process starts with a review of your overall mission. It clarifies your answer to the question ‘why do we exist?’ by summing up the scriptural ‘because’ of your church.

Biblical mission is twofold because it is founded on God’s commandment to be involved in both making new disciples of Christ and working to bring people to maturity in Christ:



- Jesus commissioned his followers to grow his church in numbers (make disciples) and in depth (teach them to obey everything) (Matt. 28).
- Paul identifies the same purposes for the church: ‘I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow’ (1 Cor. 3:5-6).
- Paul states the twin aims for himself of being all things to all people to save some (1 Cor. 9) as well as supplying what is lacking in the faith of those he has seen receive salvation (1 Thess. 3:10).

A mission statement should clearly communicate these twin aims so that people don’t forget one or emphasize one over the other. A church that does evangelism but never builds up mature Christians will be a spiritual kindergarten, as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. A church that feeds Christians but never reaches out to the lost creates fat and sluggish Christians who never exercise their knowledge or invest their gifts.

Biblical mission also entails a dynamic of progress, often described in a ‘from ... to’ form. This is a common literary device used throughout the Bible: from rebellion to righteousness (Isa. 1); from death to life (Rom. 5); from exile to restoration (Jer. 33); from not a people to a people (1 Pet. 2). A mission statement with vision will communicate progress, articulating where you’re aiming to go as a church. ‘Turning irreligious people into devoted followers’, for example, or ‘going from building a thirst for God all the way to a devotion to God’.

**‘The church ... is not something additional or optional. It is at the very heart of God’s purposes. Jesus came to create a people who would model what it means to live under his rule. It would be a glorious outpost of the kingdom of God: an embassy of heaven. This is where the world can see what it means to be truly human.’<sup>11</sup>**

The first step in identifying the specific kingdom-building contribution God has planned for your church is to determine the purpose and nature of God's kingdom-building mission to which you're contributing. If you don't know where you're aiming, you're guaranteed to miss the target! A great mission statement:

- Provides a fixed, overarching, and long-term goal against which churches can measure all strategies and activities
- Describes a church's underlying purpose in a memorable way
- Inspires people to believe that it's worth being part of the church's mission
- Is shaped by values that excite people and with which they can identify
- Calls for clear action and promises positive consequences rather than a set of theoretical soundbites.

All mission statements have at their core the two timeless biblical missions of the church—to make and grow disciples—or, as it's often put, 'to know Christ and to make him known'. But the wording of a particular church's mission statement will reflect its character and context:

- Some reflect geographic position (e.g., 'to win and hold the centre of a world capital for Christ' emphasizes the role of this church within a city)
- Some reflect contextual emphases (e.g., 'to build a thirst for God's rescue and devotion to God's rule' emphasizes the context of a church starting further back with people who have little interest in Christianity)
- Some reflect theological emphases (e.g., 'up, in, out' or 'growing up towards God; growing inwards as a church family; growing outwards to the local community' emphasizes the importance of building love for God)
- Some reflect strategic emphases (e.g., 'bring in, build up, send out' highlights what the church will do with, rather than for, people).

## **ACTION SUMMARY**

### **A. DIVINE DISTURBANCE**

Spend time walking around the area in which the church is aiming to work.

- What is the blindness and hardness of heart that Jesus sees and weeps over?
- What needs do you discern that are currently not being met and what do you feel about that lack?
- What breaks your heart with compassion?
- What agitates you into action?

Summarize your thoughts in a statement of 'what we can't let go and what we must take action on.'

## B. MISSION STATEMENT

If you don't yet have a mission statement, use the following steps to develop one:

### **1. Summarize God's mission for the church in one sentence**

- Brainstorm all the Bible verbs that describe the mission of God.
- Group words together and express the mission of making and growing disciples in phrases that use the 'everyday language' of the church.
- Confirm that you've included both evangelism and discipleship aspects of the Great Commission and add clarifying words if necessary.
- Assess what mission outcomes these phrases deliver (remove anything that doesn't add value to the mission).

### **2. Add a progress dynamic**

- Link the phrases you've come up with to show the twin missions of evangelism and discipleship. Using a clear 'and' gives the statement an axis.
- Craft the phrases into a sentence that expresses the progress of your mission. Use 'from ... to' or '-ing' verbs.

### **3. Express in a way that reflects your particular context**

- Make sure the language fits your style and is authentic and clear.
- Confirm that your mission makes sense of your church's particular role—in your area and also in cooperation with other gospel partners in your mission area.
- Use words that highlight the 'divine disturbance' that motivates your mission.

### **4. Craft into a bold and memorable statement**

- Is it memorable and bold enough to excite people to give their lives to this mission?
- Ensure the statement is generic and broad enough that the church will have the flexibility to 'go with' new opportunities God gives. A mission statement should not box a church in to a fixed long-range plan that may not be what God has in mind. As we've seen, planning is part of cooperating with God and discerning his purposes and priorities rather than driving our own ambitions.

If you already have a mission statement, review it using the following questions:

1. Brainstorm all the Bible verbs that describe the mission of God. How many are reflected in your mission statement? Does it cover both aspects of the Great Commission? Does the statement express your 'divine disturbance'?
2. Is there a progress dynamic towards your twin aims of evangelism and discipleship?
3. Does the language reflect your context, fit your style, and have authenticity?

Discuss and decide any improvements you'd like to make to your mission statement.

And finally ... don't spend too much time discussing what Scripture already defines. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to agree a mission statement that clarifies your twin tasks of evangelism and discipleship—and then to move on to discuss values, vision, and plans of action tailored to your specific situation.



# References

- 1 *Gladiator* (DreamWorks Pictures and Universal Pictures, 2000; video distribution: Columbia/Tristar Home Video, UK).
- 2 *Jerry Maguire* (Columbia/TriStar Pictures, 1996; video distribution: Sony Music Operations).
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