



step **4.**

# Building Response.

Developing  
Relationship

Showing  
Respect

Establishing  
Relevance

Building  
Response



## BIBLE STUDY

### Mark 8:22-26

In this passage we find a model of how Jesus restores spiritual sight step by step. At the start of the chapter, when Jesus encounters continued lack of understanding, we're told he 'sighs deeply' (v. 12). Yet, in his compassion, he doesn't give up on people. In fact, he demonstrates straight away the process by which sight is restored:

- Contact: The blind man meets Jesus as friends bring him (v. 22)
- Observation: While he's still blind, Jesus leads him by the hand (v. 23)
- First sight: The man regains partial sight (vv. 23-24)
- Insight: He regains full sight (v. 25).

How do these four steps apply to the evangelism process by which we help people regain spiritual sight?

How does this example of healing of sight help us to understand how the disciples go from not seeing (v. 17) to confessing Christ as Lord (v. 29)?

How is the gradual step-by-step nature of the healing an encouragement to us?

### 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

What is important to Paul in sharing the gospel?

How far is he willing to adapt to his audience?

What does 'become like' mean and not mean?

### 1 Corinthians 14:1-4, 20-25

What is Paul's concern about the reaction of unbelievers to church meetings?

What would your unbelieving friends think of your church gatherings?

Above my desk I have a poster for the film *Lost in Translation* with the following strapline: 'everyone wants to be found'. It keeps reminding me of the Great Commission Jesus has given his church—to help people who are lost in a mistranslation of God's eternal truth. How do we fulfil that commission? By acting as translators – giving a reason for the hope within us, by living out that hope in action.

The book of Ruth presents a beautiful example of how God uses one of his people, Boaz, to administer his grace on earth. The widowed Ruth, from the despised nation of Moab, moves to Israel with her Jewish mother-in-law. In chapter 2, Ruth goes to the harvest fields of her new home to glean the grain that was left behind. She knows exactly who she is and what her rights are. Although in theory a foreigner such as herself had a legal right to glean, in practice she's dependent on finding a favourable landowner (v. 2). But when Ruth meets Boaz she meets far more than grudging allowances. Ruth is surprised that she's received so much more than she deserves and she approaches Boaz with suitable humility, face bowed to the ground. His acts of kindness have gone way beyond the call of duty. As Ruth says in verse 13, 'I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls.' But that's what compassion means—it means relating to people as valued individuals, not as problems, and responding to them out of love, not just duty.

The gracious acts and kind words Ruth receives from Boaz leave her with one key question: 'Why me? Why have I found such favour?' And Boaz's answer? Because of God's grace that brings the refugee into the safety and thriving of community. As Boaz tells her, 'May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.' Boaz knew that the Lord has a vast wingspan of protection and delights to offer refuge to all who seek him.

## Because.

People need to be rescued and churches are rescue stations.

In the film *About Schmidt*,<sup>1</sup> Jack Nicholson plays a recently widowed and retired insurance salesman who starts to wake up to the pointlessness of the life he's led.

At the end of the film he writes a letter in his mind to a child he sponsors in Africa: **'I am weak and I am a failure. There's just no getting around it. Relatively soon I will die, maybe in twenty years, maybe tomorrow. It doesn't matter. Once I am dead and everyone who knew me dies too it will be as if I never even existed. What difference has my life made to anyone? None that I can think of. None at all. Hope things are fine with you. Yours truly, Warren Schmidt.'**

After I heard that I wanted to stop people as they left the theatre and tell them, 'That's not how it has to be—you can know the significance of a God who loves you so much that he gave his only Son so that you could know eternal life in relationship with him rather than perish as a pointless failure without him. That's what gets me up in the morning!'

Ecclesiastes takes the lid off our culture, which lives as if the here and now 'under the sun' is all that matters. The challenge for the church is to connect people to the reality that our rejection of God has created more than a little gap that we can step over if we try hard enough. Rather, there is a chasm between us and God which is impassable in our own strength. The opportunity for the church is to connect people to the reality of grace. God is the loving ruler of the world, and despite the fact that we have rejected him and deserve his judgement, he has paid to give us the life of forgiven friendship with himself. The church says 'mind the gap' and 'use the bridge'.

What gets you out of bed in the morning? Christians approach each day as people of destiny—knowing who they are and where they're going. Christians can also approach each day as an opportunity to change another person's destiny.

The extensive research by the Barna Group, which David Kinnaman summarizes in his book *unChristian*, concludes that the post 'boomer' generation, called 'busters' or 'millennials', has a negative perception of Christianity because it bears no relation to what they think Jesus was or should be about. Their response is an attitude of apathy, of not caring, and an acceptance that people are all hypocrites at some point. As Kinnaman puts it: **'Young outsiders have also come to expect everyone to play the angles and make themselves look as good as possible. Our culture considers having a good image to be one of the highest goals of life.'**<sup>2</sup>

They have plenty of information about Christianity but they are keeping what they know at arm's length so that they neither participate in it nor are transformed by it.

In Ephesians 1 Paul says we have the calling to be part of God's people, God's delight is to raise us to his sight. So in chapter 4 the issue he focuses on is whether we're going to live the calling. He describes the dynamic of participation that turns information into transformation. Chapter 4 outlines three steps:

- Information (v. 11)—teachers prepare us to serve in truth and grace
- Participation (v. 12)—ministers serve in truth and grace
- Transformation (v. 13)—this ministry makes Christians more like Christ.

Learning on its own won't change us—we need to process and inhabit what we learn. Paul is saying in Ephesians 4 that a church should be a secure environment in which we can participate—ministering to others and receiving the ministry of others. Church is a place where the distinct lives of God's people reveal the distinctive values of God's grace, truth, and love. Paul mentions three ministries:

- The ministry of love in bearing with others (Eph. 4:2)
- The ministry of love in building up others (Eph. 4:12)
- The ministry of love in truthing to others (Eph. 4:15)

The Greek verb that is translated 'speaking' actually makes no reference to speech. It should be, literally, 'truthing in love'. And this includes the notions of 'maintaining', 'living', and 'doing' the truth. Authentic church is a place where truth is valued—even if it's awkward or inconvenient or might show you up. Inauthentic church is where people continue to wear masks and never say what they really think.

In the film *Titanic*,<sup>3</sup> after the ship hits an iceberg the captain and others still need to be convinced that there's a problem. In the captain's office, the engineer who designed the Titanic explains the danger. He points to the plans and shows that, with five compartments of the hull breached, the ship will sink. Others still hold on to the mythological idea that the ship is unsinkable, but the engineer replies: 'She's made of iron, sir, I assure you she can and will, it's a mathematical certainty.'

The church has a similar responsibility to warn people that they're in danger. When they say, 'But God thinks I'm OK,' we need to reply, 'We have hearts full of sin, sir, I assure you without rescue we will face judgement, it's a spiritual certainty.' It's not always a popular message, but a person's eternal destiny depends on it.

God could have declared his message of reconciliation in many different ways, but the one he chose was his church. We are God's gospel distribution channel. God loves the world, our communities, our families, and our friends so much that he was willing to send his Son to die so that we might be reconciled to him for eternity. And God trusts his church so much that he was willing to commit to them the task of continuing as his reconciliation witnesses to the ends of the earth. Every Christian has the following stamped on his or her forehead: 'an ambassador of his Majesty, Jesus Christ, committed to spreading his gospel of love in the power of his Spirit'. Every church building is an embassy of God's kingdom in a foreign land.

# Therefore.

## Make main gatherings gospel opportunities.

Main church gatherings can provide a 'shop window' into Christian faith as faith is both taught and demonstrated in practice. However, a decision needs to be made as to how much emphasis is placed on the needs of the unbeliever to hear and respond to the gospel message each Sunday. Will this be a focus every Sunday focus or only in particular church gatherings? There are four main options.

### Option 1. Evangelism every Sunday

In many churches, the main weekly gatherings provide year-round opportunities for people to come and hear the gospel explained. Church gatherings are a gateway to exploring faith when the church service is deliberately 'non-churchy' and accessible to outsiders. The idea is that it's easiest for people to begin exploring faith anonymously at an outward-looking church service and then to be invited to take things further by doing something else, such as a course during the week. The benefit of starting to explore faith by experiencing a church gathering is that people see Christians relating to God personally in the praise, prayer, and teaching. Several aspects of these main gatherings are worth reviewing on a regular basis to ensure there's still a clear focus on the needs of the unbeliever to learn and experience the gospel. The following are some aspects of a strategy that encourages exploration of faith every Sunday:

#### A. Invitation strategy

Will people come because a Christian friend invites them or because they're local and/or see an advertisement? What sort of service would the people with whom you've made contact, and who have seen Christ in your conduct, come to? Do you have a 'bringing' culture at your church where people expect to bring their unbelieving friends to church? Is there a bringing focus only for special evangelistic services or is the assumption that people should invite their friends all the time because they know the gospel will be explained every Sunday?

#### B. Pre-service experience

- **The 'just looking' option** lets people come anonymously, just like they're going to the theatre: there are refreshments at the entrance to purchase or help yourself to, greeters at the door who offer bulletins, and ushers to show you to your seats.
- **The 'church community' option** aims to engage people more and include them in the church family for the day: for example, a refreshment area where members can greet and meet new people beforehand and introduce them to others with whom they can sit (or not, if members sense the visitors would prefer to be left alone).

*'Making a service "comfortable" for the unchurched doesn't mean changing your theology. It means changing the environment.'*<sup>4</sup>

### **C. First impressions of the service**

- Bulletins should be clear and welcoming to outsiders, not full of insider language or strange-sounding events, pleas for money or help with children's activities, lists of personal congregational items for prayer, etc.
- The service leader gives an initial reassuring welcome, assuming there are new people who don't know who the leader is, who aren't sure what's going to happen, what will be expected of them, etc.

### **D. Opening worship**

- Are there elements that could put people unfamiliar with church at ease (e.g., the initial welcome by the leader and the clear 'leading' through the service by the leader and maybe the bulletin)?
- Are there refreshing new elements that will pleasantly surprise people (e.g., a video item to introduce the topic of the day)?
- Will the opening help people who are far from God start to connect with the reality of the living God (e.g., a solo or reading that points people to an aspect of God's character or a prayer that demonstrates personal relationship with God)?

### **E. Music and liturgy**

- Does the opening worship help visitors approach the living God? Is there, therefore, a sufficiently God-ward focus to the opening worship? Churches sometimes go straight into 'I love you Lord' songs or use very 'in' language before there's been any approach to God or recognition of who he is in glory and holiness. Missional churches recognize that there are outsiders present who don't yet know God or who are not yet ready to use very familiar language.
  - Do the quality and style of the words that are spoken and the songs that are played alienate or connect with the context of someone new to church?
  - Does the music reflect the style of music visitors listen to (and does it need to)?
  - Will you say it's OK for people just to listen and not sing along if they'd prefer?
- Different people prefer different styles and levels of participation. The other principle to remember is that style doesn't need to control substance. You can combine a classic liturgical style with very contemporary expositional preaching that connects with unbelievers and believers.

### **F. EPIC**

Leonard Sweet gives four helpful suggestions to reach a postmodern generation. An EPIC church is:<sup>5</sup>

- Experiential: postmoderns want to 'live' truths before embracing them
- Participatory: people want to discuss, question, and process information for themselves
- Interactive: multi-sensory learning engages the heart, will, and mind
- Communal: the predominant culture people experience is one of 'communal anorexia'—the longing to belong.



## G. Participation levels

In your context, would people want to come, listen, and leave? Or would they want to participate?

- **Passive crowd.** People come and go like an audience attending a presentation.

Secular example: going to a film.

Church model: mostly performance songs from a band or cathedral with choir.

- **Participating crowd.** People come and go as an audience to an event.

Secular example: crowd at a pop concert or sports game.

Church model: worship that involves the congregation joining in, but the sense of community is mostly found outside the service itself, in small groups.

- **Inclusive community.** Everybody is welcomed to ‘come and see’ in community.

Secular example: village festival.

Church model: seeker-sensitive, where everyone is included and there’s an emphasis on being a church family and spending time together afterwards.

- **Exclusive community.** Everything is geared to one particular audience.

Secular example: members-only club.

Church model: seekers are tolerated, but nothing more, and the service is geared for Christians, ‘a place for me and my needs’

*‘Being seeker sensitive does not limit what you say, but it does affect how you say it.’<sup>6</sup>*

## Option 2. Evangelism on special Sundays

Churches where the content and style of regular Sunday gatherings are more geared towards Christians may be less accessible to unbelievers. In that case, one gateway strategy is to hold evangelistic services, or guest services as they are sometimes called, that occasionally take the place of regular gatherings. They feature an intentional programme of music, readings, interviews, and talks that present the good news of Jesus so that the spiritually curious can engage with the gospel. Carol services are a classic example of this type of event—it’s easy to ask friends to come along and sing some carols and ‘get in the Christmas spirit’. However, the risk is ‘bait and switch’ and Christians who invite friends need to be clear that this is a church service, not a concert, and they should expect a talk about Christianity. The other issue with special evangelistic services is that they completely change the style of Sunday church—so if guests then come another week they won’t find what they’re expecting. Guest services have their place, but they’re not a replacement for every Sunday being a gathering where people can hear and respond to the gospel.

*‘The church has spent its time trying to convince people that they need God, while these same people busily seek spiritual experience ... When people say that they are “spiritual but not religious” they identify themselves with a desire for God, but do not see the need to search for this within institutional religion. The reason for this by and large is that solid church has created an exclusive club out of Christian believing ... The spiritual seeker sees the price tag attached to faith and looks for satisfaction elsewhere.’<sup>7</sup>*

Another concern when evangelism only happens on special Sundays is that there are fewer opportunities through the year for those who attend church but are not yet converted to respond to the gospel. Even when the preaching is very believer-focused, it's important to apply the text regularly to unbelievers by calling on people to repent and believe. The advantage of special guest services, however, is that they ensure the gospel is fully explained in clear language for unbelievers on a regular basis. They can therefore be a helpful supplement to Sunday-by-Sunday application of Scripture for both believers and unbelievers.

### **Option 3. Evangelism alongside Sundays**

Another church gateway for people investigating faith is to join a discussion group meeting after a Sunday service. One advantage is that people can ask questions immediately afterwards and can also hear more about some of the foundations of faith that may have been assumed in the service itself. Effectively, it's a 'remedial class' for people new to Christianity and gives them a 'booster' of gospel essentials so they get the most out of Sunday gatherings. This strategy enables a friend or family member of a Christian to come with them to church but also to investigate faith further. Often these courses take place in an informal cafe-style venue.

### **Option 4. Evangelism and fresh expressions of church**

If you have contact with people who would never feel at home at events or services you put on, however welcoming you are, then one solution is to establish a fresh expression of church<sup>8</sup> appropriate for them. There isn't any point contacting people if you're going to invite them to try out something inherently alien, and therefore unwelcoming, to them. We often have contact with people who we get on with socially and share affinity with culturally but who would still find the church services and events we go to socially and culturally alien. That may be because we're socially acclimatized to ways of doing things—such as hugging people or raising our hands in the air—that might seem odd in our preferred subculture but that we've accepted because we see the theological benefit behind the expression. But our acceptance, which is based on the unity of the Spirit, can be hard for outsiders who do not yet share that bond of peace. Fresh expressions of church deliberately shape church around an unreached group's cultural context instead of being influenced by our inherited Christian subculture. In some ways, this is what all churches should be doing! Fresh expressions of church need to do what they say on the tin: they need to still be about church—with the same theology of being a gathering of God's people under God's Word with God's missionary commission—but freshly expressed for the communities they serve and out of which they grow.

**Examples of fresh expressions of church that start with a homogeneous nuclei of people:**

- A group of parents with children under five who go to a toddler group meet for a toddler-friendly time of praise, prayer, and teaching and a church gathering develops
- A group of Christians runs a special event for residents of a sheltered housing development and they grow together into a church gathering
- A youth group develops a regular service to which they can bring unbelieving friends
- A church gathering develops for those interested in alternative styles of worship or particular styles of music and culture
- A church gathering develops out of a group meeting in which members help each other recover from addictions
- Parents with children at the same school who see each other frequently develop a church gathering
- A church gathering develops out of a cell group that effectively draws local people in.

These fresh expressions of church can act as bridges from a particular homogeneous sub-group into a heterogeneous church congregation. There is a natural movement across that bridge if the leaders of that sub-group aim to transition and settle people into the more heterogeneous church gathering. However, God may call the group leading the initiative to develop the gathering into a distinct church congregation— at which point decisions will need to be made about how the congregation can be led and sustained from within the sub-group instead of continuing to rely on the direction of the planting church congregation members.

Fresh expressions of church built around a homogenous nuclei of people sharing a common life stage or affinity face the challenge of long-term sustainability. Over time, the church of homogeneous seekers will become a church of maturing believers, and they will naturally start inviting friends and family who may not share their starting-point life stage or affinity. As it matures, therefore, a church's freshness of expression may broaden and become less about a particular homogeneity and more about a freshness of approach appealing to a wider community. At that stage, members may find again that some groupings of people who are not yet Christians will begin to feel disenfranchised from the church.

One application, therefore, might be to start a new fresh expression of church or to establish evangelistic activities based around homogeneous groups that all feed into a more heterogeneous church. Rather than establishing a fully fledged fresh expression of church for a particular grouping of people, another idea is to offer 'taster' events to give people an idea of what church is about, what the Christian message is about, and what other Christians are like. A monthly 'seeker presentation', for example, might meet at a different time from the main church services and in a different venue. These events offer a low-commitment 'stepping stone' for people unused to church, and they can be much more specifically tailored to their preferences and needs. Fresh expressions of church are relational bridgeheads that aim to establish churches around specific situations. In effect, the planted church acts as a 'vortex' of solid biblical community—drawing people in from the liquid world around them.

The biblical principle is that church is the body of Christ, and its unity in diversity is a visible expression that we are one in the one Lord (Eph. 4:3-6). Paul is homogeneous in his evangelistic method (1 Cor. 9:22), but he invites all sorts of people from all sorts of contexts into one church gathering—as he demonstrates in Philippi. Paul practices homogeneous evangelism so there are no cultural barriers, and heterogeneous church gathering so there are no theological barriers—that’s what I love about our church in central London, and anyone who says heterogeneous church isn’t possible today should come on Sunday morning and see!

## **ACTION SUMMARY**

### **Discuss**

- Which of the options for evangelism on Sundays do you currently practice at each of your gatherings?
- Audit your connectivity with sceptics at your weekly gatherings using the following questions (based on pp. 98-103):
  - Invitation strategy: How do people hear about the church? Is there a bringing culture and how are you encouraging that? Is the assumption that unbelievers are going to be welcomed so people are ready and willing to bring friends?
  - Welcome: Are people welcomed appropriately?
  - First impressions: Does the website connect with unbelievers? Do the bulletin and opening words communicate that people are welcome and included?
  - Opening worship: Is the assumption that it’s OK to be exploring faith?
  - Style of music: Is it accessible and understandable to the outsider?
  - Style of service: Is it appropriate in its levels of participation and formality so people don’t feel threatened but also don’t feel like they’re only observers?
  - Is your church EPIC (Experiential, Participatory, Interactive, Communal)?
  - Use of multimedia: Do visuals clarify information, illustrate, and make the teaching real or just entertain? Is everything of a quality that outsiders expect?
  - Participation level: What kind of participation options do you provide and do those fit your context?

### **Decide**

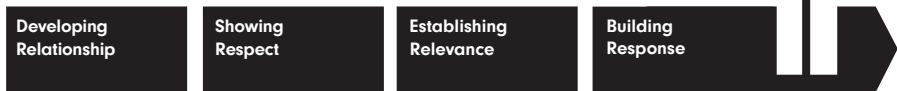
- Which of the Sunday evangelism options are you going to adopt at each of your gatherings? What changes will that involve?
- Is the fresh expression of church strategy a way of doing homogenous evangelism which could develop into a more heterogenous gathering of Christians in your context?
- Based on the audit of your connectivity with sceptics at your gatherings, what changes will make your main church gatherings places where sceptics feel welcome to come without being smothered, able to listen without being turned off, and encouraged to explore without being pestered?

# Therefore.

## Create a strategic process.

### 1. Identify activities along the journey of faith

The Because Approach outlines strategies at each stage of the journey of faith:



**The strategies outlined in the Because Approach give options and ideas at each stage of the journey of faith:**

**Build relationship by multiplying relationship gateways** in locations where people can meet Christians and talk about faith and life.

**Build respect by extending kingdom influence.** Send out church members as workers into the mission field to be the visible presence of Christ and serve their communities.

**Build relevance by connecting connection pathways** from relationship to response, by creating a learning environment on Sundays and at evangelistic courses that shows how faith relates to daily life and that enables people to ask their questions.

**Build response by creating gospel gatherings** so that as people discover faith they are welcomed into church events where the gospel continues to be explained and applied.

#### **ACTION SUMMARY**

##### **Discuss**

Interview people you know who are exploring faith or who are not interested in faith:

- What are their main fears about starting to explore faith more seriously?
- In what setting would they feel most comfortable exploring faith issues?
- Do they prefer to learn by listening to a talk or testimony, by reading books, or by asking questions and discussing issues? Are they more comfortable in a group setting, one on one, or even discussing issues in an online forum of some kind?

Identify your current activities along the four-stage journey of faith:

- What activities do you currently have at each stage?
- What new activities have you discussed during your study of the Because Approach?

- Where are the remaining gaps and how could they be filled?

## 2. Link activities on the journey of faith into a strategic process

As we have seen, there are many different locations where people can start to explore Christian faith through organized church activities. An important decision for a church is how these activities can be linked together to form an overall evangelism process. How a church decides to connect activities into a process will depend on the church's setting, vision, and values. Several process options are available.

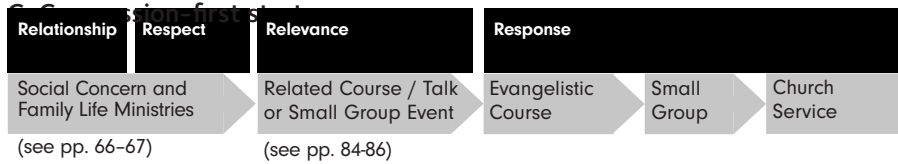


This strategy puts the emphasis on an informal, 'non-churchy' evangelistic course as the most accessible activity for people starting to investigate Christian faith. Attending church services comes later, once people have heard the gospel and are in relationship with people from the church. The challenge is to decide what activities will create a supply chain of people for the course. One way to generate interest in a course is to make it a follow-on to a special Sunday evangelistic service or special event such as a carol service. A guest supper with a talk that previews a course is an excellent bridge that demonstrates relevance and builds interest in exploring further. Gateway ministries and the personal evangelism of church members are also key relationship-building opportunities.

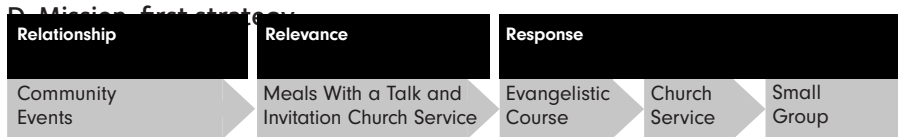


This strategy starts with a church service as the gateway. Every Sunday gathering engages with unbelievers and builds their interest in exploring further. The Bible talks teach principles of the gospel and help people understand how Christ's death and resurrection change everything. But a useful supplement to week-by-week Sunday talks is a course focused on giving people a more comprehensive understanding of the gospel message and on inviting people to accept Christ. An application of Sunday talks, therefore, is an invitation to take things further by joining a course during the week or on a Sunday (before or after the main church gathering). Once they understand the basics clearly, people learn and grow more and more by continuing to

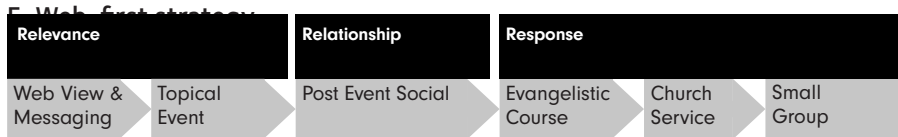
attend main church gatherings as well as by joining a small group.



Commend the gospel by serving the local community and people’s existing networks of friendships. This will generate questions in people who can be invited to next step activities on topics relevant to them such as members of a toddler group being invited to a parenting course. This can then be linked to an evangelistic course tailored to those already coming. This strategy is also well suited to small groups already meeting in a local community. The idea is to join up with other small group ‘cells’ in an area and put on a regular ‘community group’ for your community of friends with food, a relevant talk that connects with Christians and unbelievers, and an invitation to come back on subsequent weeks when you’ll run an evangelistic course specifically for them.



This strategy begins with a focused, ‘non-churchy’ mission—perhaps a week or weekend of events such as a family fun day, village fair, sports day, or arts festival hosted by the church to build relationship and meals including an evangelistic talk. The aim is to invite people to explore faith further in subsequent courses. The advantage of a concentrated set of mission events is that the church can invest time in the run-up to events praying and preparing, and church members can be encouraged to have friends round for pre-events in their homes, at which they can invite people to these big events. It’s easier for some people to get involved in this kind of big event, rather than regular events through the year, but in other contexts having regular events is more effective—especially in more transient communities.



The web provides a ‘shop window’. People can explore in the safety, and anonymity

of their homes (or, with mobiles, any time and place that's convenient for them). This entry point is open and available to anyone, anywhere, at any time. The key question, though, is what starting to explore material on the web then leads to? There needs to be progress from virtual learning to exploring faith in community with others.



The School of Faith offers central events in a city or region with follow-on invitations to evangelistic services and courses in the various sponsoring churches. There are two types of central event which are held live but also recorded for the web:

- Conversations are topic-based events or panel discussions which present the Christian worldview and biblical perspective on a topic in comparison to other views. The intention is to curate an event for a city or region that is easy to invite friends and colleagues to because the subject is always highly relevant and the location is both attractive and accessible.

- Essentials Talks give the foundations of Christianity in a single TED-talk style event. Core Talks act as a bridge between a Conversation event and a longer evangelistic course. There are four short talks given by a variety of speakers which together give a clear, concise and convincing presentation of the good news of how we can know a restored relationship with our Heavenly Father through Jesus and why that matters to each of us. The invitation to those who attend the event or watch the talks on the website is to put their faith in Christ but also to connect with one of the local partner churches to continue exploring faith.

By putting on the event together churches gain the advantages of scale and of a central accessible location which then links people with a church in their local area. The website also provides an ongoing central resource as people share the talk recordings.

## **ACTION SUMMARY**

### **Discuss**

- How do the activities discussed earlier (p. 106) link in a process?
- Where are the gaps and how could they be filled?

### **Decide**

Agree the activities you will carry out at each stage of the journey of faith.

Agree how these activities will be connected together into a process.

- Is there a natural follow-on from listening to discussing and responding?
- Do you have the capacity to sustain all of the activities in the process?
- What activities will need to be started? Reshaped? Stopped?
- How often will the process of activities be run in a year?



# Therefore.

## Communicate your vision.

The final step of the Because Approach brings all the creativity of strategies and plans into an overarching vision document that outlines how the because of Scripture and setting compels an exciting vision solution for the whole church. A sound biblical 'because' inspires people to say, 'I will give my time and energy to this ministry because it's of great value to my Lord.'

### 1. Dare to dream

Review your mission field, unique kingdom building contribution, and mission initiatives you've discussed and developed through this Because Approach process. Spend time praying through what you've learned so far. Dream dreams together about the vision goals and encourage everyone to contribute. Use the question: *What do we dare to imagine under God that our church will be like and the impact we could be having on people's lives in two, five, ten, and twenty years?*

### 2. Formulate the vision

Craft your vision into a compelling statement that's owned by all, that motivates all, and that will shape everything you do. Include where you're heading in terms of who you're aiming to reach and how you're aiming to get everyone involved in the adventure. Make it motivational by answering the 'what if' question: *What if we gave our lives to meeting these needs with the unique gifts and opportunities Christ has given us? What would the eternal significance be?*

### 3. Clarify your values

Values drive a church. They may lie below the surface, but like the rudder of a ship they control the church's visible activities. Clearly defining the church's values, and making sure they're biblically focused, is therefore a vital first step in renewing a church for mission action. Our values are:

- The beliefs that compel us to action
- What makes our church tick
- Why we love being part of the church
- Why we go to events with a spring in our step and joy in our hearts and have confidence to invite others along.

Values help us to avoid the danger of doing things because we can rather than because there's a strategic need.

In the movie *Jurassic Park*, the character played by Jeff Goldblum says, ‘Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could that they didn’t stop to think if they should.’<sup>9</sup> Asking whether we should is a great question, but we won’t ask it or know how to answer it unless we have a framework to define it. Clearly defined values provide that framework.

**‘It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known.’ (Rom. 15:20)  
‘I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.’  
(1 Cor. 9:22)**

Values shape how we undertake our mission. They translate a biblical mission into deeply held beliefs that inspire vision and shape strategy. Tim Keller describes a church’s values as being part of ‘theological vision’ that is based on ‘doctrinal foundation’ and leads to various ‘ministry expressions’.<sup>10</sup> Theological vision, therefore, is the gospel DNA of the church that directs the growth, emphases, and philosophies of ministry appropriate to a particular context. Gospel-driven values focus on: seeking God’s kingdom-building agenda and glory; acting according to Christ’s good and perfect ways; investing in the new creation mission of bringing people into the eternal people of God; and trusting God to bring growth.

The theological vision of a ‘center church’ is a balance of three values axes:<sup>11</sup>

—The centre point of the **gospel axis** is salvation by faith and grace alone. This axis keeps us from the extreme of legalism (thinking we can save ourselves by how we live and by religious practices) as well as from the opposite extreme of relativism (thinking it doesn’t matter how we live).

—The centre point of the **city axis** is a deep reflection on what it means to engage with the culture. We seek to understand and love and are also willing to critique and challenge. This axis helps us to maintain a right attitude to culture at the centre and avoid ‘underadaptation’ to culture (not engaging with our context) and overadaptation (with the result that we’re no different from our context and have no life-changing impact within it).

– The centre point of the **movement axis** is a mindset of willing cooperation with other believers that promotes mission rather than a particular church system. This axis avoids the extremes of clinging to tradition on the one hand, and on the other hand being so fluid that we have no structures or abandon the classic doctrines of sin and grace.

Values are deeply held beliefs that shape the practices of every church ministry and the priorities of each church member. As such, values act as a motivating and unifying force in a church when they’re understood and held by the whole church (instead of being simply defined and filed in a church handbook). As Ed Stetzer says, ‘When a church allows itself to be perceived as a series of meetings, it deteriorates into nothing more than a gathering of people with unmet needs.’<sup>12</sup> But when the church is values driven and that value is the mission of God to build his kingdom, it has a dynamic nature where everyone is involved and engaged.

## 4. Describe your cycle of events

When a church has a clear evangelism strategy, it's easier for everyone to know how each evangelistic event fits within the strategy, who each event is for, and therefore who they should think and pray about inviting and bringing along. It's useful, therefore, to describe your church's cycle in a form that's easy to remember and communicate.

One way that churches often use to describe where events fit within a process is to use the terminology of level 1 to 4 events:

- level 1 events that connect with people and build relationship
- level 2 events that increase insight into our Christian hope (respect building)
- level 3 events that explain the relevance of the gospel to daily life (such as talks and panel conversations)
- level 4 events that explain the gospel in more detail and have a clear call to response.

A development of that is to way of thinking about this cycle, based on Hebrews 12:1, is in terms of the Christian life as a race we run to reach the prize.

### **Stage 1: Meeting point**

Before people enter the stadium they need to hear that the stadium exists and that there's a race going on, and they need to know where they can see it.

AIM: Make contact with people who know nothing of Christianity.

### **Stage 2: Pre-match hospitality tent**

Before people start to watch the race, they're invited to meet up with some of the athletes in a hospitality tent to find out a bit about what the race entails and see that the athletes are worth getting to know.

AIM: Spend time with unbelievers and invite them to events where they'll meet other Christians, whose authenticity and love will make them curious to know more.

### **Stage 3: Back of the stands**

Invite people to watch the race at first from a safe and anonymous distance.

AIM: Explain how the Bible makes sense of the issues people face every day. Show this through sharing a personal testimony or inviting people to an event or course that will explain the Bible's teaching on a contemporary issue.

### **Stage 4: Front of the stands**

Encourage people to take a closer look at the race and then, eventually, to get onto the track and off the starting blocks.

AIM: Explain the gospel and lead people to a commitment through events and conversations.

## 5. Communicate your strategy

Communication methods include:

### **A. Publicity**

Probably the first way people will engage with your church is via the website, and that will shape their opinion of your values. Questions to ask include:

- Is it professional and up to date?
- Is the emphasis on the visitor and potential newcomer to the church? Or is everything geared to existing members?
- Is the language inclusive of people exploring faith? Or does it assume a commitment

to faith and a level of knowledge about church jargon?

– Are the pictures representative of who is part of the church and the church's context? (Pictures of graffiti walls work better in urban church plants than in retirement villages, for example!)

In addition to your website, your logo, motto, signage, banners, and displays all communicate your vision and values. All of these can highlight words or images that sum up what's most important to you.

## **B. Regular reminders**

Church gatherings through the year are good times to report progress on vision. A church's values can also be used as a structure for prayer at gatherings. How better to pray than to ask God to work in the areas we value because he values them? Another idea is to hold regular interviews at church gatherings with people who can talk about what the vision and values mean to them.

## **C. Education**

We often assume that people in the church know the church's strategy and can name the mission, values, and vision, but as the motto goes, 'never assume'! Communicating the values in multiple ways gives better coverage and emphasizes our value of values. Education methods include:

- Listing the values on the website (in a way that's understandable and engaging to outsiders)
- Explaining them at welcome events and on welcome literature
- Incorporating them into a basic course explaining the foundations of what the church is about, what the Christian gospel is, how to get the most out of church, how to discover your gifts, the basics of Bible study and prayer, etc.
- An occasional sermon series on values or website video talks.

## **D. Vision nights**

At this event for the whole church, explain, celebrate, and renew your vision. This can be an annual event or could be held at the beginning of each 'term' (new year, post-Easter, and September) or on a church 'birthday'. It's good to make it a celebration and do it at a time when everyone can come (perhaps after a main church gathering over food). At the event, the vision can be updated with the new initiatives that will further develop the mission of the church in the coming months. Allow space for people to prayerfully consider their response and practical engagement and commitment.

## **E. Values cascading**

Values are deeply held and that generate instinctive and heartfelt responses rather than just mental assent. People have to believe in them rather than just agree with them. That means understanding why we value what we value and seeing how powerful practising these values will be in achieving our vision and strategies.

Values lead people to say, 'We do x activity because we believe in y value,' instead of saying, 'We do this because the minister told us to.' When people catch the values, they have the potential to create a movement. So identifying the receptive people and those who influence others is key. One suggestion is to take some receptive influencers away for a weekend and spend time chatting through the values until they 'get it' and are 'sold' on them. It's particularly important for them to understand how those values work out in the church's vision and strategy. Once that's clear and these people believe in it, they will inspire others—who then inspire others.

## ACTION SUMMARY

### **Dare to dream**

Spend time walking the area and praying through what you've learned so far. Dream dreams together about the vision goals and encourage everyone to contribute bold visions of what could be under God. Use the question:

*What do we dare to imagine under God that our church will be like and the impact we could be having on people's lives in two, five, ten, and twenty years?*

### **Review your strategic planning so far**

Review conclusions made in Step 1 (p. 35), and make any adjustments necessary:

**A. Divine disturbance.** What bothers you about your context? What longings, which are thus far unmet, feel like moral imperatives? What has God laid on your heart?

**B. Mission field.** Into what mission fields is God sending your church?

**C. Unique kingdom-building contribution.** What value innovations are you going to develop and what unique kingdom-building contribution are you going to make?

### **Formulate the vision**

Take your goals and conclusions about your unique kingdom contribution (p. 35) and craft your vision as a church into a compelling statement that summarizes your God-given kingdom contribution, that's owned by all, that motivates all, and that will shape everything you do.

– Include where you're heading in terms of who you're aiming to reach and how you're aiming to get everyone involved in the adventure.

– Make it motivational by answering the 'what if' question: *What if we gave our lives to meeting these needs with the unique gifts and opportunities Christ has given us? What would the eternal significance be?*

Prepare a summary strategy document that describes your:

- Mission statement, mission fields, and unique kingdom contribution
- Relationship gateways
- Kingdom-extending ministries of compassion and community action
- Conversation pathways, learning environment and connection events
- Welcoming and gathering strategies

## Clarify how mission is core to your values

The following questions will help you identify your values:

- **From your reading of Scripture:**

- What principles do Jesus and the apostles teach us about the foundation of the church and what mission drives it?
- Acts 2 describes everyone in the church as being full of awe. Why? What fills people in your church with awe?
- Is what you do as a church driven by values and theological vision or by pragmatic convenience and personal ambition?

- **If Jesus came to your church and sat in on a Sunday gathering:**

- What do you think he'd enjoy the most?
- If he came on a regular basis, in what activities would he invest his time?
- If he gave you feedback on the service last Sunday, what might he say?

- **From discussions with people who come to your church, who don't yet come, or who have stopped coming:**

- Why do they choose to come or not?
- What do you think they see as the defining features of your church?

- **From discussions with church members and regular attenders:**

- What do they love about the church? How much does evangelism feature in their answers? Why?
- What evangelism activities are they willing to invest their time and money in and what are they less keen to get involved in and why?

- **From looking at your church's priorities and culture towards evangelism:**

- What does Christ desire for his church and how is Christ lived out in your church?
- What are your non-negotiables and essential, or core, activities?
- In what do you invest your time, people, and money and why?
- If your church had fewer resources of time and money to invest in different activities, which ones would you fight to keep and which would you not mind letting go of and why?
- What are the most recognizable features of your church (distinguish generic from specific)?

Getting people together to discuss values is a great way to build engagement within the church and turn people from passengers to stakeholders. Once you have a long list of potential values, distil them into an essential list by asking of each one:

- Is this value compelling because it is clearly from Scripture?
- Is this value essential to us as we seek to achieve our mission in our context?
- Will this value motivate people to become part of a movement?
- How will the future change if we practice this value?
- How will we measure whether we are living this value or not?

## Describe your cycle of events

How will your plan evangelism activities as steps in an overall process through the year? See pp. 106–109 and p. 112.

## Communicate

Discuss how you'll communicate your values, vision, and strategy so they're embedded into the life and thinking of the whole church.

**'A church never outgrows the vision of the pastor.'**

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- 12 Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, p. 289.