

Thinking Strategically About Ministry

Gospel Ministry happens because God makes it happen. He works through those he chooses and by his Spirit empowers his servants to serve others for the sake of their salvation and the growth of his kingdom.

As we read through the Bible we should be able to observe a form and intention behind God's salvation plan. It is determined, is throughout, and it is enacted over the course of history fulfilled by his Son. Yet it is not yet complete.

Before Jesus ascension he commissioned his apostles to be his eyewitnesses in the world and to go to the ends of the earth proclaiming the gospel (Acts 1:8). By the power of the Spirit the Apostles proclaimed the gospel and in turn commissioned witnesses to continue the work of proclaiming Christ.

In Acts 20, the Apostle Paul meets with the Ephesian elders (for what he knows will be the last time). He reminds them that he did not hesitate to preach anything but that which would be helpful to bring repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus (20:20). He then commissioned the elders to be the shepherds of Christ's flock (20:28-32). To Timothy, he commanded him to preach the Word (2 Tim 4:2). And he called the Romans to send people to preach so that people would hear and believe and so be saved in the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13-15).

Friends, in training for ministry – you follow intentional footsteps with clear focus.

Our topic today – to think strategically about Gospel ministry.

Organize for intentional ministry

- It would be great if all that ministers had to do was preach, pray, break bread and enjoy fellowship (c.f. Acts 2:42).
- After all if a church was really operating as a church then it would allow ministers to do just that!
- Yet, even the early apostles had to make decisions to organize their ministry – to appoint people to wait on tables and to ensure that they were indeed able to concentrate on their role of prayer and ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4)

Question:

What makes 'ministry' ministry?

- *the gospel?*
- *people?*
- *structures? process?*

- Ministry is possible because of the gospel (it is the reason ministry exists), but it happens because people engage with the gospel. And for people to engage with the

gospel effectively often we need to put structures in place that serve both the gospel and people.

- The risk – is that we start to focus more on the structures or processes than we do on the subject (the gospel) and the object (people). There is a necessary tension here.
- This is where a lot of ‘How to...’ books fall down. Often the process and form of ministry unintentionally gets placed before the gospel or the people being served. Objectively a ministry or a church could be analyzed and a ‘best practice’ identified – but that is about process. That is the job of the sociologist!
- It is wise for those in ministry to be aware but not necessarily governed by ‘best practice’. Those in our care are not part of a process as such, they are members of the family of God.
- Bear this in mind – thinking strategically in ministry will cause us to think about organization (which is best placed in the secular business world) yet those in our care are more members of a family (which often means they don’t like to be organized!!).
- That said, there are roles that people play in a family that will allow the family to get on better. In 1 Tim 5 (for instance), Paul gives specific instructions to the church through Timothy in how to order relationships with a view to ministry.

- So ***how do we organize for intentional ministry?***

The core principles that should guide our ministry are...

- 1) Our gospel agenda – it should shape and direct what we do
- 2) Our congregations – the people who respond to the gospel (1 Pet 2:9-10)

Questions/Comments?

Group Question (list answers onto white board)

At the Church level - What are some of the tools/structures we employ to organize our ministry?

- 1) *Vision Statements (e.g. Mission, Goal, Objectives, Aims etc.)*
- 2) *Preaching Programs*
- 3) *Congregation structures*
 - *Home (Bible Study) Groups*
 - *Specific ministries like Men/Women/Internationals/Youth*
- 4) *Training (specifically of leaders)*
- 5) *Rosters/Ministry Planners*
 - *Technology (e.g. email, phones, web scheduling tools etc.)*
- 6) *Liturgy – to give structure to our gatherings*
- 7) *Parish Structures (e.g. Parish councils, Committees, Leadership teams)*
- 8) *Empowering Laity*
- 9) *Digital Communication*

(From the list) For each of the tools/structures listed ask a participant to explain:

Why and How do you use [this element] to organize ministry?

Being Strategic about Ministry

1. Vision Statements

- Take it or leave it – if you choose to use it, then you must use it.
 - This can be a very helpful way to ensure the people in your ministry focus on what is most important.
 - It will work against you if it is not used
 - ‘Vision’ (goal) – what we aim for
 - ‘Objectives’ – how to organize the key tasks that help you move toward the Vision.
 - Important (and often forgotten) is that Vision and Objectives only operate in the context of the people you are trying to reach – the ‘Target Group’.
 - This is important because the ‘target group’ should influence how the keys tasks/objectives are carried out.
 - Who do you choose?
 - a) Start with who your existing core people are first. Know who your army is.
 - b) But to ensure that you don’t remain inward looking – work at the demographics of your area as a way of linking opportunities to the people you have.
- E.g.
- Sex
 - Nationality (Obvious)
 - Class – What class are they in?
 - Education level – Schooling: what they read, drink
 - Social Intelligence – manners
 - Residential - Owning and Renting
 - Mobility – Car, Bus, Train

- Financial – what jobs, cars,
- Recreational – How they play and socialize
- Aspiration – What are they aiming for?
- Geography – it matters if your people are to join your church. Anglicare Research tells us (nationally) – most will travel up to 20 min to church. Families – less than 15 min. Youth (particularly with wheels) up to 30 minutes. Asians, wherever the church family is.
- All this effects what kind of programs you can run, type of ministry etc.

c) Put together a strategy to reach your suburb/area with the people you have. E.g.'s

- 'Like attracts Like' – Homogenous Unit Principle
- Need to find the Bi-Cultural person – invest in them!!
- Need to be cross cultural as the Minister

2. Preaching/Teaching Programs

- Importance of long-term over short term planning series.
- If we are on about the Word, then it should govern what we teach.

3. Ministry/Congregation structures

a) Recognize the nature of relationships that exist within your ministry.

Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Relationships

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Friend/Family	Associate	Acquaintance
More than one context	Only one context	One-Off's

- A useful framework to keep in mind for incorporating people into your ministry families. For someone to 'belong' they should have contact with people in the ministry over more than one context (e.g. Church + Home Group + sports team or party etc.)
- Generally speaking people stay with a church when they have 6 'friendships'.
- RODNEY STARK (Non-Christian Sociologist – PhD Uni of California 1971 – Sociology Now University Professor of the Social Sciences, Baylor University¹) claims Christian Churches grow because of family values – they provide a sense of deep belonging.
- This is a good observation – although not quite right: Christian churches grow because people respond to the gospel – but you can understand how a non-Christian sociologist would see the community generated by gospel living and say it was a 'family value'.

¹ <http://www.baylor.edu/sociology/index.php?id=17661>

- Imperative for us is to ensure that people are incorporated into gospel fellowships – rather than simply social clubs.

b) In terms of organizing your ministry we should bear in mind that we need to set-up CONTEXTS that helps people relate (more so in the city than in the country).

- Bear in mind a caution: people are not converted by the process: Alpha is often an example of this – converted by the process – not necessarily by the gospel (same risk for Emmaus Walks and Cassillo programs.) – High Risk.
- The risk is that we gather and involve people who are ‘converted’ by the process, not the gospel then they will be at high risk when in trauma, and those who they teach the next generation will have a moralistic view of ministry.
- That said – if our processes ensure that people are hearing the gospel and given the opportunity to respond appropriately, then the strategic process is a good thing.

Create structures that help people naturally flow into the fellowship.

- Flow into Home Group
(Church → JesusWORKS → Home Group)
- Flow into Church
(Inviting → Welcoming → Social Event → Church → Follow-up → God, Church and Me (welcome event) etc.)
- Flow into Evangelistic events
(Invite → Pre-evangelism → Evangelism → follow-up → social etc.)

c) Also recognize that the nature of the relationship will influence how someone is heard.

Primary (Family/friends)	Secondary (Associate)	Tertiary (Acquaintance)
Opinion matters	Careful what you say	Say Anything?

How does our evangelism fit into this picture?

- Primary - It is very difficult for congregation members to bring along family and friends (because of the value placed in their opinions). You are also dealing with a limited pool of people here (most people (not Christian) only really have 4-5 friends outside of family)
- Secondary – Easier to invite along Associates. ‘Careful what you say’
- Tertiary – best to invite are Acquaintances.

Hard because of limited contact (often the reason why it is not done is because people are working up the confidence to invite), but best because not much value is placed in the persons opinion and much more can be said. Often people are willing (longing) to step into relationship.

d) Commitment levels

Zac Veron – Levels of Commitment

- Level 1 – Do because they are rostered on
- Level 2 – Do because they want to.
- Level 3 – Do because they are committed to the program
- Level 4 – Do because it is *their* program.

Move people from small ask to big ask

- Small asks (e.g. church meeting) – to huge asks (Weekend Away) etc.
- Small ask (giving) – to huge asks (giving for special projects)
- Small ask (Bible reading) – to huge asks (Bible study leading)
- The most effective ministry often happens with those who are responding to huge asks and they own the ministry.

5) Rosters/Ministry Planners

- In an ideal Gospel community, rosters would not be necessary
- A tool – only
- If used well will mean more ministry happens, by more people, in many ways.
- If used badly will mean ministry gets stuck in a box, will be done by the same few people, and serving will become a duty rather than a privilege.
- Use Rosters (Ministry Planners) to communicate your Vision and Objectives by organizing the roster around the keys objectives of your vision (if you commit to a particular vision).
- Ensure it is easy for people to get on and easy for people to get off.
- Think creatively about how you can use the non-up-front people.
- Have a plan for moving people out of less skilled ministry roles and into more skilled role (so that there is room for less skilled to take up the mantle)
- There is technology that can help: Rosterworks

Questions/Comments?

Helpful Reading

Thom S Rainer &
Eric Beiger

Simple Church – Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples (Nashville: P & H Publishing, 2006).

Zac Veron &
Ken D Noakes

Leadership on the Front Foot (South Sydney: Youthworks, 2009).

Colin Marshall &
Tony Payne

The Trellis and the Vine – the Ministry Mindshift that Changes Everything (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 2009).