

Introduction

The Need for a Vision and Plan for Church Member Involvement in Evangelism

The power of Jesus Christ and His gospel is undiminished, and every Christian has been ordained by Christ to be fruitful (John 15:16) and gifted by the Holy Spirit to fill a strategic role in God's plan to build the church and reach the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yet the average Christian is defeated both in personal living and in personal witnessing about Christ. This is revealed when they respond to daily problems as though God is dead and they, themselves, are the only resource available to cope with life. Thus, while professing to be Christians they live as practical atheists.

This explains why most have never shared Christ's gospel with another person. If it isn't a vital reality in their own lives, it's unrealistic to expect them to share it.

After talking with many pastors from varied backgrounds about this obvious problem and how it can be resolved, we offer this summary of their counsel. It has been accumulated and tested over a period of many years.

For believers to revive and be equipped to cope with life in the power of the Holy Spirit, and accomplish their mission to make disciples, they must once again refocus on their purpose for existence, which is fulfilling the Great Commission, established by Christ after his resurrection and found in Matthew 28:18-20. Then, make sure they have biblically based plans and programs that are both consistent with their purpose, and will enable them to reach their God-given goal. This requires consideration of some basic questions.

- **What prevents believers from fulfilling their purpose?**

When Christians are not being discipled, non-Christians will not be evangelized. Since the fulfillment of the Christian's purpose of discipleship is utterly dependent upon mature believers discipling "newborn" or less mature members of the Body, this is the point of breakdown which prevents most Christians from fulfilling their purpose.

- **Why have we not discipled the Christians and evangelized the non-Christians?**

When Christians become focused mostly on traditional church programs and events, and lose sight of the needs of the members and the Lord's purpose and goal for his church, believers remain spiritual babes.

Some critical unmet needs in the lives of Christians are:

1. **Real assurance**, in their experience, that God is in their lives, their sins are forgiven, they have become children of God, and they have eternal life through Christ.
2. **Understanding how to deal with sin** the moment they become aware of it, as it occurs in their daily lives.
3. **Understanding how, by faith, to appropriate the fullness of the Holy Spirit** (the Christ-controlled life) so they can experience freedom from the power of sin and have a growing experience of the fruit of the Spirit as their way of life.
4. **Understanding how to walk in Christ as they have received Him** (by faith) and to trust Him to be faithful to mold and remake their lives to become more and more like Him. They need to understand that whereas the new birth is a critical event in their spiritual experience, the Christian life involves a continuing process of spiritual growth for the rest of their lives.
5. **Understanding how to witness in the power of the Holy Spirit.**
Witnessing, if done in the energy of the flesh, usually offends the non-Christian and discourages the Christian.
6. **Understanding how to communicate the claims of Christ to others** in a clear contemporary way. One of the most frequently heard remarks by lay people about witnessing is, "I know what I believe; I just don't know how to put it into words." This is tragic in view of Roman 10:14, which says:

"But how shall they ask Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?"

People need help in learning how to communicate their faith.

7. **Understanding that they can be involved in evangelism and still be genuinely themselves.**
Evangelism has generally been so poorly taught that people are afraid they cannot be used by God. They need creative leadership that offers a variety of continuing opportunities for involvement in evangelism according to their God-given gifts and abilities.
8. **Understanding how to pray.** This greatest of all privileges is for most Christians shallow and ritualistic without any real communion with God.

9. **Understanding how to love each and every person.** Most Christians are as selective in loving others as are non-Christians. Their attitude toward others is frequently dependent on the attitude expressed towards them, revealing that the Christians are not really “free indeed,” but are still in bondage to the flesh. This is one of the main stumbling blocks to the children of Christians.
10. **Understanding God’s purpose for the local church.** Most Christians do not realize that the church is intended for the gathering of the redeemed for worship, training and equipping to be God’s instruments as ministers of reconciliation in the world.

Failing to understand this, they have settled for the role of ornaments as spectators. They cannot, in this unscriptural role, experience the reality and fulfillment that God intended for them.

Even our most vital churches usually have a small percentage of their people functioning as ministers that are being used by God.

11. **Understanding how to study the Bible.** The majority of Christians tend to the extreme of being either theologically illiterate or possessing much Bible knowledge without experiencing it. Most Christians need help in how to study the Bible, in the Power of the Holy Spirit, who alone can illuminate our minds and hearts to understand the message of the scripture and enable obedience to that message.
12. **The “Koinonia” experience of stimulation and accountability in a close spiritual fellowship** with other members of the body of Christ. It is difficult for people to integrate Bible knowledge with daily life and grow in the capacity to give and accept love if their involvement is limited to being part of an audience. This “koinonia” is most effectively accomplished in small groups.
13. **To know that they are an important part of a believable, flexible, workable plan designed to involve all of the members of the church in eventually reaching all of the non-Christians in their community.** Without this vision, they will not have a real sense of the mission of the church. They cannot help feeling hypocritical if they are not vitally involved in what is so clearly God’s priority for the church.
14. **Understanding how to defend the gospel with biblical and factual truth.** In today’s postmodern, post-Christian society, believers must possess tools that empower and provide them with a firm biblical foundation, giving them the assurance of the total accuracy and inerrancy of the bible and of the Christian faith, based on historical, theological, and spiritual factual truth about the claims of Christ. Committed disciples of Jesus Christ today must learn how to defend and share the Christian faith with reason and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”
I Peter 3:15 NKJV

15. Understanding that the Kingdom of God transcends this world and all its pleasures and pain.

Christ promises that he is preparing an eternal home for all believers (John 14:1-3).

Christians casually mention the word “Heaven” sporadically in their conversations; sadly, most of them don’t have real knowledge of what the bible says about their spiritual heavenly destiny.

This is one of the reasons many believers are living this life as if Heaven isn’t real and the current world is the best place, they’ll ever experience. This leads to a spiritual life lacking hope, focus, and purpose.

- **What needs to be done to prepare a church to meet these needs?**

- Be aware of the inherent value of what we already have in our churches. One of the most encouraging facts is that it does not require a whole new church organizational structure. Most churches, in their original development, intended to meet these needs. A careful study of them will reveal that proper programs with content to meet these needs can be implemented through three areas of the church’s organizational structure:
 - Pulpit
 - Christian Education Department
 - Evangelism Department
- Evaluate your priorities.
 - Evaluate how all church activities can contribute to the purpose of discipling all the Christians and evangelizing all the non-Christians.
 - Be willing to implement the necessary steps under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to supplement the existing programs of the church, and as necessary, revise existing activities so they can help fulfill the priorities.
 - Prepare to apply all energy, training, finances, and talent toward fulfilling God’s purpose and goal for the church.
- Find or develop the plans and programs that will most effectively nurture the Christ dependency of your members and help your church fulfill its purpose.

You can have a spiritual awakening and your community can be saturated with the good news of Christ, but it will be in direct proportion to the number of Christians that are living in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ and effectively sharing their faith as a way of life, where they live, work and play.