

THE CHURCH:

IDENTITY, MISSION, & CULTIVATION

INTRODUCTION

Why does the church exist? And how does the church do that?

How you answer those two questions shows your understanding of the mission of the church!

Course objective:

- To explain what our mission as a church is.
- And to show how everything we do as a church does (or at least should) fit into that mission.

Course outline:

- Identity & Mission – week 1.
- Cultivation – weeks 2-4.

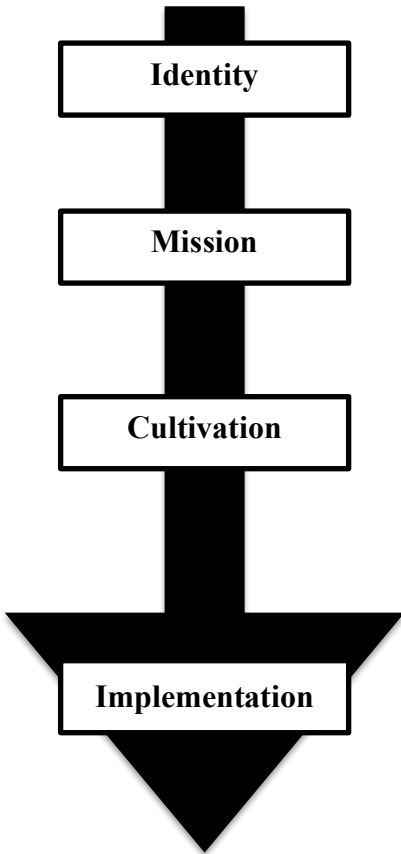
Objection: Is everything we do *really* about mission?

- The question isn't, "Is everything we do really about mission?" but rather, "Is our mission the right one?"
- "Mission" ≠ evangelism. Our mission includes evangelism, but it is also bigger than evangelism.

Significance: So what? Why does this matter?

- It focuses and provides a "rudder" for our ministry decisions.
- It enables us to be intentional and deliberate. We know what our mission is, and why we do what we do.
- It helps us not to lose perspective.
- It corrects false conceptions we may have about the church.
- It keeps our focus on mission.

“MINISTRY MAP”



We begin with what God has done and who we are as a result of it. Out of this identity (who we are) flows our mission (why we exist).

Because of who we are (our identity), this is what we are called to do. This is our mission, our purpose—why we exist as an organized community.

These are the principles we believe scripture identifies as those things that build up and equip our community for its mission. As such, these serve as our ministry values. They are vital for our church’s health and the fulfillment of its mission.

This is how we put those ministry values into practice in our specific church context. When you experience “life as CrossWay,” this is what you see. But these are not accidental activities, structures, and programs. These are intentional practices, built on our values, which seek to build up our church towards health and mission. In this way, everything we do is oriented towards our mission.

IDENTITY

Our mission is born out of our identity—who we are. And this is who we are:

We are a local church. We are a local expression of that larger people that God has rescued through the saving work of his Son, Jesus Christ.

But we do not exist for ourselves. Out of this identify (who we are, more specifically, who God has made us to be through the Gospel) flows our mission (why we exist; what we are called to do). We have been saved in order that we may in turn become ambassadors of the very same message by which we ourselves have been saved. In other words, as a church, we are not merely the product and recipient of the Gospel, but we are now also its God-appointed agent—the vehicle through which he announces his message of reconciliation to the world around us.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 -

- How does Paul describe us in these verses (our identity)?
- How does our identity (who God has made us) shape what we are called to do (mission)?

MISSION

Because of what God has done and who God has made us to be as a result of it (our identify), this is what we are called to do—our mission, our assignment from our Lord and Savior. This is why we exist as a community.

Mission: *To glorify God by advancing the gospel, which transforms people into fully devoted followers of Jesus.*

- **“To glorify God”** - The church was created and exists for the glory of God—to display his wisdom, make known his worth, unveil his beauty, and spread a passion for his greatness. Ephesians 3:10-11
- **“Into fully devoted followers of Jesus”** - The church glorifies God primarily by fulfilling its commission to make disciples—seeing people transformed into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:18-20
- **“By advancing a Gospel that transforms people”** - Finally, the church fulfills this commission to make disciples through the Gospel—the only message that is powerful to save and transform people into fully devoted followers of Jesus. Romans 1:16

Scripture: Look up the following sets of passages. According to these verses, what is our mission as a church?

Matthew 28:18-20

Luke 24:46-49 and Acts 1:8

John 17:18 and 20:21

Practices: Now this should actually be the mission of all Christians and any truly Christian organization. However, the church fulfills this mission through the following things that distinctively set apart the church as a “church.”

- Organization and government – Maintaining and practicing healthy and Biblical church membership and governance.¹
- The ministry of the word – Ministering God’s word, especially the Gospel, to one another.²
- The ordinances – Faithfully administering Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.³
- Corporate worship – Regularly assembling together to read scripture, hear it expounded, practice the ordinances, pray, confess our faith, and collectively respond to God through song.⁴
- Prayer – Communing and communicating with God.⁵
- Community – Engaging in intentional relationships of accountability, mentorship, and companionship.⁶
- Edification – Using our various gifts for the sake of each other’s encouragement and maturation.⁷
- Church discipline – Protecting one another by not tolerating unrepentant sin.⁸
- Multiplication – Actively engaging in evangelism and mission (multiplying disciples), church planting (multiplying churches), and the identifying and raising up leaders (multiplying leaders).⁹
- Giving – Giving financially and materially for the sake of others and the spread of the Gospel.¹⁰
- Social concern – Serving and engaging the needs of our church and communities.¹¹
- Partnership – Appropriately partnering with other churches and Christian organizations in order to increase our ability to fulfill our mission.¹²

¹ Mt 18:15-17; Acts 2:47; 5:14; 6:3-6; 14:23; 1 Cor 5:3-5, 13; 6:1-5; 2 Cor 2:6; 8:19; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Thes 5:12; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:9, 17; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:5-9; Heb 13:7, 17; Js 5:14; 1 Pet 5:2-3.

² Rom 15:14; Eph 4:15; Acts 2:42; 20:20; 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 3:15-4:2.

³ Acts 2:38, 41-42; 8:12, 36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 20:7; 22:16; Rom 6:3-4; 1 Cor 1:13-17; 10:14-22; 11:17-34; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:5; Col 2:12; 1 Pet 3:21.

⁴ Acts 2:42; 20:7, 20; Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 5:4, 11; 11:17-18, 20, 33; 14:23; 15:1-4; 16:2; Eph 5:19-20; Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:15-20; 3:15-16; 4:16; 1 Cor 14:14-17, 26-33; 1 Tim 2:1-2; 3:16; 4:13; 6:12; 2 Tim 2:11-13; 3:15-4:2; 1 Thes 5:27; Heb 10:25; Js 5:16.

⁵ Acts 2:42; 20:20; 1 Cor 14:14-15; 1 Tim 2:1-2.

⁶ Rom 12:10, 13, 15; 1 Cor 12:26; Gal 6:1-2; Eph 4:2; Heb 3:12-13; 10:25; 12:15-16; Js 5:19; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 Jn 3:18.

⁷ Mt 28:19; Rom 12:6-8; 15:14; 1 Cor 12:7; 14:12, 26; Gal 6:1-2; Eph 4:11-16; Col 2:19; 1 Thes 5:11, 14; Heb 10:24; 12:15; 1 Pet 4:10-11; Jude 20.

⁸ Mt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:1-13; 2 Cor 2:5-11; Gal 6:1-2; 1 Tim 5:19-21; 2 Thes 3:14-15; Js 5:19-20.

⁹ Mt 28:19-20; Lk 24:47-48; Jn 17:18; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 14:23; Rom 10:14-17; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Col 4:2-6; 1 Thes 1:8; 2 Tim 2:2; Tit 1:5; 1 Pet 3:15.

¹⁰ Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; Rom 12:13; 15:25, 31; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9; Gal 6:9-10; Phil 4:18; 1 Tim 6:17-19; Heb 13:16.

¹¹ Gen 1:26-27; Lev 19:15; Deut 15:11; Prov 19:7; 31:8-9; Isa 58:6-12; Jer 22:3, 13-17; Ezek 16:49-50; 22:29; Amos 5:11-15, 24; Mic 6:8; Zech 7:9-10; Mt 7:12; 22:39; 25:31-46; Mk 12:31; Lk 4:18-19; Gal 2:10; Js 1:27; 1 Jn 3:17-18.

¹² Acts 15:1-35; 1 Cor 16:1-4, 10-11; 2 Cor 8-9; Phil 1:15-18; Col 4:16; 3 Jn 5-10.