

Great Mission Statements

There is a common Biblical pattern to discerning God's will for the church: Trust - Vision - Mission. God's vision for the church is revealed in the context of a clear consensus around core values and bedrock beliefs. The trust within the people of God, and between the people and God, is their covenant relationship. God's vision is revealed in the clarity of this covenant. Once trust and vision are clear, church leaders can focus a statement of mission for the church.

Vision is usually expressed in image and song. Mission is usually expressed in words. Together the vision and mission provide the motivation and direction for all future strategic planning.

The best mission statements are **brief, memorable, energizing**, and point toward the **measurable outcomes** that will be used by congregational leaders to determine whether or not the church is successfully living up to God's vision for the church.

Three Common Mistakes

The following mistakes render a mission statement useless for effective strategic planning.

- **It's not about institutional survival.**

God's purpose for the church is always about multiplying disciples and blessing the world. The church is not valuable in itself ... but only as it multiplies disciples of Christ and fulfills God's purpose to redeem the world.

- **It's not a program summary.**

Mission statements are all about *purpose*, and make no assumptions whatever about tactics, structures, or leadership. A mission statement is not an abbreviated version of a denominational heritage, church constitution, or list of committee mandates.

- **It's not an essay.**

Mission statements articulate “in a nutshell” the single, essential reason the congregation exists in this time and place. It does not attempt to explain a tradition, justify membership, or exposit a theology, or compare the congregation with other religions.

Powerful Mission Statements

The following criteria make a mission statement extraordinarily effective for future strategic planning.

Powerful Mission Statements are:

- ✓ **Clearly motivational.**

The missions statement is exciting to people in both church and community, and it is regularly celebrated by the congregation as the unique way in which they follow Jesus. The mission energizes people. It is a source of pride. Members readily speak of it among work associates, neighbors, relatives, and friends.

- ✓ **Clearly congregational.**

The mission statement is the sum of congregational life, and not simply one program of the church. Every member is enthusiastic and wholehearted about that mission. Each person is “on fire” for that mission, and they participate in this congregation specifically because these people are working toward that purpose.

- ✓ **Utterly distinctive.**

The mission statement uses words or metaphors unique to that particular congregation; in their unique demographic context. It distinguishes the purpose of this congregation from the unique missions of other churches even in the same denomination.

✓ **Profoundly sacrificial.**

No matter how large the vision or how great the challenge, a powerful mission statement is always reasonable and achievable. It deserves immense personal sacrifice. It will be used effectively in all stewardship campaigns and nominations processes.

✓ **Always prayerful.**

Individuals, leaders, and the congregation as a whole continually pray for the success of the mission. Prayer is both planned and spontaneous. The mission is constantly lifted into consciousness, and lies at the center of personal and corporate spirituality.

Your ultimate goal will be to articulate your mission in such a way that it can be easily printed on the side of a bus, on a park bench, on a matchbook cover, or on a banner trailing behind an airplane above a crowded beach. In that brief space, you need to communicate everything necessary to capture the imagination of the public and motivate enormous sacrifice by church members.