

The Church On Purpose 1

The Church On Purpose: God's People Turning the World Right Side Up Acts 17:6

Introduction:

1. I have entitled this series "The Church On Purpose." Throughout the series we will ask and answer three important questions:
 - a. "What are we supposed to be doing?"
 - b. "How well are we doing it?"
 - c. "What can we do to be more effective?"
2. In this first lesson we will consider our God-given objective and give an overview of what the series is about.
3. The second will focus attention on our confession, commitment and loyalty to the Lord as the foundational elements of our work (Matt. 16:13-26).
4. The third will discuss the role of leadership in teaching, creating unity and creating an environment of working together for the Lord.
5. The fourth will address what we can do to help persuade our children to accept Jesus as Lord.
6. The fifth will discuss how Christianity spread through households in the first century and does so today. It will address how we can capitalize on this natural web of influence.

Discussion:

- I. What are we supposed to be doing?
 - A. Many religious organizations allow the world to define what they are doing.
 1. Some borrow a model from the business world. They may survey the community and see what they want (or think they need) and then work to meet that need.
 2. Since many of these organizations no longer believe in the Bible as the word of God, no longer believe in heaven/hell, salvation from sin, etc. their mission becomes primarily social in nature. They do many good social works—AA meetings, Boy/Girl Scouts, care for homeless/poor, establish schools, build hospitals, etc.
 - B. Our mission/purpose is defined by God.
 1. It is evident in the work of the people of God in the first century.
 - a. "Turning the world right side up" (Acts 17:6).
 - b. They used their money (Acts 2:43ff; Phil. 1:5; 4:15ff) and their lives (Acts 4:19ff; 14:19).
 2. It is evident in the work of Jesus. "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).
 3. Evident in the entire plan of God (from Genesis to Revelation).
 - C. It is a noble mission.
 1. This mission turns the world right side up. It gives people hope—not only for the next life, but it transforms lives in the here and now. The social changes the world needs to have addressed are transformed by the good news of the gospel. Social

change is a by-product of hearts given to the Lord. The homeless/poor are cared for. Children are educated. Social needs are met when people's hearts are changed. The purpose of God not only addresses the symptoms but the disease itself.

2. Jesus gave His life for it. God gave His son for it. Apostles suffered for it.
3. There is no greater purpose for which we could give our lives, our money, our time.
4. "Go and make disciples of all the nations" is the divine directive (Matt. 28:19-20).
5. If you want to do something worthwhile to affect the world . . . this is the most worthy cause. The world is all about getting ahead, making money, being successful, pleasure-seeking, entertainment, etc. In all these they are looking for purpose. The people of God recognize this is upside down (1 Pet. 4:1-6; Titus 3:1ff; 2 Tim. 3:10ff). The world defines its heroes around the wrong things. Real heroes give themselves to the purpose of God (Acts 13:36).

II. This purpose is a part of our identity as the people of God. It defines who we are.

A. There is a lot of confusion about the church.

1. Some see it as a community organization for good community work.
2. Some see it as an institution people get into to be saved.
3. Some see it as a "safety deposit box" where Christians are kept safe until the Lord returns.

B. The universal church is God's special people (Lev. 20:7-8, 26; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 Pet. 2:9-10).

Unless we recover a sense of the incredible privilege of what it means to be a holy people, belonging to the Lord, the objects of His gracious election, His treasured people, set apart exclusively to Him we will remain pathetic and powerless in our efforts to win the lost.

C. The local church is 1) a group of God's people that have 2) mutually agreed to work together 3) to accomplish the work 4) that God has given them to do.

1. With this mentality the church is pro-active rather than reactive; it pursues goals rather than responding to emerging pressures; it is intentional rather than reflexive; it functions by design rather than accident or whim.
2. Often the perception is that the church is a place to go to sing, pray, study, give, observe the Lord's Supper.
 - a. But WHY do we do these things? They are not ends within themselves but means to an end.
 - b. Why sing? "To praise God!" Yes, but to teach and to admonish (Col. 3:16). Not singing because "I like it. I like pleasing sounds."
 - c. Why pray? To accomplish the purpose of God (Dan. 9:1ff). Is this what is meant by "praying according to the will of God" (1 Jn. 5:14-15)?
 - d. Why study? Not mere academic exercise, but training for effectiveness in our work (Eph. 4:7, 11-16).
 - e. Why the Lord's Supper? Proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes again (1 Cor. 11:26).
3. Why is the local church organized the way it is? "The way God wanted it." Yes, but this is not an end in itself, but the means to an end. When we see the means as the end in itself we become devoted to ritualistically doing things rather

than purposefully doing them.

4. Every action, every movement, every effort needs to be focused on the objective to be accomplished and not just done by rote. Every song, every prayer, every lesson, every Bible class needs to be focused on the purpose.
 - a. Some things God has stipulated. He has legally commanded some things. Why? Because this is what works to accomplish His objectives. Sometimes identified as matters of faith. Ex. Go make disciples. Sing.
 - b. Some things He has left us free to do. Sometimes identified as matters of expediency. How to go . . . boat, car, foot. Song book. Not expedient if it does not accomplish the objective.

III. The two major works of the church and how they work together in the accomplishment of God's purpose.

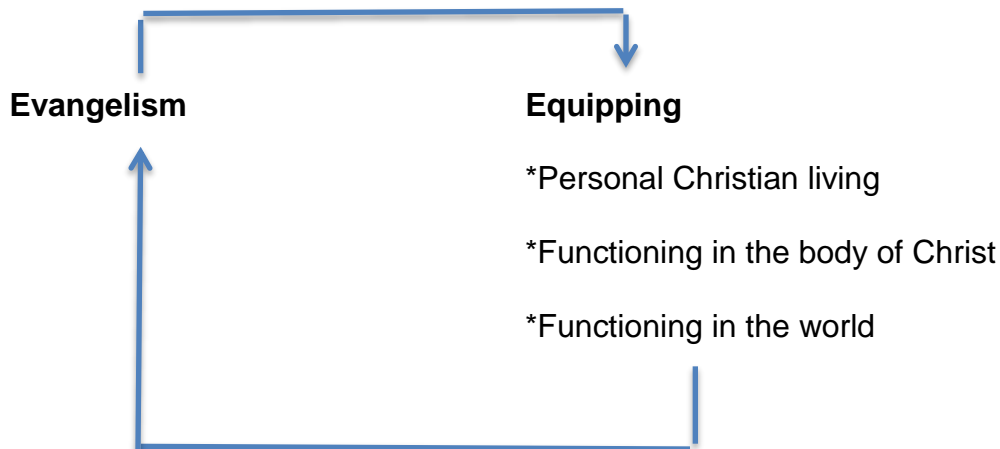
A. Usually designated as evangelism and edification.

B. Edification may be more appropriately designated as "equipping" if we use the language of Eph. 4:11.

C. There are three major areas in which we are to be trained or equipped to function.

1. Personal Christian living. Ex. my personal morality—not lie, steal, control anger, love my neighbor, care for spouse, children, parents.
2. Functioning in the body of Christ. Ex. Using my gifts in a way that is beneficial to the body. Cf. Rom. 12:4-8.
3. Functioning in the world. Ex. paying taxes, submitting to governing authorities, employee/employer relations, being the salt and light of the world.

D. Diagramed.



Conclusion:

1. This is what we are supposed to be doing.
2. How well are we doing it? A matter of on-going evaluation.

3. What can we do to be more effective? The diligence with which we answer these two questions determines whether we are more like a swamp or a millrace. It determines whether we are moving ahead or growing stagnant.
4. What is your plan? How do you get there from here? How effective are you turning the world right side up? Or are you being engulfed by an upside down world?