

**Series:** Vision Month 2021  
**Title:** Priorities – What We Do  
**Text:** Acts 2:42-47  
**Date:** January 10, 2021

After establishing why your organization exists, you must consider a secondary issue – priorities. While purpose deals with why your organization exists, priorities deal with what your organization does. Purpose alone gets you nowhere. You must consider what you must do to fulfill your purpose. This is where priorities come into play. They provide clarity and detail. They reveal what must be done in order to realize one's mission. Gary Keller has commented on this reality, saying, "Live with purpose and you know where you want to go. Live by priorities and you'll know what to do to get there... purpose has the power to shape our lives only in direct proportion to the power of the priority we connect it to. Purpose without priority is powerless."<sup>1</sup> Without a clear understanding of organizational priorities, your purpose statement will be little more than a statement. To get traction and move forward, you must identify the priorities that will help you achieve that purpose.

I think of this issue of priorities in terms of how one loses weight and gets in shape. Every year, countless people make resolutions concerning their health. Many sputter out and fail. The reason, many times, is a lack of clear priorities. The end goal and mission is often abundantly clear – achieve a certain weight, develop a six pack of abs, fit into a certain dress or pair of jeans. However, many never reach their aspired ends because they don't clearly identify what things must be done to achieve it – curb calorie intake to an appropriate level, remove fatty foods from diet, exercise for one hour six days a week, don't keep sugary and fatty foods in the house, only consume whole foods. Many fail in their health endeavors because of a lack of clear priorities, not because of an unclear purpose.

The same malaise affects many leaders and organizations. They know what they want to accomplish, but they don't know how to get there. They haven't gotten precise regarding priorities. In this chapter, we will focus on this issue. To do so, we will first look at the benefits of articulating priorities. Next, we will examine Scripture's teaching regarding what priorities ought to characterize local congregations. The chapter will close with tips for communicating one's priorities. Examples will be given from some current ministries.

## **PRIORITIES FOR CHURCH PRIORITIES**

Identifying your organizational priorities is one thing. Comprehending and communicating them in a precise, purposeful, poignant, and powerful way is another

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<sup>1</sup> Keller, Gary and Jay Papasan. *The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results*. (Austin, TX: Bard Press, 2012), 132-133.

matter all together. If you aren't clear about what's actually involved with a priority, those you lead won't be either. In my time as a leader, I've discovered there are some helpful ideas that can make our implementation of organizational priorities more lean and effective. Consider three important priorities for crafting your church priorities.

**Be Scriptural.** Fortunately for church leaders, the pressure is off when it comes to this subject. We don't have to determine our church priorities. We only have to discover them. In the Bible, we have a treasure trove of heavenly instruction regarding the activity of the church. God's Word informs us regarding what we should do. We have clear mandates from Jesus and the apostles, and we have stories from the early church that chronicle which activities they deemed important. Paul's words to the Romans can be applied to us: "For whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures" (Romans 15:4).

The Bible shines the light on what priorities we should pursue. We have neither a right or responsibility to make ourselves an authority on this matter. Rick Warren has said, "Remember, we don't decide the purposes of the church — we discover them. Christ is the head of the church. He established the purposes long ago. Now each generation must reaffirm them."<sup>2</sup> As you seek to lead your ministry, be committed to being Scriptural. Base your activity on the Bible. Uphold God's Word as the standard for faith and practice.

Such an approach will actually help your leadership. You won't feel the pressure to be the creative sage who constantly needs to reinvent the wheel. Additionally, your people will get the sense that you don't lead for your own agenda; thus, they will be more willing to follow. Finally, when you face rejection, you won't be prone to take it personally. Because your priorities are God's priorities you will have a sense of peace and assurance.

**Be balanced.** I follow the ministry of an independent Baptist pastor in California who often speaks of the need for churches to be balanced in their ministry approach. His intent is to emphasize the need for leaders to be full-orbed in both their commitment to proclaiming truth and exhibiting grace.<sup>3</sup> Without a doubt, a balance of both virtues is needed for leaders who want to make a difference in a dark world. Imbalance is an ever-present enemy of ministers and members within the church.

I can think of another sort of imbalance that threatens many congregations — an imbalance regarding priorities. Have you ever noticed the way in which many nationally prominent ministries emphasize one Scripture virtue or activity. Some are known for missions and others are known for prayer. Others highlight charitable deeds and acts of

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<sup>2</sup> Warren, Rick. *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 100.

<sup>3</sup> <https://paulchappell.com/2013/01/09/humility-baptist-churches-grace-truth-balanced-ministry-1/>

kindness. Some beat the drum for discipleship and others are staunch regarding church discipline. Surely the Lord uses the strengths of some congregations to admonish and challenge others. However, the seeming fascination with individual priorities over others can hamstring a ministry from being fully faithful and effective.

We must be careful that our culture of specificity and specialization does not unwittingly make us morph our churches into something the Lord never intended. In his book “*Transitioning: Leading Your Church through Change*,” Dan Southerland warns, “Most churches tend to overemphasize one of the purposes...to the neglect of others. This always creates imbalance...balance creates health.”<sup>4</sup> Resist the urge to build your ministry and make waves by becoming sensationalistic in one regard.

Shock value can make you succeed temporarily in the eyes of the world, but the estimation of the Lord is more important. Let His Word set the the tone for what you do. Balance is integral to riding a bike. It is also important in leading a church. Search the Scriptures and make sure you give equal place to each of Christ’s priorities.

**Be limited.** Perhaps you’ve heard about the proverbial man who was the jack of all trades and the master of none. It represents an axiom that holds true for all of life – no one can be all and do all. Too many priorities causes one to lose sight of what really matters. When everything matters, nothing matters. In our personal lives, we understand this to be true. To be successful, we must be clear regarding our passions, skills, and responsibilities. We then have to craft a life plan that orients our focus, time, and resources on those things.

A similar focus is needed in organizations. A business, non-profit, or church can’t be good at everything. He who chases two rabbits won’t catch either one. For organizations to thrive, they must develop a laser-like focus on what matters most. Patrick Lencioni has commented on what happens when these realities are ignored: “Most organizations I’ve worked with have too many top priorities to achieve the level of focus they need to succeed. Wanting to cover all their bases, they establish a long list of disparate objectives and spread their scarce time, energy, and resources across them all. The result is almost always a lot of initiatives being done in a mediocre way and a failure to accomplish what matters most.”<sup>5</sup>

In our next section, we are going to examine the New Testament’s teaching on church priorities. For now, know this – for churches to be healthy and strong, they must limit their focus to the priorities set forth in Scripture. Contemporary trends, calendared events, and cultural crises can’t dictate what’s important. Churches and church leaders must be skilled at saying “no” to good so they can say “yes” to the best.

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<sup>4</sup> Southerland, Dan. *Transitioning: Leading Your Church through Change*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Lencioni, Patrick. *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 82.

## BIBLICAL CHURCH PRIORITIES

Scripture is the starting place for a study of church priorities. As with the purpose of the church, no man or woman has the right to set the agenda concerning this matter. Jesus is the head of the Church and He alone has authority over His people (Colossians 1:18). If we want to experience Christ's power in our congregations, we must align ourselves with His priorities. The ingenuity and inventions of mankind are no substitute for the ways of the Lord. Fortunately for us, the Word of God sheds a lot of light on how churches ought to function. The book of Acts perhaps gives us the best synopsis of the Church's priorities in one passage:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

Students of Scripture and church leaders have often used the aforementioned passage as a guide to discovering the main priorities of the church. What I will share with you here is not novel. It did not originate with me. I'm simply relaying what God's Word has revealed. From the passage before us, we discover four priorities that ought to exist in every New Testament Church

### Fellowship

The early church was marked by a peculiar togetherness. Such a spirit carried on into the second century. When the early church leader Tertullian wrote a letter entitled "Apologeticus" in order to defend the Christian movement to the Romans, he extolled the kindred spirit that existed amongst God's people. He quoted his fellow Romans who often remarked on Christians by saying, "Look...how they love one another...and how they are ready to die for each other."<sup>6</sup> In all generations, God's people should be marked by a family-like love that makes the world stand in marvel. Jesus promoted such in John's gospel. He instructed the Twelve, saying, "I give you a new command: Love another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone one will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

An aura of unity is seen in the book of Acts through Luke's reference to "fellowship." The Greek word underlying English translations is one that spoke of the act of sharing. It could be translated "participation" or "association." It conjured imagery of

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<sup>6</sup> Tertullian, Apologeticus, Ch. 39, sect. 7.

“close relationship.”<sup>7</sup> Luke gave evidence of the intimate ties that existed amongst the early church by speaking of the way in which they shared possessions and ate together. The former act was necessary, given the destitute condition of many first-century believers. Given the fact that the standard of living was quite low, the meeting of physical needs was a platform for ministry (Acts 6:1). The church did not freely distribute charity to people outside of its fold (Acts 3:6), but it was conscientious to look out for the needs of its members. The demands of Christian love and fellowship required such.

Luke’s description in Acts 2:46 of the way in which the early church “broke bread from house to house” could refer to the church’s commitment to observing the Lord’s Supper, as outlined in Matthew 26:26-30 and 1 Corinthians 11:24-32.<sup>8</sup> However, many believe Luke intended to convey the church sharing common meals together.<sup>9</sup> In the ancient world, the act of eating with another person was reserved for only kin or the closest of friends. The fact that the early church ate together spoke volumes concerning the way in which they viewed one another. Because of the teachings of Jesus, they knew they had a family-like bond (Mark 3:33-35).

In the church, Christians have a spiritual family designed to provide strength and support throughout life. The author of Hebrews spoke of this in his letter to first-century Jewish Christians. He admonished his readers, saying, “And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25). The word translated “consider” is one that strictly meant “to place the mind down upon.” It conveyed the act of one being thoughtful about another.<sup>10</sup> The New Testament elsewhere commends a conscientious regard for the body of Christ (Philippians 2:3-4). When Christians are careful to follow the Lord’s teaching in this matter, “love” and “good works” will grow in their midst. As a result, God receives great glory, since it is His desire for His people to exhibit such virtues (Matthew 22:39 and Ephesians 2:10).

Because of the historical and biblical precedent for fellowship, local congregations should be intentional to make sure a family-like love is promoted amongst their people. Church leaders should make sure there is time for public worship and preaching, but they should also give strategic space to personal interaction. Instituting a small group ministry is a way of doing this. Believers need a platform for discussing God’s Word and receiving personalized encouragement. Leaders should also promote gatherings outside of the

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<sup>7</sup> Gingrich, Wilbur F. and Frederick W. Danker. *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 110.

<sup>8</sup> Earle, Ralph. *Beacon Bible Commentary: Volume VIII*. (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1965), 289.

<sup>9</sup> Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck. eds. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1983), 360.

<sup>10</sup> Rogers Jr., Cleon and Cleon Rogers III. *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 540.

larger assembling of the body for the sole purpose of interaction and “breaking bread.” It is a sign of health when believers meet extemporaneously for meals and other forms of fellowship.

In my ministry, I have sought to follow the Bible’s teaching on this topic. In my vision casting, I have identified “fellowship” as one the four priorities for the churches I have led. At times, words like “community” or “relationships” have been used as substitutes; however, the spirit of the priority has remained the same. To promote fellowship, I have encouraged meetings, gatherings, and personal interactions outside of large worship gatherings. I believe my emphasis on this matter rests on strong, Scriptural ground. Church leaders are under a mandate to encourage fellowship amongst their people.

## **Worship**

A second priority for the church is seen in Acts 2:42 through Luke’s mention of “prayer.” According to Jesus, prayer was to be central to the mission of the church. In confronting the greedy extortionist at the Temple, He quoted Isaiah 56:7, saying, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17). Though the concept of prayer is more thoroughly understood by examining a plethora of Scriptural terms (“thanksgiving,” “supplication,” “requests,” and “praise”), a basic meaning of prayer is “communion with God.”

Seeing prayer in this way sheds helpful light on Jesus’ remarks concerning the Temple. The place of worship should be a place in which people experience communion with God. Whereas the priority of fellowship is all about fulfilling the second part of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:39), worship is all about fulfilling the first part (Matthew 22:37). Local congregations should provide opportunities for believers to connect both with other believers and the Lord.

There are numerous New Testament teachings that highlight this priority. One is found in Colossians 3:16. Paul instructed the early church concerning the nature of their public gatherings, saying, “Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” Notice from Paul’s words that two acts ought to mark the assembling of God’s people — praise and preaching. Reference to the latter is seen through Paul’s catalog of popular forms of praise in his day (“psalms,” “hymns,” and “spiritual songs”). Reference to the former is seen through his mention of “the word of Christ” and “teaching and admonishing.”

One could go into great depth in defining and describing what’s involved in the preaching and praise of which Paul spoke. For the purposes of this study, it is important to place simple emphasis on this — local churches should be strategic about having a time for public worship that encourages communion with God through Word-centered preaching and praise. The Word and worship, Scripture and signing, should be at the heart of our worship gatherings. Churches should be on guard against diluting the Lord’s

intent for worship through an unhealthy emphasis on announcements, human-centered programming, entertainment-driven activities, and superfluous programming.

In the ministries I have led, I have labored to make worship a key priority. I have attempted to be conscientious that I don't deprive God's people, whether knowingly or unknowingly, of a weekly Colossians 3:16 type of gathering. In communications, I have tried to uphold the necessity of regular preaching and praise. At times, this has required tough decisions and difficult conversations, but I have had no regrets. I have a deep conviction that we all need regular communion with God through public worship. As church leaders, may we never forget that Jesus said, "But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him" (John 4:23).

### **Discipleship Training**

Luke's reference in Acts to "the apostles' teaching" in Acts 2:42 highlights a third priority for local congregations. The word translated "teaching" is one that referred to the act of instructing. Some translations have rendered it "doctrine." The idea behind the noun, however, involves much more than just the mere transmission of spiritual facts. One has commented on the way in which the word carries the idea of "tutoring."<sup>11</sup> It reveals that intentional training in the truth of Christ should be on the radar of all who lead. Jesus espoused such activity as being at the heart of the church's mission in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

In examining the New Testament, we can find multiple references to such activity in the midst of the early church. Paul gave his young preacher apprentice Timothy explicit instruction regarding this topic. In 2 Timothy 2:2, he said, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." From the Great Commission, we have previously learned that Christian discipleship should not be focused on mere information. It should have an aim of transformation, as evidenced by Jesus' mention of the importance of obedience in Matthew 28:19. Paul's words in 2 Timothy 2:2 highlight another important aspect of local-church disciple making. There is to be a focus on multiplication and replication in the way we train people. Take note of the way in which Paul encouraged a "pass it on" model of teaching.

Many modern congregations have lost sight of this biblical mandate. Teaching normally occurs in an academic fashion. A guru or expert is entrusted with communicating the oracles of God. While there is nothing wrong with God-called preachers fulfilling their Scriptural obligation to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:1-2), there is something wrong when churches are devoid of the one-on-one tutoring and mentoring the Lord requires. Church leaders should uphold discipleship training as a church priority. Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:42, and 2 Timothy 2:2 demand such a commitment.

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<sup>11</sup> Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), 451.

I'll be honest. I was negligent in this matter for the early part of my ministry. I believed it was my job to plan outreach events and host worship gatherings. It wasn't until about twelve years into my ministry that I was confronted by a retired missionary regarding my negligence to personally tutor and train people. Once I began to be obedient to God's Word, I realized there is power in what the Lord prescribes. Personal discipleship creates an atmosphere of encouragement, accountability, and edification that propels the church forward.

In my ministry, I now uphold discipleship training for the purposes of obedience and replication as a key priority of the church. I have created content and materials our members can use for these purposes. I have labored to teach faithful individuals how to teach other faithful individuals. In our church schedule, I have given space for 2 Timothy 2:2 type of ministry. A pass-it-on mentality has been encouraged and celebrated. Praise be to God, such an emphasis has generated wonderful spiritual fruit.

## **Outreach**

The final priority for the church is seen through Luke's reference to the growth the early church experienced. In Acts 4:47, he commented on the fact that "every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." Conversions imply evangelism, ministry, and outreach. In our study of the purpose of the church, we learned through the Great Commission that every believer is to have a commitment to "go" into their circle of influence and share Christ. Jesus emphasized this reality in Matthew 5:13-16. Commenting on this aspect of the church's ministry, William Temple once said, "The Church exists primarily for the sake of those who are still outside it."

The New Testament consistently upholds outreach as a priority for local congregations. Passages like Luke 15:3-7, Acts 6:7, 2 Corinthians 5:18, Colossians 4:5-6, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, and 1 Peter 3:15 make it clear that the Lord desires for His church to internally strive to make His name known to the lost. Ephesians 4:11-12 elaborates on this matter. It says, "And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry." Some mistakingly view ministers as hired hands who have are paid to bring people into the church. Paul's words reveal otherwise. He maintained that ministers exist to "equip the saints" to do that work.

The word translated "equip" was a medical word from the first century. It depicted the act of a doctor setting a bone. As used by Paul, it figuratively portrayed a dynamic activity by which individual believers were properly conditioned for the work of ministry and evangelism.<sup>12</sup> According the Scripture, ministers aren't the only ministers in a local church. Every member is to be a minister. The role of pastors and leaders is different in that they are the ones tasked with mobilizing and motivating the members for ministry.

Because of Scripture's teaching, I have made it my aim in ministry to have outreach as a priority in the ministries I have led. When making plans for a given ministry

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<sup>12</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 441.

year, I often ask myself, “What are we doing this year to intentionally share the gospel with people who don’t know Christ?” I regularly train people to share the gospel. I have often taught on spiritual gifts so that members can discover the ways in which they can serve. My preaching is filled with emphases on the topics of evangelism and outreach. I have tried to hold up an expectation that the church exists to share Christ with others and that the Lord desires every member to be a minister. Acts 2:47 and the entirety of the New Testament compel me to make these things a priority for the church.

### **TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING CHURCH PRIORITIES**

Once you’ve identified your priorities, it’s time to communicate them. Good leaders talk about the mission of the church incessantly. Great leaders talk about it in ways that inspire and mobilize people to action. Make it your aim to do the latter.

I’ll be honest, I can struggle in this regard. I think I have a clear understanding of what the church should do, but I’m not always the best at reminding those I lead. Over time, I’ve discovered that strategy and intentionality is needed in this area. Experience and some helpful mentors have sharpened my skills. I’ve got a long way to go, and I’ll always stand in need of improvement. However, I’ve learned a few simple commitments that help me communicate priorities more effectively.

**Use action-oriented words.** Your priorities should express and inspire action. For that reason, it is helpful to use verbs. Too many ministries are too vague in the way they express their mission and values. Be succinct and straightforward. Call people to action.

Instead of speaking about “a commitment to love and unity,” talk about “investing in Christian relationships.” Rather than saying, “God’s glory is the purpose of our existence,” say, “We exist to worship God.” Don’t be wishy washy about discipleship. Be direct, declaring something like, “We train people to be fully committed, discerning followers of Christ.” Go for precision in how you express your commitment to evangelism in missions. “Sharing the gospel with those who don’t know Christ,” would be a good way of making your fourth biblical priority clear and action oriented. Make your priorities easy to understand and word them in a way that makes it really clear what’s expected.

**Make them easy to remember.** I once served on staff at a church in which the pastor upheld the importance of remembering the church’s purpose and priority statement. He trained us to be ready to recite them at a moment’s notice. I remember crossing him in the hall way day and him quickly asking, “Patrick, tell me why we exist and what we do!” The lessons from his leadership have stuck with me. Leaders should make the purpose of the church memorable.

If you have to read your church priorities, they probably aren’t stated succinctly enough. If you can’t remember them, neither will your people. Brevity is helpful. It’s advisable that you don’t use more than five words. At times, a mnemonic device or a graphic can help. Alliteration may seem corny and overused within the church, but it can serve a great purpose when communicating church priorities. Get creative and seek advice. Talk to your team of leaders and brainstorm ways in which you can make your purpose and priorities stick.

In one of the ministries I led, I attempted to make our priorities more memorable by using an alliteration device. Each one started with the letter “g.” Instead of fellowship, we talked about “gathering.” Worship was “glorifying” and discipleship training was “growing.” Lastly, outreach was represented by “going.” To make things more easy to remember, we capitalized on a cultural cue. We used the newly introduced “4G” cellular network concept as a representation for our priorities. We regularly talked about the “4Gs” of the church’s mission. Cheesy? Maybe. But people remembered our priorities!

**Over Communicate.** Talk about your priorities every day. Make them a part of casual conversation. When you lead a committee or staff meeting, make sure mention is made of why you exist and what you do. Effective leaders know that what gets talked about is often what gets attention.

I remember when this concept revolutionized the way I made announcements on Sunday mornings. Formerly, I used to prepare for that part of the service by scanning the bulletin and highlighting what I thought was important to share. Then it hit me — announcement time can be a time for casting vision. I started scanning the bulletin for things that represented our church priorities. Instead of just sharing the details about new Bible study offerings, student camps, or ministry events, I started giving stump speeches for fellowship, worship, discipleship training, and outreach.

Over communication can become a wearisome task. Sometimes you might be afraid of redundancy. Don't worry. Repetition is the key to learning, and it is also the key to instilling a sense of mission and vision within a church. I was recently a part of a meeting in which a leader commented on the way in which I had repeated things I said from a previous meeting. I took his remarks as a compliment. We were both aware that repetition helps build organizational culture. Mark Rutland has said, “You cannot over-communicate your vision for your organization...communicate it until you are sick of hearing it come out of your own mouth... When you have communicated the vision to everybody you know, you’re just getting started.”<sup>13</sup>

**Use a purpose-to-priority transition statement.** If you don’t link purpose and priorities together, people may not see how they relate. Know this — though there are several concepts related to church strategy, purpose and priorities are the ones you will talk about the most. We will talk about things like processes and production later in this book, but an effective leader won’t talk about those things much when speaking to the church in general. He will make most mention of purpose and priorities. Since this is true, he must be able show the connection between the two. This subtle nuance of vision casting can make a big difference.

Let me give an example to make the technique clear. In one ministry, we identified our purpose by saying, “We are in the heart of our city with a heart for knowing Christ and making Him known.” Our priorities were communicated with the words “fellowship,” “worship,” “discipleship,” and “ministry.” In communicating our purpose and priorities, I naturally began to link the two together with a simple transitional phrase. I

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<sup>13</sup> Rutland, Mark. *Relaunch: How to Stage An Organizational Comeback*. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2013), 94.

discovered myself saying, “We exist to know Christ and make Him known, and we do this by fellowshiping together, worshiping God, discipling believers, and ministering to our community.”

The implementation of just a few words gave me a poignant and powerful way of regularly articulating the two most important parts of our church strategy. Do the extra work. It will pay off. Craft a statement that will wed both purpose and priorities together. Doing so will help you strengthen your vision casting capabilities.

### **EXAMPLES OF PRIORITY STATEMENTS**

If you are like me, you get great benefit from examples. I often swim for exercise. Though I’ve read books and articles for advice on my freestyle stroke, there is nothing as helpful as a coach who shows me what the stroke looks like. Visible examples can produce great benefit.

In this section, I will share a few examples of actual priority statements used by different congregations. I think you will see that each one contains a clear, Scriptural statement of priorities in a way that is both memorable and action oriented. If you would like more ideas, enlist the help of Google, or visit websites for ministries you respect. You can find a smattering of ideas beyond what I share here.

#### **Rick Warren and “Purpose-Driven Church”<sup>14</sup>**

- Magnify (Worship)
- Mission (Evangelism)
- Membership (Fellowship)
- Maturity (Discipleship)
- Ministry (Service)

#### **Darrell Robinson and “Total Church Life”<sup>15</sup>**

- Exalt the Savior
- Evangelize the Sinner
- Equip the Saint

#### **“4G Spiritual Connection”**

- Glorify
- Gather
- Grow
- Go

#### **“4 Chambers of the Spiritual Heart”**

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<sup>14</sup> Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church: Every Church is Big in God’s Eyes*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Robinson, Darrell W. *Total Church Life*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1985).

- Fellowship
- Worship
- Discipleship
- Ministry

### PRIORITIES AUDIT

- Gary Keller said, “Live with purpose and you know where you want to go. Live by priorities and you’ll know what to do to get there...” What is the difference between purpose and priorities? How does Keller’s statement emphasize that difference?
- We talked about how priorities give clarity to what we do. How do priorities provide such clarity?
- We talked about how priorities must remain “balanced.” What does this mean? In what ways have you seen some churches become unbalanced in their approach to priorities?
- Imagine you have been given the responsibility to craft the stated priorities for your church. Consider the biblical priorities we discussed. Also, remember the “priorities for church priorities” and the proposed “tips for communicating church priorities” we discussed. With these concepts in mind, write out the priorities for your church or ministry. Make sure you include an appropriate purpose-to-priority transition statement.

### MY MINISTRY STRATEGY (Use this table to articulate your ministry strategy)

Organizational Concepts (“7 Ps”)	Fill in the Blank
My Purpose:	
My Priorities:	1. 2. 3. 4.