

**Series:** Vision Month 2021

**Title:** Plan – How We Accomplish Our Purpose

**Text:** 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

**Date:** January 24, 2021

Each year my wife gets excited about an annual purchase. As any given year nears an end, she purchases a planner for the following year. She gets a giddy sort of excitement when she does. Her enthusiasm is due, in part, to the fact that the purchase signifies the coming of a new year. In another way, her excitement has something to do with her personality. Because she is a planner, she gets excited about the prospects of planning important events for a new year. My wife loves to plan!

In order to be faithful and effective in ministry, churches need to develop a similar love. That's the purpose of this chapter. The third component of our ministry system is represented by the word "plan." This is where the rubber meets the road in church ministry. Our end goal is to establish a ministry plan that will enable us to fulfill God's purposes. All of our talk about purpose, priorities, and passions are meaningless if we never put them into practice. This chapter is all about doing just that. It's about crafting a plan that helps us follow through on Christ's Great Commission.

In organizational theory, this aspect of organizational design is often called "strategy." Plain and simple, this is the part of leadership that maps out how an organization can fulfill its purpose. Planning sets forth the specific steps people must take in order to fulfill their mission. A plan gives action to priorities. It helps an organization achieve its destiny by outlining a scheme for behavior.

We know planning is important. Don't we? It seems all domains of life demand the activity. Planning is a necessity at home, in the office, with our children, for our health, in reference to our finances, and even amongst our hobbies! Our meals and our vacations wouldn't happen without forethought and follow through. We regularly plan to eat, sleep, and take care of life's most pressing matters. We couldn't live without the activity we call planning. Show me someone who never plans, and I'll show you someone who leads a chaotic life.

Benjamin Franklin has often been quoted as saying, "A failure to plan is a plan to fail." One could apply the pragmatic printer's axiom to organizations. It even has meaning for churches. Without this step, our entire ministry will breakdown. Achievements will only occur incidentally, or by accident, in churches that don't delineate a clear plan. For this reason, we want to be intentional in formulating a plan for ministry. In the material that follows, I will help us think through this issue by talking about six issues related to a church ministry plan.

### **PAUL THE PLANNER**

The Bible never explicitly speaks of planning on the part of the apostles. For this reason, some bristle at the the thought of forethought and strategy in church work. They assume that spiritual work must be extemporaneous and spontaneous. Flying by the seat of one's pants seems more spiritual. Though there may not be a lot of forthright

commands concerning the need to plan, there is a lot of precedent. When one studies the Bible's account of Paul's missionary efforts, it is obvious that Paul was a master planner. From his ministry, we discover five keys to effective ministry planning.

**Keep the Lord's commission in mind.** When Paul ministered, he did so with a laser focus on the Great Commission. It is not by accident that the book of Acts started a focus on the church's mission. Before His ascension into heaven, Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In reading about Paul's missionary activities in the book of Acts, we learn that He followed Jesus' commission with precision. In each town in which he ministered, he preached to the Jews first, visiting local synagogues to proclaim the gospel with Jews (Acts 9:20, 13:5, 13:14, 14:1, 17:1-2, 17:17, 18:4, and 19:8). Paul's example teaches us that the Great Commission should always be front and center in our ministry plan.

**Remove barriers to getting the gospel to people.** Paul was strategic. He was sensitive to things that would prevent others from listening to the gospel. On one occasion, he actually had Timothy circumcised to remove any hindrances to ministering to Jews (Acts 16:3). When speaking of his approach, Paul said, "To those who are without the law, like one without the law—though I am not without God's law but under the law of Christ—to win those without the law" (1 Corinthians 9:21). The apostle teaches us that we should be strategic and sensitive. We should be willing to let go of any tradition or personal preference that prevents others from hearing about Christ.

**Go to where people are.** Paul didn't sit around and wait for crowds to come to him. He didn't have a "come and see" approach. He operated by the "go and tell" mentality. When he wasn't invading local synagogues with his Christian doctrine, he preached in any place he could gain an audience. His methodology in Philippi reveals this to be true. He went there after having received a divine call to Macedonia (Acts 16:10). Though Philippi wasn't specified in the vision he received, he chose the city as a place for ministry, knowing that it was a hub for business activity (Acts 16:12). Once there, he didn't have an audience at a synagogue, since there was none in that city. Not to be deterred, he went to a riverside to find worshippers meeting according to Jewish custom (Acts 16:13). Paul's example teaches us to be strategic in finding people to hear the gospel.

**Speak to them in a way they will understand.** The gospel never changes, but our means of communicating it may. Different people may require different explanations and considerations. Paul knew this. That's why, when he went to Athens, his preaching looked a lot different than it did in other places. He made reference to their polytheistic religion, and he gave a defense of the faith in light of their allegiance to "an Unknown God" (Acts 17:23). Paul's ministry model teaches us that our ministry plan should take into consideration the culture and worldview of those to whom we minister.

**Don't give up on the mission.** Paul faced immense hardship in ministry. Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-29 to get a snapshot of the tough stuff he faced. Despite resistance, Paul persevered. In fact, the word "endurance" may be the single best adjective to describe his ministry. On one occasion, he admonished his preacher apprentice, saying,

“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:3). Paul teaches us that a solid ministry plan is built on the foundation of perseverance. If giving up is an option, it is doubtful we will see God do great things through us.

### **PRIORITIES FOR YOUR PLAN**

Before getting busy with the work of planning, it is important to consider some important matters. Some jump into this thing headlong with a lot of heat and energy. In time, they fizzle and fade. Friction and frustration bringing their fervor to a screeching halt. Many times, a lack of discernment concerning how to plan is the single point of failure. If you want to fashion a ministry plan that is lean and efficient, consider the following pieces of advice.

**Make your purpose your aim.** Remember, the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) are the big picture. Be careful you don't create another purpose, or a sub-purpose, when crafting your plan. It should involve succinct and straightforward action steps that help you accomplish your intended aim. Aubrey Malphurs has said, “A strategy is the process that determines how you will accomplish the mission of your ministry.”<sup>1</sup> When you look at your plan, if you can't clearly see how it will help you fulfill your purpose, you need to go back to the drawing board.

**Take action on your priorities.** I once ministered in a military town. I learned a lot through that experience. One lesson sticks with me. I learned it in a committee meeting one afternoon. After sitting through an hour of discussion and deliberation, it was time to dismiss. One retired officer, concluded the meeting, saying, “Okay, what is our for action?” I didn't know what he was talking about, so I asked him to clarify. He explained, “I never like to leave a meeting without being clear about what we intend to do. All of our discussion is useless, if we don't have a plan to act.”

This is the simplest way to think of your ministry plan. The goal is to turn your priorities into verbs. Based on a basic understanding of Acts 2:42-47, things like fellowship, worship, discipleship, and ministry should be at the heart of your priorities. Think of your plan as a way to actually do these things. How can you lead your people to engage in Christian community? What can you do to encourage genuine worship? What will be the steps you take to train people and multiply followers of Christ. What are the specific steps to be taken in order to reach out to your world with the gospel? Your plan is all about taking action on your priorities.

**Think about your passions.** They are the core values that make your church unique. All congregations will have the same purpose and priorities, but passions will vary from church to church. Passions are intended to inform how you go about fulfilling your purpose and priorities. They are like a special spice added into a popular recipe. Though almost everyone makes spaghetti, most everyone goes about it a different way. The same is true for ministry. Everyone exists to fulfill the Great Commandment and

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<sup>1</sup> Malphurs, Aubrey. *Ministry Nuts and Bolts: What They Don't Teach Pastors in Seminary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1997), 137.

Great Commission through the priorities outlined in the book of Acts; however, everyone will have a different set of core values that sets the tone for how they do those things.

Since this is true, Passion can give you insight into how you can minister in a way that is genuine and meaningful. For example, maybe you identified something like “touching poverty” as a core value for your local assembly. With that in mind, you would likely create ministry opportunities to disciple, worship, fellowship, and minister within the context of poverty-stricken areas.

Do you get the picture? Think about your passions when crafting your strategy. They will help you minister in a way that’s true to who you are. As a result, your ministry will ring with a spirit of authenticity and conviction that will make a difference.

**Maximize time and resources.** It may seem like an understatement to say we live in a busy world. The truth is many of the people in your community are living life at warp speed. We can spend our time cursing the culture, but that won’t help us reach it. If you want to engage your world, you are going to have to be creative in your use of time. You are going to have to be sensitive concerning schedules and calendars.

Time shouldn’t be the only concern for church leaders. Money matters should be on the radar as well. As of late, research has revealed that charitable contributions are on the decline in America. One study showed that the United States has recently slipped off of its pedestal as one of the most generous countries in the world. Whereas it previously ranked as the second most giving country, it is now in fifth place.<sup>2</sup> Such a change in American society requires wisdom on the part of church leaders. A good ministry will help one manage resources more effectively. When money is aligned with biblical priorities, sound stewardship will follow.

**Foster unity.** Jesus regarded unity as one of the most powerful evangelistic tools for the church (John 17:21). The problem with unity is that many Christians don’t recognize its source. I once heard about a congregation that bragged about its fellowship. The members felt they were the most unified church. It took an outsider to point out the reason for the church’s connectedness. All the members were related!

When we study Scripture, gospel ministry is the best path to oneness. When Paul wrote to the church at Philippi he spoke of their “partnership in the gospel from the first day” (Philippians 1:5). Notice that the gospel was the rallying point for unity between Paul and the church at Philippi. The word translated “partnership” is a Greek word that spoke of a mutual sharing.<sup>3</sup> It is the word commonly rendered “fellowship” in the New Testament (Acts 2:42; Galatians 2:9; and 1 John 1:7). An antonym for the term in the first century was one that conveyed ideas of “dislike” and “hatred.”<sup>4</sup>

How can churches deal with the fragmented thinking that often plagues their membership? A good ministry plan is the best remedy! When Christians get their eyes on ministering and serving, controversies calm. Problems and differences don’t seem so

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<sup>2</sup> <https://factsandtrends.net/2017/09/14/u-s-slips-world-giving-index/>

<sup>3</sup> Zodhiates, [CD-Rom].

<sup>4</sup> Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, [CD-Rom].

big when everyone is busy sharing the gospel. Build a plan for ministry and you can do a lot to build unity within your church!

**Seek ministry effectiveness.** At the end of the day, a plan is helpful because it enables a church to fulfill its mission. In their book *Simple Church*, Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger remark on the benefit of instilling a ministry plan into the various ministries of a local church, saying, “According to our research, integrating the same simple process into the entire culture of the church is wise. Integrating the same process in each ministry department makes a profound impact.”<sup>5</sup> A plan can move your church forward. What’s the alternative? No plan? That doesn’t sound helpful. If you want to be effective, get busy strategizing and scheming. Pray and seek the Spirit’s wisdom. Ask the Lord to give you insight into the methods and means you might use to take action on your priorities and fulfill your purpose. Your goal in ministry should be to be both faithful and effective.

### THE POWER OF A PLAN

Many churches are stagnate because they are victims of poor patterns of thinking. Though they have the best of intentions, and though they pay homage to the Great Commission with their lips, there is still a lot to be desired. Because they don’t have a solid plan for taking action on their biblical priorities, they stay stuck in the rut of ministry ineffectiveness. When one looks at such ministries, one may be tempted to wonder whether or not Jesus’ promise was true — “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18). Fortunately, nothing can stop the advance of Christ’s kingdom. When a local body stays focused on its purpose, the power of hell cannot stop it. A well executed plan can work wonders! Consider four organizational sicknesses a well-crafted church plan can conquer.

#### “The Way We Have Always Done It” Thinking.

I’ll never forget planning one of my first large-scale outreach ideas as a pastor. I had a vision! I could just see hundreds of people visiting our small congregation. Baptisms and professions of faith were sure to happen. A plan was in place. I had mapped out a way to get a few thousand invites to people in our community. One last piece of business stood in front of me — I needed to present my idea to our deacon body!

I can still remember the sound of the sarcastic laughter as one man shot down my idea. “Do you really think this would work? What would we do if a lot of people actually came to our church? Where would we put them?” He then uttered one of the most-worn out, antagonistic clichés in the history of American Christendom — “Pastor, we’ve never done anything like that before!” Somewhere along the way, someone has said that the famous refrain is often the last words of a dying congregation.

Purpose will help your church overcome such thinking. The truth is, no one can ever say “we’ve never done it that way” in reference to the Great Commission. Since the ascension of Christ, it has been the church’s mission. In addition, the priorities of

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<sup>5</sup> Rainer, Thom and Eric Geiger. *Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 179.

worship, fellowship, discipleship, and ministry are timeless. Lead your church to see that such things are set in Scripture and work hard to develop a plan. Sure, methodologies may change with culture and context. However, if you help your congregation see that you have a plan rooted in Scripture, the bondage of traditionalism will wane.

### **Departmental Thinking**

Some congregations are ineffective in ministry because they are too departmental. Because there is no compelling vision, affinity groups form. The end result is a hodgepodge of special interest groups, cliques, and ministry silos. Fragmentation makes ministry faithfulness impossible. Music ministry competes with mission ministry, senior adults clash with students, the pastor stays at odds with the deacons, and little gains are made for the kingdom.

A strategic plan can help demolish departmental thinking. Through good leadership, members can start seeing themselves as being more than cogs in a wheel. They can regard themselves as having a pivotal part in a grand plan. When the body understands that it is a body functioning underneath the head of Christ (Colossians 1:18), beautiful things can happen. Worship ministries can view themselves as helping fulfill a main church priority. Age-related ministries can regard themselves as a place for people to engage in biblical fellowship. Missions and outreach ministries can start to see themselves as one part in a big picture of ministry.

### **Non-Mission-Essential Thinking**

When I was in seminary, I had a classmate who faced an unthinkable dilemma in his church. He was attempting to reform the way in which his congregation celebrated Christmas. One would think that putting the focus on Jesus was a no brainer for such an occasion. Not at my friend's church. They had a tradition of removing the pulpit on Christmas Sunday. In its place they erected a throne for Santa Claus. At the beginning of the service, a deacon would make a grand announcement, the doors to the worship center would swing open, and Santa would parade down the center aisle to the applause of the congregation!

I mention an extreme example, but it proves a point. Many churches are anemic because they are plagued by non-mission-essential thinking. They are distracted from what matters most. Some are given over to a club-like mentality. Many spin their wheels, always looking to culture for clues for why they exist and jumping from one pet cause to another. Others become an end unto themselves. They exist for no other reason than themselves.

A good plan can cure such ailments. It can give clarity concerning purpose and priorities. It can reorient people with Christ's desires and clear the clouds of myopic thinking.

### **Going-through-The-Motions Thinking**

Most churches are victims of a treadmill approach to ministry. They are merely running in place. Busy in a flurry of activity, they are deceived into thinking they are making

progress, but they really aren't going anywhere. Each week, staff and volunteers work hard to sustain self-perpetuating ministries. A plan can break the cycle of such ineffectiveness. It can give vision for new initiatives, growth, and expansion.

### IMPORTANT REMINDERS

In my attempts to install plans in different local churches, I've discovered there are some pitfalls to avoid. Some struggle, because they fall victim to one of two traps. Both will lead to either paralyzing fear or frustration. Be on guard. Consider these two warnings.

**Your plan doesn't have to be perfect.** Some never take action because they think they've got to get everything perfect first. They are afraid of failure, so they over plan. They promise they'll get started once they get it all figured out. However, they never get going. They stay in a holding pattern.

Know this – there is no perfect ministry plan. Even the best of ministry ventures are stained by our sin and imperfection. If you wait until you get all the kinks worked out, you'll never get to work. You'll never move forward, and it is unlikely you will make a difference.

Ministry can't wait. Time is of the essence. Souls need to hear the good news. Christ has called us to action. We must act! who knows what ground can be lost while we wait for the perfect strategy.

I like the advice of General Patton. He once said, "A good plan violently executed today is better than a perfect plan executed next week." Sure, there is a place for deliberation, consideration, and forethought, but we must not forsake our obligation to the Great Commission out of a belief we will one day concoct a perfect plan. Now is the time for forward advance. Paul encouraged the Romans, saying, "The night is nearly over, and the day is near; so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:12).

From personal experience, I know what it is like to fall into this trap. I am a perfectionist by nature. At times, I have read books on ministry strategy, gained great ideas, and been inspired to action. Afterwards, I have strategized and schemed without getting to work. Remember, action is the key to advancing.

Patrick Lencioni once said, "A plan is better than no plan."<sup>6</sup> Craft a plan, no matter how archaic and elementary it may be. Get to work and watch God bless! You can perfect your plan and make it more sophisticated later, but don't delay on the first steps. From my experience, I've discovered that the incubation period for creating a plan shouldn't be much longer than three to six months.

**It should change when change is needed.** Some leaders make the mistake of thinking their work is done once they establish their plan. They fail to understand that revision is required. Church plans are like the operating system on your smart phone – they need updating from time to time.

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<sup>6</sup> Lencioni, Patrick. *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 79.

I once visited a pastor friend who lead a thriving church in Houston, Texas. I met the staff and a number of volunteers. My goal was to learn some things I could apply to my ministry. One take-away stuck with me. My friend talked a lot about how his church had embraced what he called a “rhythm of renovation.” They constantly looked for ways to improve. They were attentive to cues that indicated ministry plans needed to change. Reinvention, revitalization, and renewal were a regular part of their strategy.

In our ever-changing world, such a mindset is a non-negotiable. However, it is worth noting that such an approach marked Paul’s ministry. Read the book of Acts and you’ll discover he had an adaptive approach to ministry. He was flexible. He was willing to change his approach in a moment’s notice. Consider how he ministered in Corinth. His well-used strategy was to first preach in the synagogues of the towns in which he ministered. When in Corinth, he ran into a brick wall. He faced stiff resistance from the Jews, but he wasn’t detoured. He morphed his approach so that he might minister more effectively. Luke records, “When they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his clothes and told them, ‘Your blood is on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles’” (Acts 18:6).

We may not face persecution from those to whom we minister, but our efforts will fall flat at times. New ventures will fall on deaf ears. Previous patterns will become stale. Times will change and new approaches will be needed. Our purpose and priorities will never change, but our plan can. When needed, be willing to make course corrections. Regularly evaluate what you are doing and embrace the “rhythm of renovation.”

### **EXAMPLES OF CHURCH PLANS - WAYS FOR TAKING ACTION ON PRIORITIES**

A good plan takes action on priorities. That’s the entire point— to formulate a way of actually doing what the Lord has called you to do. Different churches take action on them in different ways. It is up for you to consider what will work for you. As you pray and seek the Lord’s leadership, it may help to consider approaches commonly used. Below I will examine five ways many congregations seek to fulfill their priorities. Think about what method may work best for your local church.

#### **Sunday Morning Focused**

The most basic, squareOne way for fulfilling the church’s mission is to use the Sunday morning gathering as the end all be all. I call this an attraction model. I confess that this was the approach I used when I first started in ministry. I imagined if I created a great Sunday morning environment, I would be able to build a strong church.

Many congregations function similarly. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, they regard Sunday morning as a platform for all aspects of the church’s ministry – worship, fellowship, discipleship, and outreach. They never strategically promote small groups or other ministries as an avenue of fulfilling the mission of the church.

Some think of themselves as being creative and cutting edge, assuming they have a unique strategy because they introduce changes to worship styles. They often promote themselves as being ones who think outside the box. They assume that tweaks to worship methods makes them state of the art. Ironically, such churches often don’t have



a ministry plan that is any different than their traditional counterparts. Their plan is to simply use the Sunday morning gathering for worship, fellowship, discipleship, and outreach. Though they may have a different facade, their plan is no different.

### **Event Focused**

The next level beyond the Sunday morning model involves using periodic events to fulfill the mission of the church. Weekly worship is still important, but leaders in such churches realize they need other opportunities. Consequently, they plan large events for outreach – egg hunts, fall festivals, wild game suppers, and the like. Special evenings for worship, and training events for discipleship, fill the calendar from time to time.

Such churches normally have a calendar that would make even the most committed church member's head spin. I was a professional at this type of ministry in my first church. I can still recall the day in which I overheard some of our best people murmur about how busy our church was. Sensing we had a problem, I began to reevaluate how I might do ministry better.

### **Meeting Time Focused**

Wearied by exhaustion of event after event, some vie for the Simple Church model.<sup>7</sup> The four typical weekly gatherings are each dedicated to one of the church's purposes. Small group hour is utilized for fellowship, and the Sunday morning gathering is used for worship. Discipleship might take place on Sunday night, and outreach may occur during the midweek gathering. This model can be quite effective. However, it can lack, if leaders aren't vigilant concerning leadership development and discipleship multiplication.

### **Small Group Focused**

Moving beyond aforementioned paradigms, many see the need to utilize small groups for ministry. Sunday school, Life Groups, D-Groups, cell groups, Bible studies, or whatever you call them, are used for fulfilling the mission of the church. Normally, leaders are appointed for the various church priorities. An outreach leader leads the group to share the gospel. Discipleship is handled by the teacher. Fellowship is coordinated by an in-reach leader. The Sunday morning worship service is regarded as the place for worship. It is also often seen as a sort of spiritual pep rally that encourages small groups to stay committed to the work of the church. This model has been used mightily to build strong churches; however, as with the meeting time model, it requires vigilance concerning leadership development and discipleship multiplication.

## **MY PLAN CHURCH PLAN**

Ultimately, you have to craft your own plan. Read, study, pray, and learn from others. Seek guidance from the Holy Spirit. Enjoy the process of the Lord leading you to develop a plan that is peculiar for your place and your people. I share the highlights of my plan

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<sup>7</sup> Rainer, Thom S. and Eric Geiger. *Simple Church*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing, 2011).

here simply to give you an example. You can take it or leave it. Maybe you can glean some ideas, or perhaps it can serve as a template for your church. Whatever the case, let me share three factors that drive my plan for ministry.

### **Use Meeting Time for Priorities**

I like to follow the Simple Church plan of using the four customary weekly church meeting times for the four priorities of my church. I realize I minister in more of a traditional church within the Bible belt. Such a plan may not work for everyone. However, I found that it has been beneficial for the contexts in which I minister.

The benefit of this plan is that it guarantees a church will take action on its priorities each week. On Sunday mornings, I have used small groups for fellowship and the Sunday worship gathering for the priority of worship. Sunday evenings have been reserved for discipleship. Midweek gatherings have been all about outreach.

It is sad that some churches meet several times a week without giving attention to all four priorities. In such congregations, every meeting is typically dedicated to the same thing – worship. If one wants to engage in discipleship, fellowship, or outreach, they have to sign up for another church activity. On top of Sundays and Wednesdays, they are required to gather at another time during the week.

Interestingly, Charles Spurgeon’s Metropolitan Tabernacle seems to have used an approach similar to the one I advocate here. He may not have led his congregation to do exactly what I have done, but it is clear he used Sunday evenings to fulfill purposes other than worship. In a sermon entitled “Good Works in Good Company” that he preached in 1864, he said the following to his congregation:

You have other service to do, dear friends. This afternoon many of you will be occupied with your Sunday-school classes. There will be a knot of lads or girls around you. You will, perhaps, be conducting classes of hundreds of young men and young women. This evening, again, many will be occupied in preaching, or you will be engaged at home with your own children. Oh! how blessed it is to go to the classes, or into the pulpit, having the Master with you!<sup>8</sup>

It seems the Metropolitan Tabernacle used their Sunday evening meeting time strategically for the purpose of ministering in London. Perhaps you could do something similar within your context. Dedicating your regular meeting times to the different priorities outlined in Acts 2:42-47 is a great plan for fulfilling Christ’s mission.

### **Use Small Groups to Empower People**

In addition to aligning meeting times with ministry priorities, I have found there is great benefit in using small groups as a clearing house for engaging laity in the ministry of the church. This tactic takes a play from the small group driven church. Sunday School

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<sup>8</sup> Spurgeon, Charles. *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Volume X*. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1976), 713.

classes and Life Groups can be the most effective place for connecting people with the discipleship and ministry opportunities available during the week.

Instead of simply existing for Bible study, small groups should exist to connect people with Christian community and fellowship. But they can do much more. They can be leveraged for involving people in the total ministry plan. Instead of just being regarded as “teachers,” those who stand in front of a group should be seen as “leaders.” It should be their responsibility to plug their people into discipleship and outreach opportunities.

In some churches, I have seen the small group gathering as the place in which discipleship training groups are actually launched. Though there may be a scheduled time for discipleship amongst church members during the week, discipleship groups are birthed through the small groups. When they multiply disciples, those disciples are then funneled back into the Life Group. This, in turn, builds the small group ministry.

Small groups can also be a place to build outreach ministries. Though the church may use a weekly meeting time, small groups can stock that time with outreach initiatives. Each class can be commissioned with launching and developing a ministry. Seen in this way, the small group ministry is the farm system for the entire ministry of the church. Church leaders can use it to equip and empower the laity for Christ’s mission (Ephesians 4:11-12).

### **Strategically Multiply Leaders and Disciples**

Though the first two components of my plan can lead a church to ministry effectiveness, something else is still required. If there is not a focus on discipleship multiplication, ministry will sputter and stall at some point. There are many approaches one can take to accomplish this task. It is beyond the scope of this work to examine the various alternatives. I will simply testify to the fact that a strategy for multiplying both leaders and disciples is indispensable to healthy church life. I have used a discipleship group strategy that focuses on discipleship accountability and multiplication. Without such a component in my strategy, the best ministry effort would have grown stale and weak over time.

### **PLAN AUDIT**

- Benjamin Franklin has famously said, “A failure to plan is a plan to fail.” In what ways to churches sometimes fail to have a plan that executes on purpose and priorities? How have you seen this breakdown occur in the past? In your opinion, what are some of the reasons for failure in this area?
- We said “a good plan will foster unity.” How does this work? Why does a plan seem to build focus and oneness in an organization?
- We talked about four common plans churches use to take action on their priorities. Sunday mornings, events, meeting times, and small groups are often used as platforms for fulfilling both purpose and priorities. Which approach do you think would work best for our church? Would a hybrid approach work?

- After determining how one of the aforementioned platforms, or a hybrid of the aforementioned platforms (Sunday mornings, events, meeting times, and small groups) can be used to fulfill a church’s purpose and priorities, craft a succinct statement that communicates a ministry plan for your church?

**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.
My Passions:	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
My Plan:	