

Our Churches Are Not Formed for Evangelizing

Posted by Bob Young

We have missed it. We have focused too much on function. We have focused on results. We thought we could succeed by setting up another program, hiring another person, trying a new idea to make it work.

Effective function depends on having appropriate forms.

A tool is designed or formed in a certain way so that it will be effective in doing the job it was designed for. The design process begins with the task, what is to be accomplished. Then form follows function. Function dictates form. Form is determined by what is to be accomplished. A tool takes a certain shape because its purpose influences its form.

Have you ever tried to do something with the wrong tool? Such may be humorous; more often it is frustrating. There is a reason we do not eat cereal with a shovel or dig trenches with a spoon.

Then, form dictates effectiveness. Having the wrong design will result in frustration. The job will not get done.

God has defined the function or purpose of the church, to bring all under the Lordship of Jesus. The church cannot escape its calling to share the Good News of Jesus to fulfill God's eternal, spiritual, saving purpose. So that the church can accomplish its divine purpose, God has defined the form of the church.

A primary function or purpose of the church is evangelism. Therefore, the church must be formed correctly to reach the unchurched, to reach the unreached. The tools the church uses for evangelism and mission must be shaped biblically, according to God's instruction.

Consider the tools customarily used.

We invite unbelieving people to large group gatherings that are primarily designed for believers.

- Be honest. Large group gatherings are not personal. They are relational only to the extent that people engage.
- In large group gatherings, many things are done without explanation, insider stories are shared, much that occurs is for "us" with little thought given to the impact on visitors.
- Not many people respond to the gospel in large group gatherings. Those that do respond are usually from among "us" (from our families), or they have received Bible teaching in advance.
- Many people are not open to going to a church facility with a large group.

We hire personnel or begin programs. We organize. We make the work official and lose the personal touch.

- In hiring, we are imprecise. Rather than hiring an evangelist or minister of evangelism, we soften the expectation. Evangelism is not expected. Evangelism is not the goal. Room does not allow a list of the imprecise job descriptions I have heard through the years.
- We hire staff but do not expect them to model evangelism. One of the easiest ways to avoid being responsible for evangelism or disciple-making is to have a job assignment that takes time away from God's primary purpose for the church.

Consider the tools that are not used, or underused.

People want relational connections, not only with one believer, but with several believers—a place where they can ask questions, interact casually, see what it means that those present are trying to put Christ at the center of their lives. To become more open to the gospel, people need to see believers in genuine relationships.

People are more open to an invitation to a friend's house.

Offsite activities and gatherings help the church go to the lost rather than insisting that the lost come to the church building.

Relational connections can more quickly and adequately respond to needs and opportunities.

Jesus shows us that seeking the lost is most often a one-on-one activity.