

A NEW DAY

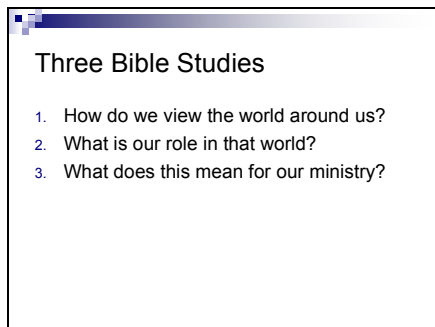
Three Bible Study/ Discussions on our mission in the post-churched context

Part 3: Our Future Ministry LEADER'S NOTES

Slide 1



Slide 2



There are three parts to this Bible Study

The first study focused on “The world around us”.

The second study looked at our role in the world around us

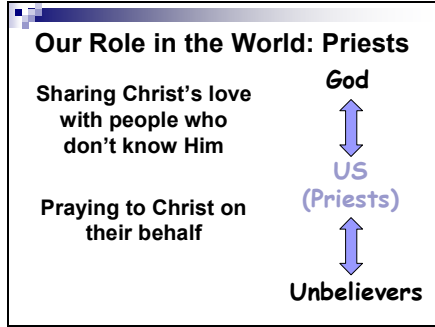
Today we ask “What does this mean for our future ministry”

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In our first study we discussed how the context for our ministry has changed. We are no longer in a churched society context, but rather are in a post-churched society context. We talked about how this has important and dramatic implications for how shape the ministry to which God has called us.

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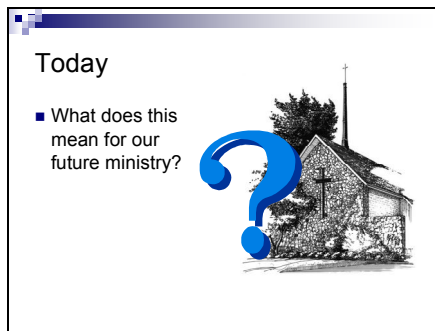


In the second study, we looked at our role in this post-churched society

We are called as priests, “standing between” God and the unbelievers

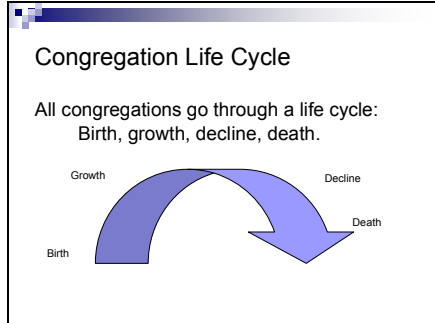
We are called to share Christ's love with people who don't know him and to pray to Christ on their behalf

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Today we ask, “What does this mean for *our* future ministry?” What will our future be?

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Here is one way to look at it:

All congregations go through a life cycle; birth, growth, decline, and ultimately death. Most churches have come and gone by the age of 70.

But which side of the life cycle are we on?

Have you seen this in churches with which you are familiar?


Churches that have been around for awhile have most likely experienced “re-birth” along the way, heading off decline by initiating a new cycle

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Where are we?

What side of the life cycle we find ourselves depends on where we seat these four passengers in our "car."

- Vision
- Relationships
- Structure
- Programs



Which side of the life cycle are we on?

The four passengers are:

- **Vision:** Where is this ministry going? Are our eyes on the mission? How will our community be blessed through us?
- **Relationships:** With God, with one another, with the unbelievers in our lives
- **Structure:** Organization, rules, by-laws, authority, permission, turf, buildings, job descriptions, etc.
- **Programs:** Ongoing ministries such as Sunday School, confirmation, etc., which can have a life and permanence of their own regardless of mission and vision

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What it means:

- Dying churches:
 - Structure in the drivers seat
 - Programs in the navigation seat
 - Relationships and vision in the back seat.
- *Why do you think this happens in congregations?*

So before we figure out where the four passengers are in *our* car, lets look at a couple of different situations.

- In dying churches, **structure** is in the driver's seat. It is all about how the church is organized, who has authority, and who is in what position. **Programs** are in the navigating seat, focusing on keeping the current ministries going. **Relationship** and **Vision** sit in the back seat, not having much effect on the direction the "car" is going.

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What it means:

- Vibrant churches:
 - Relationships in the drivers seat
 - Vision as navigator
 - Structure and Programs in the back seat
- Relationships
 - The Great Commandment: Matthew 22:34-40
- Vision
 - The Great Commission: Matthew 28:18-20

In vibrant churches,

- **Relationship** is in the driver's seat. In this church, it is all about relationships; relationship with God, with each other, and with those outside the church. God's desire to restore the relationship between the world and himself through Jesus Christ is the main focus.
 - **Vision** is the navigator. God's mission gives us direction, as we seek to live out that mission in our community.
 - **Programs** and **Structure** take a backseat; they are there only to support the **Relationships** and the **Vision**.
 -
- How would you describe your congregation? Which car?

Look up the Bible passages and discuss

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Where are we?

- *Where do you think your congregation is in the life cycle? Why?*
- *Where are the "passengers" in your congregation's car? Why do you think they are "sitting" where they are?*
- *Read Revelation 2:1-7. Where are the "passengers" in the Ephesian car?*

Lead a discussion of these questions

Slide 11

What is the Mission?

Scripture	Directed to Whom	What	Ministry to Whom	How	Where
Mat 28:19-20	Disciples	Go, make disciples	All nations	Baptizing and teaching	—
Mark 16:15	Disciples	Go, preach the good news	All creation	—	All the world
Luke 24:46-48	Disciples	Be witnesses	All nations	Preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins	Beginning in Jerusalem
Acts 1:8	Disciples	Be my witnesses	—	With power	Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

from Advanced Strategic Planning, Aubrey Malphurs © 2005, p.127

Review what our mission is all about.

Ask the question: “What are we supposed to be doing?”

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What is the Mission?

- *What are we supposed to be doing?*
- *Are we doing it?*
- *Why or why not?*
- *What will it take to get us to do what we are supposed to do?*

Lead discussion of these questions

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Why do we do what we do?

- *Make a list of all of the ministries and activities of your congregation.*
- *Circle the ones that are intentionally designed to reach out to the unchurched in your community.*
- *What does this say about our congregation and its mission?*

A whiteboard would be very helpful for this exercise so that the group can brainstorm the congregations ministries and activities. Allow it and encourage it to be as inclusive as possible.

After the list is complete invite them to circle those that are intentionally designed to reach out the unchurched, especially in a relational way. We’re not talking about ministries designed for members that we merely allow or invite nonmembers to, but rather those that take us into the community or intentionally invite the community to experience something designed for their needs.

The point of this exercise is to encourage discussion regarding whether we are as missional as we might think we are.

Asking the Right Question

As we think about our future, which question should we be asking?

- How do we build our church?
- How do we change our community?

We have a choice between two questions to ask ourselves as we look to future ministries of our congregation. Which question should we be asking ourselves?

- **One is: How do we build our church?**
- **The other is: How do we change our community?**

The first question is a church culture question. It assumes that our task is about ourselves. We can just focus on ourselves and the un-churched will come. But as we have discussed, this is no longer true. If this is the only questions we're looking at, it is the wrong question.

The second question is a post-church question. It assumes that our task is to reach the world and the community with the gospel. This is, after all, the mission of the church. The church wasn't meant to be an elite club that we are merely trying to keep open, catering only to our members. The mission is to set the world ablaze for Christ. And we must start right here in our own community.

How do we change our community? We seek to find the real needs of those around us, and then meet those needs. We love them, unselfishly, with the goal that they may see Christ through us and in us.

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Another way to put it:

- Are we here for ourselves?
- Or are we here for those who aren't here yet?
- Both?
 - Who gets priority?
 - What are we called to do as priests?

Another way to look at this is asking:

- **Are we here for ourselves?**
- **Is our ministry about meeting the needs of members?**

**Are we only looking inward?
Or, are we here for those who aren't here yet? Is our ministry about reaching the community?
Are we looking outward?**

If we claim that we are here for both, we next have to answer the question regarding who gets priority? We will become missional congregations when we intentionally give the unchurched priority while still ministering to our members.

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Reaching Out

Brainstorm another list, a list of things that your congregation and its members could do to intentionally reach out to the unchurched in your community. Think about:

- *1st article (creation) needs of people in your community that your congregation can address*
- *Answering questions that they are asking*
- *Building relationships*
- *Building bridges*
- *Building on your strengths*

Another white board activity. Spend some time discussing what we mean by intentional outreach into the community, keeping in mind the post-churched context. The unchurched are not culturally attracted to conventional Christian ministry the way they might have been a couple generations ago. The church is called to go to them, to answer questions they are asking and to seek to meet real needs in their lives. In so doing we build relationships and gain a hearing for the most important need and the opportunity to answer the most important question with the good news of Jesus Christ.

If time permits, you can work on selecting a small number of these to act on. Encourage those in the group to take ownership and leadership.

The point here is not just to do something missional, but to model it for the rest of the congregation.

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Summary

- We live on a post-churched mission field
- We are called as priests to the unbelievers in our lives and in our community.
 - Sharing the love of God with them
 - Bringing their needs to the Lord in prayer
- We are here not just for ourselves, but primarily for those who are not here yet.

Close with prayer