



## **Christ Community Church Philosophy on Target Ministries<sup>1</sup>**

Every time a church creates a target ministry the leadership needs to ask what view of the church & what kind of culture is being created or reinforced at that church. Men like Carl F.H. Henry and Billy Graham (a scholar and evangelist respectively) were key leaders at the beginning of neo-evangelicalisms birth. More recently however, corporations, businesses and mega-churches like Word, Lifeway resources and Willow Creek have led much of modern evangelicalism (since the 1960s). These companies and organizations were founded to respond to the amazing growth of evangelicalism by producing resources, curricula, programs and packaged materials to help accommodate that growth, help other churches and organizations meet the needs of its people and capitalize on successes in other churches, regions, denominations, etc.

The combination of evangelicalisms growth, American capitalist efficiency and the mega-church surge beginning in the late 70s has led to a ‘success’ with unintended consequences. One of the biggest of these consequences has been the dramatic transformation that the average Christian conceives of the Christian life. This change was not inherently wrong or deliberately malevolent in any sense yet the impact has been significant.

The biggest change is that most evangelicals approach the Christian life in terms of programs or events rather than relationships and lifestyle.

---

<sup>1</sup> A target ministry is any particular event; program, course or involvement opportunity intended to ‘target’ a particular demographic within or without the church.



For example, today, when the average Christian thinks about evangelism or learning evangelism they think about a program or course like EE, Alpha groups or Ray Comforts *Way of the Master*. Then, once trained, the individual moves into evangelistic events like OJT, street witnessing, or other one-time events (i.e., Harvest crusade). This is a very different view of evangelism than has been historically understood; which consisted of sharing the gospel within the context of the current relationships that fill individuals lives at that moment. In other words it was an organic way of looking around ones life for those people who don't know Christ, and then conforming ones lifestyle in a way that puts the gospel front and center in all of ones interactions. For example, going to the same Starbucks regularly to get to know the baristas who work there or going to the same Subway to build a relationship with the person behind the counter, or going to the gym at the same time to build relationships with the people who are there—seeing all these natural relationships as the field “ripe unto harvest” that you would evangelize in word and deed.

The concept of discipleship is another example that has changed dramatically. Often the first instinct of someone who wishes to be discipled is to find a Bible study or a men's or women's group, a popular curriculum or seminar rather than thinking more relationally and asking “who in my church has a mature walk I admire and want to imitate their faith as my own?” and then arranges the affairs of their life to overlap the life of their discipler. An example of this strange disconnect is the shocking reality of how many young couples will pay for marriage therapy when they are surrounded every week by Christ-like, gospel-centered marriages that could help them if they would only



ask.

A final example would be the cause of social justice that is of big concern to most young evangelicals. Most individuals will think of getting involved in a local food bank or clothing ministry (events) rather than asking whom in their life can they help receive social justice? Who do they know, or can they know that they can help navigate the bureaucracy of social welfare systems (food stamps, child welfare support etc.)?

These examples offer enough evidence that today's believers have a fundamentally different way of looking at the Christian life than Christians have done historically. To be clear, it's not that Bible studies, information and events are not important because they do have their place. However, when the leading edge of how people conceive of the Christian life is through programs and *moments of ministry* that one steps into *rather than an outflow of ones lifestyle and relationships* that God has naturally placed around them, that reveals the church no longer conceive of the Christian life primarily in the way that the New Testament does.<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, because any program or event is a large investment of human, financial and capital resources every church needs to make sure that that investment is

---

<sup>2</sup>Another example might be the recent trend for churches to host Halloween parties on their campus rather than encourage everyone to sit on their driveways, get to know the kids in their neighborhood and hand out tracks, or other relationship building ideas. One very relevant example to our own church is the surprising reliance of our "Moving Ministry" for people who are already embedded in community groups. Again, to be clear, a moving ministry is a great outreach and way to care for people on the fringes of the church and community but it is surprising that instead of relying on relationships one already has in a community group- relationships intended to encourage, bless and serve one another no less, why the need for another group of people i.e., the moving ministry, is necessary? The same could be said about a meals ministry, benevolent care, etc., etc. Imagine how nimble, responsive and outward focused a church could be that did not require the logistic, administrative support and infrastructure to accommodate all these various programs simply because individuals (who are already in community groups) cared for each other in such practical ways?



not furthering a programs and events mentality but will serve to highlight a relational and lifestyle approach to the Christian life. These church sponsored choices should act as the infrastructure that supports and reinforces its goals of developing relationships and lifestyles *not* programs and events.

Target ministries provide strengths to be celebrated and concerns to carefully weigh in order to ensure the new ministry reinforces and promotes the right kind of culture in any given church.

*Strengths:*

1. Target ministries provide a great “on-boarding” process for individuals to reach the maturity ideal of Matt. 22:35-40
2. Target ministries provide more opportunities for individuals (particularly new comers) to connect and find belonging.
3. Target ministries meet a specific “targeted” need within the church community or community at large.

*Concerns:*

1. Target ministries can unwittingly create a ‘known everywhere but known nowhere’ situation.
2. Target ministries can create a ‘para-church’ ministry mindset within the church:
  - a. The participants self-identity is not as a part of the body of Christ as much as it is a member of that particular demographic or ‘targeted group’
  - b. These events and activities happen to align with their personal preferences or enjoyments & therefore they can confuse their genuine enjoyment of these as growing in sanctification without having to sacrificially give of themselves for the sake of others
3. Target ministries can place unhelpful demands on people’s time