

4 Balancing Acts for Church Health

Church health is the result of balance.

Balance occurs when a church has a strategy and a structure to fulfill the five New Testament purposes for the church: worship, evangelism, fellowship, discipleship, and ministry.

If you don't have a strategy and a structure that intentionally balances the purposes, the church tends to overemphasize the purpose you as a pastor feel most passionate about.

We tend to go to seed on one truth at a time. You attend one seminar and hear that the key to growth is *small groups*. At another, it's *volunteer recruitment*, or *dynamic worship*, or *creative outreach*, or *strong preaching*.

The fact is, they're all important.

When a church emphasizes any one purpose to the neglect of others, that produces imbalance — it's unhealthy. And being unhealthy stunts a lot of churches.

To keep things balanced, four things must happen. You've got to:

- **move people into membership**
- **build them up to maturity**
- **train them for ministry**
- **send them out on their mission.**

And you need a **clear discipleship process** to be able to gauge whether you're doing these things effectively or not. Just as our vital signs tell us whether our physical bodies are in good health or not, the health of a church is quantifiable. For example, I can measure how many more people are involved in ministry this month than last month.

How you accomplish those four objectives doesn't matter. As long as you are bringing people to Christ, into the fellowship of his family, building them up to maturity, training them for ministry, and sending them out in mission, I like the way you are doing ministry.

Health does not mean perfection. When a church focuses on evangelism, it brings in a lot of unhealthy people. My kids are healthy, but they're not perfect. There will never be a perfect church this side of heaven because every church is filled with pagans, carnal Christians, and immature believers — along with the mature ones.

I've read books that emphasize, "You've got to reinforce the purity of the church." But Jesus said, "Let the tares and the wheat grow together, and one day I'll sort them out" (paraphrase of Matthew 13:29-30).

We're not in the sorting business. We're in the harvesting business. We do get a lot of

unhealthy people at church because society is getting sicker. But Jesus demonstrated that ministering to hurting people was more important than maintaining purity. When you fish with a big net, you catch all kinds of fish.

That's why one of the biggest programs in our church is [Celebrate Recovery](#). We have thousands of people involved in recovery with all kinds of addictions.

One of the most important decisions we made was to not have a counseling center. If we put a full-time therapist on our staff, that person's schedule would fill up instantly, and 99 percent of the calls would still go unmet. We couldn't keep up even if we had five full-time therapists. Instead, we've trained lay-people to do biblical counseling and compiled a standard list of approved therapists we can refer to if need be.

In conclusion, a far better focal point than church growth is church health. Size is not the issue. You can be big and healthy or big and flabby. You can be small and healthy or small and wimpy. Big isn't better. Small isn't better. **Healthy** is better. So I encourage you to focus on helping your church become balanced and healthy.

If churches are healthy, growth is a natural occurrence. I don't have to command my kids to grow. If I provide them with a healthy environment, growth is automatic. In the same way, if you provide your church with a healthy, balanced environment, growth will occur naturally.

> [Read more from Rick](#).