

8 Ways to Give Definition to Your Ministry

Ministry is too important to be done haphazardly. How we're leading in the core of our churches has to do with life-changing, eternity-consequential decisions. Therefore, we need to think through what ministry is all about. Sometimes we are more strategic about our grocery lists than our approach to ministry.

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 1 Corinthians 12:12-18 (NIV)

Two thoughts... First it says the body is a unit made up of many parts, which are arranged by God. In other words, God wants order in His church. Why? Because God is a God of order. So we need to evaluate our ministries and ask, “Is there order? Are we getting the maximum return out of the ministries that we have?”

There are eight components to ministry that help us to focus our efforts. And the more you focus on what you're trying to do, the less energy it takes to do it. That's a principle of life that applies directly to ministry.

What Is Your Purpose?

The business of the church is developing disciples who live effective lives for God's glory. That's what Ephesians 4 is all about, which says that we're all built up into maturity for ministry and for mission. We're in the disciple development business. We attract and win members, develop them to Christlike maturity, then mobilize them for ministry in the church and a life mission in the world. We do that in each stage and segment of their lives. Our product is changed lives. Our theme is helping people develop their lives to the fullest.

What Are Your Values?

The second question is a question about values. Take some time to write out a list of the theological and cultural values that are most important to you as you lead your church. The Pastor is the primary culture-creator in a church, and every leader creates culture within their ministry by sharing and living out some key values.

Who Are You Reaching?

In other words, at what stage of spiritual development are the people to whom you are speaking? In most churches, you will have a mixture on Sunday morning. But as you launch ministries and design processes and prepare sermons, remember that you have people at various places spiritually to think about.

You're moving some people from the community into your crowd through evangelism. You're moving others from the crowd to the congregation through fellowship. Others, you're moving from the congregation to the committed by involving them in ministry. And still others are ready to move from the committed into the core to live out their life mission. And those who are living their life mission are bringing others into the crowd so that the cycle continues.

What Is Your Strategy?

Answer these two questions: Where would I like to see my church be six months from now? And, a year from now? Write your goal down in a sentence, and feel free to add it to the comments below. If you could dream your wildest dream and the ministry you're involved in right now, how would you see it or a year from now? Now, listen to God. If possible, withdraw from the noise around you, take a deep breath and just wait on the Lord. Then ask God this question, "Father, where would You like to see my ministry six months from now? How would it be different?" As an idea comes to your mind, write it down.

What Systems Do You Need to Have in Place?

What does the word "system" have to do with the church? Remember, the church is a body, and your human body is made up of nine systems. You have a circulatory system, respiratory system, nervous system, a structural system, a digestive system, and so forth. When one of those systems gets out of order, it's called illness or disease. God wants you to have a healthy body and the body of Christ needs healthy systems too.

What People Do You Need to Hire or Empower?

Who do I know that ought to be a part of this ministry but isn't? Who could I recruit to serve with me? Who is right under my nose that I should be empowering for leadership? Come up with at least one name, maybe two or three, and write them down. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Pray for laborers." When you get a name and you put it down, you can start praying for them.

How Are You Adding Value to People's Lives?

This is one aspect of ministry – serving people by adding value to their lives. How does this ministry serve people? Are we meeting the real needs that people experience? Those needs can be physical, emotional, spiritual, and social. All four are legitimate needs. The Bible says in Luke 2:52 that "Jesus increased in wisdom (emotional and intellectual) and stature (physical), in favor with God (spiritual) and man (social)." A ministry that adds value to people's lives finds ways to minister to these needs in a balanced way.

How Can Your Structure Increase Your Effectiveness?

Saddleback Church is structured according to five purpose teams. Each of the purpose teams of our church relate to the five purposes of our church and the five targets that we have for moving people forward in their lives. We have a Membership Team which helps cares for and supports the membership of the church through lay counseling, prayer, and recovery ministry. We have a Maturity Team that oversees our thousands of small groups. Our Ministry Team helps people to plug in according to their SHAPE. Our PEACE (Missions) Team carries out our calling to take on the global giants threatening our world. We've gone into every nation on the planet and are now infiltrating every possible people group and planting international campuses. And our Worship and Creative Arts Team leads our church in its corporate worship life. We have a few other teams that overlap or support these, but our approximately 400 staff are organized around our purposes in a structure that lets us maintain healthy systems so that we can move people forward and produce mature disciples.

This might be a good time to do some real brainstorming and writing. Begin by asking God to help you define your ministry for greater effectiveness.