



5

**steps of effective
church communications
& marketing**

yvon prehn

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The 5 Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing

by
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Previous versions of bits and pieces of this material have appeared on my website: www.effectivechurchcom.com and other books and articles by Yvon Prehn.

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Intro note about the references to seminars:

In the book there are frequent references to teaching seminars, what I learned at seminars from church communicators, etc. For over twenty years, (fourteen of the last, full-time) I've traveled and conducted full-day seminars and many workshops and talks on all aspects of the topic of church communication all over North America. This book would not have been possible without the input, examples, and inspiration I received from the extraordinary church communicators in my seminars.

Currently, I am no longer traveling to do seminars, but have shifted all of my training to creating web-based, CD, and downloadable and printed materials for church communicators. I am in the process of creating web-based training that will be a 24/7 resource providing training, resources, and inspiration to help churches fully fulfill the Great Commission. My goal is to have this complete and launched before the end of 2009. My current website: www.effectivechurchcom.com will give you a taste of the materials that will be on the future site, though it will have much more. Please sign up for my email notifications on www.effectivechurchcom.com for updates and launch notification of the training site.

If you have suggestions of what you want to see on the site, what you need as church communicator, please let me know at yvonprehn@gmail.com.

**Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is.
Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has
landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling
us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.**

C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

**Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in
heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go
and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the
name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything I have
commanded you. And surely I am with you always,
to the very end of the age."**

Matthew 28:18-20

**The glory of God, and, as our only means to glorifying
Him, the salvation of human souls,
is the real business of life.**

C.S. Lewis, "Christianity and Culture"

1

chapter

5 Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing

Introduction

We serve a great God—the creator of heaven and earth. We have a great salvation—paid for by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and freely offered to all who believe in him.

We have extraordinary tools to communicate this message with computers in church offices today that are more powerful than NASA had when they put a man on the moon. We have incredible people creating church communications in print and online.

So why is the church losing ground?

Not a week goes by without another study or national news story about the declining of attendance in Christian churches, the growth of the numbers of people who don't believe in anything, and the celebration of aggressive atheists whose books attack the Christian faith. Even more discouraging are the studies that show many Christians no longer believe Jesus is the only way to God, that the Bible is not a source of objective truth, and whose lives are little different in their moral practices than those of the world around them.

Maybe the church deserves this. If we communicate that the Christian faith is about attending a multi-media production on Sunday morning designed to make you feel good about yourself and teach you how to live your best life now; if its primary concern is the health and wealth of its members as it ignores a world of pain and desperate need, maybe it ought to fade.

But that is not what the church is about. The church is the Body of Christ, the risen Savior and returning Lord. The church was left with the mission to share the true, uncompromising message that Jesus, by his resurrection from the dead, proved he is the only way to God. Jesus left his church with the command to share this message and to make disciples who live it.

That is the message of the church. To help you communicate it clearly and effectively is what this book is about. We can reverse the decline—we can grow our churches in numbers and our people in maturity we simply need to follow the directions.

The Five Steps gives churches an all-encompassing communication plan to enable them to fully fulfill the Great Commission

Jesus told us what to communicate when he said:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

This is our Great Commission. Please notice that it isn't an either/or statement. We are to "go" AND "make disciples" AND "baptize them" AND "teach them to obey everything" Jesus commanded. It isn't until we do *all* these things that we've fully fulfilled the Great Commission. The purpose of this book and The Five Steps of Effective Church Communication and Marketing is to help you do that. For purposes of simplification, throughout the book, I've combined terms and define fully fulfilling the Great Commission as these two actions:

- to go into all the world, or to introduce people to Jesus
- make disciples, or to grow believers to Christian maturity

These two statements are the goal and measure for success of The Five Steps. Helping you do these two things through your church communications is what this book and the ministry of Effective Church Communications is all about.

Keep fully fulfilling the Great Commission as your primary communication goal

Good looks, expert use of current technology, cutting edge design are all tools subservient to this one goal. A flashy, great looking church outreach piece, the envy of all your peers that brings people in on Sunday, is not the ultimate goal. A web site that takes advantage of every new technology and social networking link, is not the ultimate goal. These communication projects might be part of it, but success in one communication piece does not make an effective church communication program.

An effective church communication program is an overall refocusing of the entire communication program of the church to not only accomplish one goal such as creating a successful piece to bring people into the church, **but structuring the entire communication program to create sequential, intentional communications that help meet Jesus and then grow to Christian maturity, to become disciples.**

Don't worry—this is not a pitch for an expensive, complex system of communications. Effective Church Communications can be accomplished with almost

no or very little money. It works for church plants, mega-churches, and everything in-between.

As you'll see as you study this plan, it has much more to do with cumulative faithfulness in the little things of many prayerfully and thoughtfully created communication pieces in a variety of formats, in print and online, than in the difficult or expensive creation of one or two showy or cutting-edge technology projects.

Effective Church Communication goes beyond Sunday morning

This a radically different approach to church communications because many churches, when they realize that they need to do more in reaching their world, focus primarily on creating or buying marketing-oriented materials that are designed to get people to come to church on Sunday or to a special event at the church. The colorful, glossy, mass-produced postcards that many churches send out are an example of this. These can be useful, but in only a limited way.

Their help is limited because they only help a church *start* to obey the Great Commission. Through colorful PR campaigns and targeted mailing lists they do bring folks in on Sunday mornings. It might seem like this is THE successful way to do outreach—they do produce some new visitors. But attracting even a large number of visitors on Sunday or to a holiday event does not fully fulfill the Great Commission, which has at its core, the command ***to make disciples and teach them to obey all Jesus commanded***. Jesus did not allow for incomplete evangelism, for the far-too-often church practice of satisfaction with Sunday attendance and expecting nothing more from the majority of attenders.

It goes beyond adapting the latest technology

There are many reasons why your church may or may not want to adapt a certain technology, but effective communication and marketing that fully fulfills the Great Commission doesn't ignore technology, but is the foundation beneath all the changes that come in technology.

At one time printed books were a radical way to share the gospel message and Christian publishers are now scrambling to publish books on how to use FaceBook, Twitter, social networking and websites for church communication ministry. That's great as we are encouraged by the Apostle Paul to "be all things to all people that we might win some" (I Cor. 9:22).

However, the process I want to share with you in this book is useful no matter what technology used. We can be certain that what is the latest and greatest tech tool today will be outdated shortly. Because of that to focus too intensely on one technology and to think that this new, great technology will be the communication salvation of your church is not a wise approach.

I recently read a book that stated that every church must use a certain technology (I'd rather not be too specific so as not to embarrass the author). In addition, the book forcefully stated that the technology should be used on a iPhone. I'm not certain where the author lived, but in the farming community I

live in, during this recession, I'm not sure how many folks my church is trying to reach have iPhones and how many of them are desperately seeking spiritual advice with them. It's not that the technology might not work for some churches in some locations, but I imagine that even for those who do rush to it, they will find it has limited success as *the* communication solution for the church.

A focus on fully fulfilling the Great Commission and using whatever tools you have available is a much better approach. If you apply what I'll teach you in this book in a consistent and thoughtful way, you won't experience the roller-coaster ride many churches are on where "This is the great technology that will reach people!" and then the next year it's, "No! This is what will bring young families into our church!" Focus on the task; pick up and lay down tools as needed.

The Great Commission is not an easy command to fulfill.

There are many factors that contribute to churches not fully fulfilling the Great Commission. The Five Steps and the lessons related to church communications are only one part of fully filling the Great Commission.

Even well-produced communications can't help if the people in your church don't want to grow as a church or in personal spiritual maturity—as some pastors have sadly shared with me. But if you and your people want your church to grow in numbers and in spiritual maturity, an expanded view of the place of church communications and a plan to put them to use in fully fulfilling the Great Commission is essential for your success. ***You can't grow a church without effective communication.***

Also, without good communication disciple-making is impossible to do once a person commits to Jesus as savior.

Disciple-making requires a large amount of tangible information be communicated in a sequential manner. Disciple-making takes time. Disciple-making takes repetition. Few churches today are intentional about creating communications in print and online that build believers in the faith and consistently communicate a process to develop disciples.

Even churches who spend large amounts of money on outreach materials seldom spend the time and communications work needed to get people into maturity-producing programs. The lack of maturity of the average Christian in the pew is evidence of the lack of disciple-building communications.

We can't stop in our communication process until we have developed mature disciples who are able to share their faith, live their faith, and lead others to Jesus.

We've established the needs in church communications. Let's now look at a solution that will enable you to:

- Approach every aspect of your church communication program with the Bible as your standard and guide

- Create timeless communications, where the principles can be applied no matter what the technology
- Create the communications by your church staff within your budget, or no budget
- Walk worthy and to reflect Jesus in all your communications
- Enable all of your communications to work towards fully fulfilling the Great Commission
- Do it all in a practical, cost-effective, and sequential way

The Five Steps of Effective Church Communication & Marketing will accomplish these goals.

The Five Steps of Effective Church Communication

The Five Steps of Church Communication and Marketing, each of which is composed of a variety of communications in print and online formats, to move people from outside the church to mature discipleship are:

#1 INVITE

#2 INFORM

#3 INCLUDE

#4 INSTRUCT

#5 INSPIRE

This is a unique approach to church communications for most churches, to think of their communications in a sequential, progressive way that works towards the goal of fully fulfilling the Great Commission. This way of approaching church communications consists of more than quick tips, snazzy schemes, and one or two impressive pieces. As stated earlier it is based on the Bible as standard and guide in both our motivation for effective church communications and in the way we carry it out.

This is not an old-fashioned, out of touch, anti-technology response. I LOVE technology. I blog, tweet, build and modify websites, and can out-tech, out-geek, and out-sci-fi-trivia most of my relatives and friends a third my age.

But as much as I love technology, I love Jesus and his Word more. It saddens me that we aren't telling Jesus' story well enough so more people don't want to know him. To help us all tell that story with integrity and fidelity to God's Word is the purpose of my ministry and this publication.

It's important to take time to read this book of before you jump into the nuts and bolts of the many how-to materials available through my ministry and on my website www.effectivechurchcom.com. Implementing effective church communications can be overwhelming. The articles, samples, audio materials, and videos associated with this topic will provide the practical details of The Five Steps and the practical application of the how-tos available on my website make so much more sense if you have a vision of the final goal.

My hope is to help you get your vision clear before you work to implement anything. If you don't have a vision for the scope and potential of church communications, you'll simply continue to create one communication project after another that might look good, or that will accomplish a short-term goal, but won't accomplish the core goals of the church—to help people come to know Jesus as Savior and to grow to maturity in him.

I'm sure you want those things to happen, but you may wonder: will this work for my church?

These Five Steps work with any church growth program, denomination, tradition or ministry within churches

Each of your churches has a mission statement, target audience, and ministry system. The Five Steps do not replace any of them. The Five Steps are a **method** to help you reach the specific mission goals of your church in the particular area God called you to reach.

I've seen how each of these Five Steps can easily tie in with the various models of church growth popular today including the five steps of Christian growth in the Purpose-Driven model, the Willow-Creek model of Christian growth, and other spiritual maturity systems in Protestant denominations, Catholic, and Orthodox churches. It not only works with church growth models, but missional models, and church planting models. I have seen these principles successfully applied in every imaginable church size, from house churches to mega-churches, and in many denominations as I have traveled and taught it to thousands of churches all over North America for the last fourteen years.

I do want to give credit where it is due and the Purpose-Driven Church (along with Debbie Fields cookies, a story explained in another section) was the inspiration for this church communication system, but its application extends far beyond the initial inspiration. The only requirement for this system of church communications to be useful to you and your church is a desire for your church to be obedient to the Great Commission given to us by our Lord Jesus and a desire to fully fulfill it.

Beyond church growth overall, The Five Steps are a way to grow ministries within the church

In addition to providing a method for your church to accomplish its overall mission, The Five Steps can work within various ministries of any church to help each ministry become effective. They describe a process that moves people from their first invitation to a ministry, to learning about it, getting included in it, receiving instruction in it, and then becoming inspired to invite others. From increasing church service attendance overall to becoming involved with small groups, or any spiritual growth ministry, this system is useful for the growth of any church-related program.

In addition to working well for programs within the church, the basic principles work well for nontraditional churches. House churches, missional churches—no

matter what the name or system, every church needs to communicate. Every church's primary goal is to move people from being strangers to Jesus to becoming his disciples. The Five Steps are scalable in that you can apply them from little churches and home groups to large churches, as my pastor husband and I have personally experienced in a variety of ministry settings.

My personal motivation for making The Five Steps widely useful

I've worked hard to make the system useful to a variety of churches and church traditions. I've done this not only because the people in my seminars over the past many years have been from every imaginable church group and I've come to know, appreciate, and love fellow church communicators from many traditions, but because it's part of my DNA.

I'm the daughter of a Mennonite mother and Catholic father; an army brat who, in the course of moves from coast-to-coast in the U.S. and living in Hawaii and Japan, attended many churches of varied denominations. I've taught at a Catholic high school and Jesuit university. I have a master's degree in church history in addition to having done graduate work in communications and at an evangelical seminary.

I worked for two interdenominational, international Christian organizations and was a religion reporter at a secular newspaper. I'm married to a formerly Presbyterian, formerly Baptist, now bi-vocational pastor. I attend a formerly Baptist and now Bible church, though I periodically attend Episcopal services and Catholic mass to satisfy my soul's hunger for liturgy. As previously mentioned, I interact with people from many denominations in my seminars and through my web-based materials. Because of this wide variety of church experiences, I often refer to myself as a walking ecumenical council.

I am not dismissing and do understand the valid and important doctrinal distinctive of denominations, but for the purposes of fully fulfilling the Great Commission, Jesus' prayer in John 17 that we might all be one is my prayer for us all, no matter our church home, as we seek to fully fulfill the Great Commission the Lord gave us all in our communications.

How this book will help you build a communication structure that will work to fully fulfill the Great Commission

After this Introduction is a chart of the Five Steps of Effective Church Communication and Marketing.

Though this chart is the foundational and organizing construct for Effective Church Communications, it is not a foundation that was hastily constructed. It took over a decade of work in church communications ministry for the basic concept of The Five Steps to be born, quite a few more years to take shape and it is a constant work in progress to build a structure of solid communication training on it. The chart is a summary of it. You can copy it, pass it on, use it however is helpful.

Chapter 2: Discipleship

This chapter on discipleship is important because although we all know we should be about the Great Commission, it's easy to forget the key place of disciple-making. It is only when we make disciples that we fully fulfill the Great Commission. Discipleship isn't a little side-issue for the serious folks in the church. It is Jesus' command for all believers and this chapter will encourage you greatly on what intentional disciple-making can do for your church. As you will see, it is also an effective way to grow a church and sustain church growth.

Chapter 3: Marketing

Some church people are genuinely concerned about marketing and wonder about the appropriateness of marketing in the church. This is a valid concern and an important one to address. This chapter presents a biblical view of respectful marketing and provides biblical and practical examples of appropriate uses of marketing in the church.

Chapter 4: Inspiration and Integration

Though I'd been teaching church communications for many years and had been involved in disciple-making ministries most of my Christian life, I did not integrate communication creation and disciple making until a Purpose-Driven Conference and Debbie Fields cookies inspired me to integrate them. Sometimes it helps to understand a system if you know the genesis of it. This chapter explains how The Five Steps came together.

Chapter 5: Overview of The Five Steps

Though the rest of the book, the training website, www.effectivechurch.com, and my entire ministry fleshes out The Five Steps, this chapter gives an overview of them. For each step you'll learn:

- the **Tasks** that each step will accomplish
- the specific **Communications**, in print and online that comprise that step
- **Additional Notes** about the implementation of that step

Chapter 6: Strategies

Though each step accomplishes different tasks through different communication pieces on the road to fully fulfilling the Great Commission, the wise use of selected strategies will make each step more effective.

The strategies presented include:

- Strategy #1: Create multi-channel communication
- Strategy #2: Divide your communication team into two production levels
- Strategy #3: Always be who you are, where you are
- Strategy #4: Don't let money be a determining factor
- Strategy #5: Do not confuse irreverence for relevancy

Chapter 7: Characteristics

Any meal, from gloppy potatoes and mystery meat, to a gourmet picnic feeds you, but the characteristics of the food and how it is served make a huge difference in what they reveal about the server and the response to the food. It's the same with church communications. For our communications to be welcome and tasty to hungry souls, they need to be:

- Congruent
- Complete
- Caring
- Consistent

Chapter 8: Evaluation

Church communication is a demanding task with eternal results. How do we know if we've been successful or not? How do we know what makes a good communication piece worthy of the time and effort that go into it?

Unfortunately far too often church communication value is determined by uninformed opinion. This chapter recommends that we begin to objectively measure the effectiveness of our church communications and provides suggestions on how to do that.

Chapter 9: Practical Endurance

By this time you should be inspired to create effective church communications, but this final chapter reminds us that inspiration alone doesn't accomplish anything. We have to turn our inspiration into endurance by the daily, weekly, practical creation of effective church communications.

This book is a road map, but there is more to the journey

There is so much to learn and do in church communications, no one book could attempt to cover it all. In this book my goal is to give you a motivation, framework, and purpose for your church communications, but I don't want to leave you with guilt-producing motivation, no matter how biblically-based it might be.

My website, www.effectivechurchcom.com has many practical, this-is-what-you-can-do-today-to-make-a-difference resources and information.

We've got a huge task, but I believe we can reverse the decline of the church, if we communicate effectively by focusing all our communication efforts to fully fulfilling the Great Commission.

We can do this—let's get to work.

The Five Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing

to help churches create communications that will fully fulfill the Great Commission

TASK	Target Audience	Marketing Strategy	Ministry Goals	Key Communications Far from exhaustive, the practical tools that will help move people from one step to the next.
Step #1 INVITE	Unchurched people Visitors Community	See	Identify the church Unchurched into the church Become regular attenders Evangelism	Print & Digital Versions Identity pieces: logos, business cards, stationary, signage; Outreach: invitation cards, postcards, ads, door-hangers, tracts; Outreach support publications; Signage. Websites, emails, video, podcasts.
Step #2 INFORM	Visitors Regular Attendees Crowd	Sample	Personal Salvation Learn about the Church Join the Church Worship	Print & Digital Versions Bulletins & Bulletin Inserts; Visitor & Prayer Cards; Visitor & Member Communications; Gospel Presentations, Doctrinal & Denominational Literature; Church Overviews; Overall Church Newsletters. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #3 INCLUDE	Church Members Committed Attendees Congregation	Select	Participate in Church Events Experience Ministries beyond Sunday Morning or main meeting Fellowship	Print & Digital Versions Age, life-stage program info & PR: children, youth, singles, seniors, etc. Ministry specific: Newsletters, brochures, calendars, event info and PR. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #4 INSTRUCT	Involved Members & Attendees Committed	Stay	Spiritual Growth and Maturity Biblical Training Small Group Participation Discipleship	Print & Digital Versions Training materials: for all age and life-stage groups; Teachers: manuals, support materials; Corporate devotional and Bible reading; inspirational reminders Small group: PR, lessons, support. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #5 INSPIRE	Leaders, Workers, Key Volunteers Church Staff: professional, bi-vocational & lay Core	Sell	Ongoing Service & Outreach Lifestyle & Church Ministry Consistent Giving Missions Involvement Ministry	Print & Digital Versions Volunteer & Staff: recruitment, training, affirmation; Equipping publications; Encouraging & Inspiring materials; Financial publications; Missions involvement and support. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking

Core Components of Effective Church Communications

- Based on a Biblical Vision: the Great Commission, Commandment, Goal, and Promise.
- Modeled after Church Growth Theory that is: progressive, structured, time-intensive.
- Informed by Marketing Theory: communication that is targeted, multi-channel, complete, repeated.
- Implemented using a variety of hardware and software, publication tools and tactics.
- Modified for and tailored to the denomination, location, size, culture, and budget of each church.
- Measures success by attendance, conversions, church growth, and changed lives.
- Accomplished by tangible publications, team effort, prayer, and trust in God for eternal results.

2

chapter

5 Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing

Discipleship

We all know we should be about the Great Commission, but beyond spiritual significance, it's easy to forget the practical power of disciple-making in church growth. Discipleship isn't only what we are supposed to be doing, it's how to grow people and churches.

Discipleship at first appears to take excessive time to develop a few people, when aggressive outreach seems to reach many more people much faster. But first appearances can be deceiving as this chapter will show you.

It's important to read this chapter before getting into the practical nuts and bolts of creating church communications. The purpose of The Five Steps is to fully fulfill the Great Commission and that means to make disciples. If discipleship is your goal, if fully fulfilling the Great Commission is the measure of success in your church communication process, you will approach your communication ministry much differently than if success is measured by how many people you get in the door on Sunday or how impressed visitors are with your website.

To create disciple-making communications is what The 5 Steps of Effective Church Communication and Marketing is all about. Let's look at the process in churches today and how it can grow your church.

Why discipleship is essential for the church to survive –and why your communications are essential to develop disciples

Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt: 28:18)

These verses are our marching orders, what we are supposed to be about as representatives of Jesus here on earth—that seems obvious. The actions required by these verses also seem obvious—go, baptize, teach—with the end result of making disciples.

What is also painfully obvious in our world today is that overall, we aren't doing a very good job of obeying. In the article “Rethinking Leadership” by E.Glenn Wagner, he reports:

“Of the some 400,000 churches in the USA today, 85% are not growing, 14% are growing by transfer growth, and only 1% are growing by conversion growth.”

This article was written several years ago and it applies to America, but similar statistics are true in much of the world. In addition, it's not just in church growth where the church is doing badly.

Today we have aggressive atheists who are the darlings of the popular press. When men like Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris slander and malign the Christian faith in a way that is not only false, but nasty and vicious, their mockery is quoted and promoted without question throughout the internet and across the globe.

Church leaders who are exposed to public scandal are reported in the in press and individuals Christians don't fare much better. Studies frequently show Christians behave no differently than non-Christians in morality and that many people who call themselves Christian have little or no understanding of what the Bible says and how it teaches them to act (which is probably why their behavior is no different than that of their unbelieving friends).

I could bore you with reams of additional studies and statistics, but you know in the quietness of the your heart and the turmoil of your mind that the Christian church is losing ground, so let's skip the statistics and get to solutions.

The solution is to fully fulfill the Great Commission.

Fully fulfilling the Great Commission means more than simply getting people into the church to participate in an uplifting praise service and listen to a feel-good

message. We fully fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples. To be satisfied with anything less for *all* of your people is incomplete obedience.

The church in North America isn't growing because of bad PR, ineffective marketing, or lack of technology, it isn't growing because few churches focus on making disciples.

Making disciples is a different way of doing church today

Making disciples as a priority would honestly be a shift in priorities for many churches today because most churches currently grow by adding attendees rather than making disciples. A key way to reverse the current slide into irrelevancy and moral decline is for the church to make it a priority to intentionally make disciples instead of just adding people to the pews.

It won't be quick or easy to do this and we need to look at a few more reasons why it isn't being accomplished before suggesting how to reverse our situation.

Why we are where we are—our limited expectation of discipleship

Sadly, it seems that in many churches in America, the only person the church expects to be a mature disciple is the senior pastor. Churches have huge expectations for the pastor and perhaps other leadership, but few for the church members as a whole. Perhaps this is part of the pastor as superstar syndrome or the CEO model of leadership popular in the church today. No matter what the reason in many instances this seems to be the situation.

The church should have high expectations in morality and integrity for church leaders, but these expectations should be the same for every member. The biblical view is that "***we all*** reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4: 13—italics mine). I would venture to say that the expectation that the church work to help all members become totally like Jesus, in other words, a mature disciple, would come as a surprise to many.

Many people come to church expecting their pastor to help them feel good and to learn techniques for earthly prosperity, not to learn how to die to self and bear a cross. It's little wonder the lives of many Christians are no different than their unbelieving neighbors. Little wonder church growth is declining if going to church makes no more difference than a change in Sunday scheduling in the lives of its members.

Discipleship is also essential to church growth because *only mature disciples reproduce themselves*

Not only is maturity in Christ the biblical goal for all Christians, but it is the only realistic method for sustained church growth. My pastor husband often says, "Sheep have sheep, not the shepherd." The point he's making is that adult mature sheep have the babies. Mature Christian disciples share their faith and have spiritual children. The shepherd's job (on the ranch or in the church) is to

nurture and grow sheep to maturity so the adult sheep can reproduce.

We'd think a shepherd a bit odd if he tried to grow his flock by building a big sheep pen and making it exciting so other sheep would desert their sheep pen and come over to his. We'd wonder what he was doing if he worked harder on advertising for other sheep to join his flock than on feeding his own so his sheep would grow to maturity and naturally increase the herd.

The analogies are obvious and the result is that it seems we've got some shepherds today with confused job descriptions. Because of the lack of clarity in the position of the chief shepherd in the church, church communications often do not have a clear mandate. For real change to take place in the effectiveness of church communications, changes have to start at the top with how pastors view their job.

The changing job description of shepherds

As a natural result of the current measure of church success being primarily church size, it is to be expected that the standard of success for a senior pastor has also shifted. The standard of success has shifted from the New Testament expectation to develop mature disciples to a job description to increase attendance on Sunday morning. From a church plant anxious to an increase every week to a mega-church with national television coverage, Sunday morning numbers seem all important.

Sadly, we all fall into this. Often one of the first questions I ask a seminar attendee before I teach is, "How big is your church?"

There is a value in numbers in that we are called to win the world and we need to measure and evaluate our use of resources as we do that, but a focus on numbers alone is not the answer to building disciples or even ultimately to church growth. Even if the pastor is hard-working, a great preacher, and great at visitation, he or she cannot fully fulfill the Great Commission by simply adding numbers each week. With a big budget, a nonthreatening message, and a charismatic personality, a pastor might pack an auditorium, but numbers on Sunday do not mean a church is fully fulfilling the Great Commission.

There is only one way to fully fulfill the Great Commission and it's what Jesus said to do: make disciples. A mature disciple by definition will reproduce other disciples, who will produce other disciples. It's the principle of multiplication vs. simple addition in church growth. Here's how it works—

Back to basics: multiplication vs. addition

When I was in college I was involved with Navigator ministry and our leaders constantly impressed on us the importance of growing a ministry through multiplication rather than addition. LeRoy Eims, my college Nav group leader, again and again would show us a checkerboard pattern of squares. He'd explain how if you start on square one, if you add one grain of wheat a day for a month on each square, when you get to the end of 30 days, you'll have 30

grains of wheat. The same thing would happen if you really hustle in your Christian life. If you knock on lots of dormitory doors, do lots of evangelism and work really hard, maybe you can add one person a day to the ministry—that would be 30 people added at the end of the month. Not bad, we'd be tempted to think—but LeRoy wasn't finished.

He'd remind us if you are so busy adding new believers, you don't have much time to take care of the ones you added the day before. You simply hope they are OK. You gave them a Bible, told them to read it and go to church. You press on because you want to grow the ministry. You're willing to burn out for Jesus and you keep up that pace for months. You make it all through the school year working like crazy and at the end of 9 months you've got 280 people in your campus ministry. LeRoy was not pleased. What's wrong with that, we'd wonder?

There is another way to grow a ministry LeRoy would explain. Imagine what could happen, if instead of just adding one person a day, you added one person and then the two of you each added two more, instead of simple addition, you'd see the power of multiplication. The charts below illustrate this:

growth by addition					growth by multiplication				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	4	8	16
6	7	8	9	10	32	64	128	256	512
11	12	13	14	15	1,024	2,048	4,096	8,192	16,384
16	17	18	19	20	32,768	65,536	131,072	262,144	524,288
21	22	23	24	25	1,048,576	2,097,152	4,194,304	8,388,608	16,777,216
26	27	28	29	30	33,554,432	67,108,864	134,217,728	268,435,456	536,870,912

Obviously multiplication is a much more effective way to increase numbers than simple addition, but expecting a person to be a reproducing disciple in one day isn't realistic. More realistically, what if you took a month to intensely disciple that person: helping him or her study the Bible, learn to pray, get involved in church and a small group, learn share their faith? Though discipleship is a lifelong process, by the end of a month imagine your disciple-in-training is able to introduce one person to Jesus. If you do the same, there are now four of you. The next month is spent on intensive discipleship involving four people with the expectation that each one will introduce just one other person to Jesus during that month. Going into month four, you've got eight people.

Don't compare too soon, another chart to consider

Multiplication ministry can be discouraging if another campus minister or pastor of a church down the road is doing great job of addition ministry. As the chart below shows, at the end of four months the person inviting aggressively (or sending out slick direct mail campaigns) has 120 people coming to his or her church or campus ministry. Growing a ministry by multiplication you've got

eight people. Looking at the numbers at that point could make you think what you are doing isn't working.

Numbers are important; evaluation is important, but don't evaluate the numbers too soon. In multiplication ministry, your focus is on discipling—making sure that your people become mature and can lead others to Jesus. If you do that, though it takes more time, the numbers will take care of themselves.

Needless to say, this chart is for illustration purposes only, but notice what happens at month eight.

The church or other ministry doing addition is up to 240, but your slow and steady discipleship building process has reached 256 people. You're finally about even, but then things start to shift dramatically. At the church or ministry that continues to grow primarily by addition, unless it adds staff to keep growing the numbers, one person can only do so much. The main person will burn out.

In contrast, at the multiplication church where a core value is that the Great Commission is to be fully fulfilled and every convert is disciplined to reproducing maturity and expected to introduce other people to Jesus and to disciple them, no one person wears out. Part of discipleship is learning how to feed yourself and be responsible for your own spiritual growth.

By month or year 10, the church or ministry growing by addition is at 300 (and 80% of all churches in American are less than this in size). The church or ministry that has been growing by discipleship is now at 1,024. To carry the illustration out 30 months, the

Month or year	Growth by Addition	Growth by Multiplication
1	30	2
2	60	4
3	90	8
4	120	16
5	150	32
6	180	64
7	210	128
8	240	256
9	280	512
10	300	1,024
11	330	2,048
12	360	4,096
13	390	8,192
14	420	16,384
15	450	32,768
16	480	65,536
17	510	131,072
18	540	262,144
19	570	524,288
20	600	1,048,576
21	630	2,097,152
22	660	4,194,304
23	690	8,388,608
24	720	16,777,216
25	750	33,554,432
26	780	67,108,864
27	810	134,217,728
28	840	268,435,456
29	870	536,870,912
30	900	1,073,741,824

addition church is at 900, and the multiplication church at 1,073,741,824.

The chart illustrates contrasting processes—in a real world situation the actual growth of both groups will most likely be less. In churches that grow primarily by addition, the senior pastor will be exhausted far short of gathering 900 members. People who are never taught to get into God's Word and feed and care for themselves are bound to get frustrated if their needs aren't continuously met and their boredom entertained. Many will wander off to another church with a more interesting (actually only different and new) pastor and praise service.

In churches that grow by multiplication a variety of issues can enter in to keep the church from reaching its full potential. Not everyone has the time or interest to become a disciple. Cross-bearing, sacrifice, self-discipline, and the reality of living as if we truly believe that our best life isn't now, but in heaven, is a tough sell in our world today.

Tough sell or not, growing people to mature discipleship is the command given to the church if we are to fully fulfill the Great Commission.

Make it practical

Staff commitment, prayer, time, money, vision—so many things go into the makeup of a Great Commission fulfilling church. Church communications aren't everything, but it has been my experience from observing thousands of churches and their communications and from over two decades of church communication teaching, that a church can have the greatest vision and programs in place, but if they are not communicated effectively, nothing much happens. A vision that stays inside the heads and hearts of the pastor and staff and isn't communicated, isn't a vision, it's a fantasy.

In addition to not communicating the mission of their church, I've found very few churches have a progressive plan to develop disciples with their communications. Many churches think they have a ministry communication plan when the only thing their communication plan consists of are outreach postcards to get people to special events and extra money for printing up a fancy bulletins for Christmas and Easter.

We've been entrusted with the words of eternal life. It takes more than one or two pretty pieces or today flashy websites to do the job. The Five Steps of Church Communication and Marketing outlines communication strategies and projects from outreach to mature discipleship. It is a lot more work, but it fulfills the expectations of the Great Commission.

A useful part of the solution to building disciples and churches

I am quite certain that my suggestions are not the only or the final answer. They are offered as part of the solution, but Lord willing, a useful part. A guiding inspiration for my ministry is the example of the children of Israel when they rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah records as they rebuilt the wall (a picture of how we are building up the church today in fulfillment of the Great Commission) how some people worked on a section of the wall directly in front of their home. Nobody had the responsibility to build the whole thing, but when each group did their part, the wall got built.

Church communications is my section of the wall. Good communications isn't the only requirement for building up the Church, but I hope through training and resources in this book and on my website, to do all I can to help you make this part of the wall strong as you build your church of disciples and fully fulfill the Great Commission our Lord gave us.

3

chapter

5 Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing

Marketing

Intro note: the following material is from the book, Ministry Marketing Made Easy, by Yvon Prehn. The book is currently being revised and updated, but the following chapter is helpful for those who have questions about the value of marketing in the church.

Some church people are genuinely concerned about marketing and wonder about the appropriateness of marketing in the church. This is a valid concern and an important one to address. This chapter presents a biblical view of respectful marketing and provides biblical and practical examples of appropriate uses of marketing in the church.

I strongly recommend you take time to go over this chapter as a staff and with the leadership of your church. If you don't and people in your church have concerns that are not answered, you can be certain they will come out and often not in pleasant ways.

You want everyone (as much as is possible) in the church to be of one heart in your communication and marketing efforts. Yes, it takes time to explain why you are doing what you are doing, but the oneness of heart that should be the result is worth it.

If you put the reasons why you are doing what you are doing and your reasons for church marketing on your website, it will always be there for you to refer to and your people to look at. To help you in that you have my permission to copy and post anything (or all, if it helps) of this chapter on your website—or of any other materials in this book or from my website. I'd appreciate it if you would add this citation (somewhere little and not to be a bother): *from yvonprehn, www.effectivechurchcom.com.*

Remember, you have my permission to copy and use any of my material on your websites or in your church communications.

Posting some of it on your website might help explain why you do what you do and help folks feel at ease about church marketing.

Marketing misconceptions defined and defused

Nonprofit organizations are involved in marketing whether or not they are conscious of it. They are involved in various markets and use certain operating principles in dealing with each market. These operating principles define their marketing. The issue is not one of whether or not nonprofit organizations should get involved in marketing, but rather how thoughtful they should be at it.

—Phillip Kotler, *Marketing for NonProfit Organizations*

You will find this chapter helpful if people in your church are asking these questions:

“Wait just a minute! What does marketing have to do with ministry? Marketing is worldly; ministry is spiritual.”

“Ministry and marketing—can the two go together? Is Ministry Marketing really a skill we can learn or an oxymoron created to sell a book?”

These are good questions and valid concerns.

Marketing defined

First, let’s look at Webster’s definitions of the terms “ministry” and “marketing.” Then read my modified definitions for the purposes of this book.

Webster’s definitions:

ministry: the act of serving

marketing: the total of activities, involved in the moving of goods from the producer to the consumer

My definition of Ministry Marketing:

Combining the two definitions above and adapting them for the church results in this working definition:

Ministry Marketing: a servant ministry that consists of the total of activities, every action and communication that makes up our story, involved in moving the good of salvation from the God who produced it by the death and resurrection of Jesus and helping the intended consumer, lost humanity, to accept that salvation.

Or, said another way:

Ministry Marketing: everything we do in communications and actions as servants of Jesus to share his story and to invite people to join us in the eternal adventure of living it.

One of the most important elements in this definition is the word *everything*. Ministry Marketing involves everything we do, including all communications,

publications, media, and public actions of your church. You cannot create any publication, communication, or media in your church and not have it affect your marketing in either a positive or negative way.

Misconceptions about Ministry Marketing

Even with a good definition, many church people have four misconceptions about marketing. Let's define and address these misconceptions with the definition of Ministry Marketing that was just given in mind. The rebuttals to these misconceptions should remove any objections to a instituting a more intentional marketing program in your church.

Marketing Misconception #1: Marketing's primary purpose is to draw attention to itself.

Marketing Misconception #2: Marketing is somehow unspiritual. At best it is a worldly tool that is used to manipulate people into making decisions that they would not otherwise make.

Marketing Misconception #3: Marketing only involves the communications created on paper or for the web.

Marketing Misconception #4: The task of marketing is a job for professionals only. It involves lots of time, money, expensive research, statistics, demographics, tools, and techniques beyond the resources of most churches and ministries.

Marketing Misconception #1: Marketing's primary purpose is to draw attention to itself

To address this valid concern, it is important to emphasize the adjective *ministry* to describe the kind of marketing we do in the church. Again, to minister means to serve. Church marketing is first, last, and always a servant ministry. It does not exist to draw attention to itself or to the people who produce the publications.

Our goal is not for people to say, "Wow, what a visually beautiful newsletter!" Our goal is not to win design awards or to impress people with cool typeface selection. Success in Ministry Marketing is measured differently than success in secular marketing. Success in Ministry Marketing is measured in lives changed, not in compliments heard or awards won. The measure of success for Ministry Marketing is the people who come to know Jesus as Savior and grow to maturity in their Christian lives. When it does this well, Ministry Marketing is a somewhat invisible ministry in the church.

You don't remember marketing if it is done well. Instead, you celebrate the results as the church grows, more people attended events, and the ministry prospers. While the pastor may be congratulated for his or her great talk, the trainer thanked for the great workshop, the evangelist praised for the revival, few notice or thank the people who worked hard to do the publicity and marketing for these events.

Check your motivation for doing ministry marketing

This reality reveals an important ministry caution: Don't go into Ministry Marketing and communications if you need public praise and thanks to keep going—you won't get it. If you work in church communications and marketing, the only time that you will be publicly acknowledged for your work is when you make a typo that makes somebody really angry. Then people will know who you are. Then you will be publicly recognized.

Marcie, a new church secretary, experienced this situation when she mistakenly published the wrong date for an upcoming event in her church. A gentleman in the church had not been terribly enthusiastic about some of the changes she'd made to the bulletin in recent weeks and he thought that her publication style was too youthful and modern. His disgruntlement had even led him to complain about the situation to the pastor. On the Sunday when the mistake appeared, he found it and yelled from his pew during the announcement time, "Pastor, tell people the correct date for the church anniversary picnic. Our new church secretary Marcie messed it all up."

Marcie slumped in her pew and wanted to die. She was ready to quit her job.

When Marcie shared her story with me, I understood why she felt the way she did. That sort of treatment is unkind and uncalled for, but sadly, is a common experience for those who work in church communication and marketing. In an attempt to encourage Marcie, I remind her that being involved in Ministry Marketing is a bit like being a Levite in the Old Testament times: the Lord is your only reward. In the Old Testament, the Levites couldn't own any land (Deut. 14:29). All the other tribes could, but not them. Like the Levites, the Lord is the only one who rewards you for much of the Ministry Marketing work you will do.

I also reminded Marcie that, though she might be the brunt of criticism and unappreciated work today, helping people come to know Jesus, even the behind the scenes, is truly the way to become a star. Recall Daniel 12:3: "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

Marcie was encouraged. It helps to have an eternal perspective on the value of Ministry Marketing and to focus on what will bring about eternal rewards.

In order to correct the first Ministry Marketing misconception, remember that Ministry Marketing isn't about drawing attention to itself, it's about bringing people to Jesus. Others may not recognize you for your work now, and they may even criticize you. But it won't always be that way. To encourage yourself in your work, put a little note above your desk that says, "Someday I'll be a star!"

Marketing misconception #2: Marketing is not spiritual

It's important to address this misconception because we certainly don't want to do anything that displeases the Lord. In voicing this fear, many people relate the story of Jesus chasing the money changers out of the temple. (Matt. 21:12-13) People are afraid that anything that is even remotely connected to commerce should not be conducted in the church.

To address the concern, we need to remember that in the story about Jesus cleansing the temple the individuals who sold livestock and exchanged currency had nothing to do with marketing the gospel message. They were just selling their stuff. Ministry Marketing wasn't the issue in that situation. There are, however, valid examples of Ministry Marketing in scripture, as well as solid examples in today's church. Here are some of them:

Biblical Ministry Marketing Example #1: The Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul was one of the greatest marketers of all time. As Paul traveled, he usually went directly to the synagogue to speak. In this setting, he knew his market well. Acts 17 describes his visit to Athens. Here it was different and in Athens, Paul engaged in some careful market research before he shared his message.

Look closely: here is a man who went around the city carefully studying the pagan idols. This was not easy for him to do. Paul was raised with "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and "Thou shalt not make any graven image." Despite his background, Paul carefully studied what was personally repulsive to him because what he studied was important to the people he wanted to reach with the gospel message. Paul even took the time to memorize some of their poetry. When it came time for him to speak, instead of pronouncing curses on the worship of idols, Paul said, "I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you." (Acts 17:22, 23, NIV).

This is Ministry Marketing in action—studying what is important to the audience you are trying to reach and then using that as a bridge to the gospel message.

Ministry Marketing Example #2: Jesus

When Jesus began sharing his message publicly, he didn't stay home in Nazareth and post a little sign outside the carpenter's shop that said, "Interested in eternal life? Knock on my door."

He didn't stay in Nazareth and wait for people to come to him. Instead, he was in the public arena each day, sharing and marketing his message in a way that was appropriate to his day and audience.

Ministry Marketing Example #3: Joshua

One last example on the spiritual value of marketing comes from a devotion by Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon begins by retelling the story of the children of Israel's battle with the Amalek (Exodus 17). In the story, Joshua is down in the valley fighting and Moses is up on the mountain with his hands raised in prayer. So long as Moses holds up his arms, the Israelites win. However, as Moses tires and his arms drop, the army begins to lose. So Aaron and Hur help hold up Moses' arms and the battle is won.

Spurgeon comments that we often use this story as an example of the importance of prayer in our spiritual battles and that is a good application of the Bible story. But we must never forget that while Moses is up on the mountain praying, Joshua is in the valley fighting bloody, hand-to-hand combat. In all that we do for the Lord, Spurgeon continues, we must always do two things: We must pray, because every victory is ultimately God's, and we must also fight.

Don't just pray without taking action

This story is incredibly important for you to remember as you do the work of Ministry Marketing. The story of Joshua illustrates a recurrent problem in thousands of churches. The steps that make up the problem often occur something this:

1. The church staff plans and envisions great and glorious activities, church growth events, and outreach programs.
2. The staff prays about the plans. They discuss. They hold committee meetings. They pray some more.
3. They recruit the people to put on a worthwhile ministry event. The event's details are perfectly in place. The program leaders practice and are ready to go.
4. The day of the event comes and almost nobody shows up.

Sound familiar? This is what happens far too often in churches when it is a modern-day situation of Moses praying, but no Joshua fighting. This book will help equip the Joshua's in your church to do their part.

The following story illustrates a real-life event that underscores the reality of the story above. It reveals problems in marketing church events and what happens when we pray and use expensive production media without simple, but intentional marketing strategy and tools.

Real life story about the limitations of prayers and good intentions

In this instance a church was experiencing great numerical growth. It had grown from 600 to over 1800 in attendance in three years. The Sunday service was spectacular, with seeker-sensitive music, drama, and powerful need-centered preaching. Individuals were making decisions to become Christians every week and the church was growing in numbers. They were doing many things right.

Though grateful for the growth, the church staff was concerned because the growth was primarily reflected in Sunday morning service attendance. The leadership realized that people also needed to grow in Christian maturity and that meant getting them into spiritual growth opportunities outside the Sunday morning service. The staff decided to address this issue by initiating a men's ministry.

The staff prayed about and planned for the kick-off event for the new men's ministry, and they advertised it for four weeks in the bulletin and newsletter, on Powerpoint and through lively announcements. The staff expected at least

100-200 men to show up. The night came for the event. The twelve men from the church staff and the planning leaders enthusiastically set-up tables and chairs for 200, expecting a great response. Three men came. What went wrong? The staff did all the right things, spiritually. They followed a biblically sound ministry model, they planned and prayed, and then they prayed some more. They held more meetings and prayed more.

The marketing plan for the men's ministry and what went wrong

Though they did all the right things spiritually, the staff didn't do effective Ministry Marketing. They were a committee of Moses members with no Joshua doing the tough work. This is how they marketed the event and following this list (which may appear adequate at first glance) we'll look at why it wasn't effective and what would have made for effective ministry marketing in this situation.

1. They advertised the study for four weeks in the newsletter and bulletin. Their belief concerning the effectiveness of these communication pieces was that the most important criteria for success was how the pieces looked. Therefore, the pieces were produced by a professional advertising agency in full-color on glossy paper.
2. The content of the announcement was the same in both the newsletter and the bulletin. It said, "Men's Bible study starting Sept. 8. All men of the church are encouraged to attend. Sign up in the church lobby."
3. They announced the event from the pulpit in the same way for three weeks, and used PowerPoint® each week to illustrate the announcement. The PowerPoint presentation was attractive and well done.

What looked right and what went wrong

At first look it seems like a good way to market the program, so what went wrong? Here are some of the most obvious problems:

1. Though the event planners advertised the event a total of eight times in their printed material (a good number of times), ***the announcement was virtually worthless because it didn't give the complete information details that would enable the men to attend the event.*** The planners did not tell the men the time the event was going to start or where it was going to be held.

It doesn't matter how beautiful the graphics are in a communication piece if essential details like these are left out. All of the details must be included every time and as a part of every announcement of an event if you want people to attend. It is the details of time, location, date, duration that actually connect people with an event—just remembering something is happening sometime does get people there.

2. They made a number of incorrect ministry marketing assumptions: The staff assumed that men would find out the information regarding starting time and

location, and would write it down and remember it when they went into the church lobby to sign up for the study. That was a huge mistake. If you want to give any event the kiss of death and guarantee no response at all, tell people to “sign up in the church lobby.” Nobody does, especially guys.

After church is over, does any man to say to his wife (please forgive any implied sexism in this illustration), “Honey, would you please wait for me in the car while I find out where to go sign up for the men’s Bible study?”

It doesn’t happen. I know my own husband’s most pressing thought after church is food—where are we going for lunch and how little the donut was in-between services. Following the thought of food is football, basketball, or hockey, depending on the time of year. Most men I know, godly guys that they are, are similar. In addition, remember this is a church of 1800 people—realistically how will even a tiny fraction of them fit around a sign-up table? Will the men stand in line for a chance to sign up?

When the choice is between brunch or to stand in a line to sign up for an event I’m not even sure I want to attend and won’t find out anything about until I wait, what choice do you think most men would make?

Any time you require people to take a second step (call the church office for more information, sign up in the lobby, etc.) to find out essential details that they need to show up, you will drastically cut down attendance at your ministry event. People don’t have or don’t care to take the time to do this. Remember also that the event you are working to get people to attend is not nearly as important to the church members as it is to you and they will usually not take any extra time to do something that is primarily important to you.

Summary of incorrect ministry marketing assumptions:

- **The staff assumed that men would remember the details from the PowerPoint® announcement presented every Sunday.** Most men don’t. PowerPoint® is great for song lyrics, to set a specific mood for worship, or for graphics to reinforce a story or theme, but few men (women or teenagers) sit in worship, pencil in hand, ready to take notes off of a PowerPoint® presentation. And you don’t remember connection details from seeing them on the screen once or twice.
- **The staff assumed that having the pastor encourage the men to come to the event meant something to the men, and would make them want to come.** It usually doesn’t. Pastoral leadership doesn’t have the influence it once did. We live in an irreverent age, an age that doesn’t admire authority. A personal invitation from a friend can be powerful, but pleas from the pulpit are seldom heard, let alone acted upon.
- **The staff assumed that men would want to come to a Bible study.** Most men don’t. There was nothing in any of the advertising that told potential attendees what they would study, what it would do for them, or if it would change their lives or benefit them in any way.

· **The staff just assumed that a Bible study meant as much to the new Christians and unbelievers who attended the church as it did to the church staff.** It doesn't. Remember: The number one question people ask when they get an advertisement for anything from the church or elsewhere is, "What's in it for me?" If that question isn't answered quickly, clearly, and in a way that meets a need, people don't show up.

Some of the previous comments might seem rather unkind and somewhat brutal, or cynical. You may be thinking, "You shouldn't talk about church Bible studies that way! People do what our pastor says! I just know people are impressed with the PowerPoint® slides we make before the service starts."

I'm certain my observations aren't true in every instance. Please know that I'm not sharing these observations from a cynical heart, but from a heart that cares passionately about the church of Jesus Christ. We have to start being honest in the church about what works and about what doesn't work if we are going to market our message effectively. We are losing the hearts and souls of people to every imaginable philosophy and religion, other than a saving trust in Jesus. If some people make a decision for Christ, so often they remain baby Christians all their lives because the church doesn't seem to offer them anything more interesting than what is on TV. This has to change for the church to become the powerful, life-changing force it could be.

Our attempts to get people to church and involve them in activities of the church are not working very well in most cases and people must become involved in more than Sunday morning if they are to grow up in the Christian faith.

What the men's ministry planners should have done

In the example above, the church leaders needed to pray, but they also needed some marketing savvy and some common sense. They should have:

- 1. Given complete information each time the event was mentioned in writing.** Remember, "the message is the message." It doesn't matter if you spend a pile of money for four-color printing if you don't give the time something starts or the location for the event each time you advertise the message.
- 2. Sent out a series of postcards to the men of the church,** in addition to providing the newsletter and bulletin announcements. Postcards, if done correctly, tend to get carried directly from the mailbox to the refrigerator. Once posted, an announcement on the refrigerator is a far more likely to illicit a response than an announcement in a discarded church bulletin.
- 3. Send out email blasts, text messages, social site notices to those who prefer to receive reminders that way.** To some folks today, if it isn't on their Blackberry, mobile phone, Tweets, or Facebook page, it doesn't exist. You may need to do a little upfront surveying of your people to find out their preferred method of receiving information, but any time spent doing that will be worth it in increased response.

4. Provided food and advertised it. A good, hearty, regional favorite food (and lots of it) at the kickoff event is an example of being market savvy. Food is a draw not only because people like to eat, but it is a great ice-breaker for any new spiritual training event. Attendees might think, “I’ll just come for the great BBQ and leave before the serious stuff starts,” but if the food is great and the interaction positive during meal time, they will most likely remain for the spiritual part.

5. Made it an event that would appeal to unchurched men. Starting the Bible study series with a locally popular speaker (a sports figure, perhaps) that the men would want to come and hear would have also been a good idea. The advertising should have prominently featured the food, the speaker, and the benefits that the men would experience from the event. Most unchurched men, and many church men have no innate burning desire to know the Word of God better. It might be what they most need, but until they have an opportunity to actually interact with godly men and see the relevance of God’s Word to their lives, they see little value in it.

These changes would have provided the Joshua contribution. The church staff still needs to pray and plan just as intensely, but the addition of sending out some postcards and text messages, the promise of great BBQ and an inspiring speaker, along with the prayer makes for a Ministry Marketing victory.

Unclear announcements of a Men’s Bible Study with no details and nothing other than a Bible study offered are not the ingredients of victory.

Marketing misconception #3: Marketing only involves the communications created on paper or for the web

If only it were that easy, I could share with you pointers on how to create your print and web media and we’d be done with it. Even though I have lots of great ideas in those areas and thousands of wonderful examples, great looking examples aren’t the end of the story. ***Ministry Marketing doesn’t stop with our printed or web-based communications. It’s part of everything we do.***

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, “You will be my witness.” Sometimes we interpret that verse as if being a witness were an option. It isn’t. Individuals may be good witnesses or bad witnesses, but once a person becomes a Christian, people know. Christian behavior is judged. It’s amazing how people who are not Christians have some pretty firm ideas on how Christians are supposed to act.

Nobody ever says, “Oh, isn’t it horrible that rock star is acting that way!” Expectations for rock stars are pretty lax. But if a Christian makes the slightest misstep, the charge of hypocrite is loudly invoked. Once someone becomes a follower of Jesus, he or she becomes a walking advertisement for the faith. For good or ill, a person’s faith is judged by his or her actions.

In the same way, people have certain expectations about churches. People come to church hoping for healing and acceptance. If they meet grumpy people and messy bathrooms, they are likely to assume the Christian faith is grumpy

and messy. While this may be an unfair expectation and judgment, it happens.

Remember: Ministry Marketing consists of a “total of activities.” Effective marketing is made up of many things, from signage to web sites, from post-cards to email, from bulletins to training programs—every imaginable communication format. Ministry Marketing spills over from the web and the printed page and into more permanent aspects of church life, including the condition of the parking lot and the availability of handicapped parking.

Marketing misconception #4: Marketing is costly, difficult, and for professionals who have the right equipment

In truth, effective Ministry Marketing is possible for every church, and can be done in cost-effective, relatively easy ways. Great marketing can take place in tiny churches, mega-churches, and everything in-between. It can be accomplished with pennies or thousands of dollars. The things that make it work or not (and remember, marketing that works results in changed lives) are what this book is all about.

One more part of this misconception is the belief that Ministry Marketing is successful only if marketing professionals do it.

Some marketing professionals can and do provide great advice and ideas, but they aren't the only source of marketing success. The difference between these two approaches is a bit like the difference between a meal cooked by a great, trained chef and one cooked by your grandmother. Professional marketing advice is like the meal produced by the trained chef. It can look picture perfect, satisfy your hunger for the exotic, and be exactly what you want.

My grandmother's approach to cooking was different. She was raised on a farm and she never had a cooking class in her life. A little of this and that, hours in the kitchen, and a lot of hard work produced a Sunday dinner of Mennonite brown beef and gravy over fried potatoes, garden raised cabbage cole slaw with sweet cream dressing, homemade rolls with strawberry jam, corn and beans, bread and butter and watermelon pickles. Strawberry and Rhubarb pie topped with sugar and cream and dark strong coffee finished the meal.

There's more than one way to fill a tummy, and more than one way to approach successful ministry marketing.

Your Ministry Marketing may take the professional chef's approach, with slick, glossy publications and a big marketing budget. Or you may go the grandma path—little of this and that, hours on the computer and a lot of hard work that produces your own materials. Either way can work.

Footnotes:

1 Philip Kotler, *Marketing for NonProfit Organizations* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1975), 9.

2 Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2001).

4

chapter
5 Steps of
Effective Church
Communications & Marketing

Inspiration & Integration

Sometimes understanding the genesis of an idea helps clarify the idea. To understand how The Five Steps system works, it might help to see how it came together. If you find this personal history unnecessary, you can skip this chapter and go directly to the practical implementation ones that follow. I most likely would. I really don't like this sort of thing, but I put in it to answer the question of how I came up with The Five Steps, so here is my story....

I was involved in discipleship-making ministry for much of my Christian life. In addition, though decades of work in church communications had much of what became The Five Step of Effective Church Communication and Marketing simmering in my mind, the integration of those ideas came when I was attending a Purpose-Driven church conference with my pastor husband. The conference provided the setting, but cookies were the inspiration that made it all come together.

I don't remember what year the conference took place; it was probably in the later 90s. I don't remember years or dates of anything—they just never seemed an important category of data to store as far as I am concerned. That habit drives some folks I know crazy. Wonderful, inspirational saints that they are, we all know people who remember the year, day, and hour of every transgression of their family members and every personal emotional hurt in their history. My habit of not remembering much of any of those sorts of events, nor being inclined to discuss them, has been a constant source of frustration to some, but that's how I navigate through life.

I digress, forgive me—back to the story of the birth of The Five Steps which took place in some undetermined year.

How a conference and cookies inspired The Five Steps of Effective Church Communication and Marketing

My husband and I were at the Purpose-Driven conference. Though I found much of it inspirational, I found most of it short on practical implementation. In one of the sessions in the huge sanctuary at Shaddleback Church, I found myself half-listening to the great preaching and wonderful music. I was looking around at all the folks who seemed to be getting it, whatever “it” was while I was getting more and more cynical and depressed.

The conversation in my head went something like this, “Yeah, I could do all this great church growth stuff if I had a church staff of hundreds and piles of money. It’s really easy for you pastors of big successful churches to spout great ideas, leave them with the staff and then be off to your next idea.”

It was more than my innate bad attitude that prompted those thoughts. At that time we were working (without pay) at a little church with few resources for anything new. In addition, for many years I had been teaching communication seminars to churches all across North America who were much more like our current little church than Shaddleback.

Most churches weren’t short on great ideas—all of them do have access to the Bible, a desire to reach their communities for Jesus and ideas on how to do that. Most pastors I knew read more articles, attended more conferences, and had far more great ideas floating around in their heads than they had time to implement. What churches needed, it seemed to me, was a way to make theory practical.

A great model lacking in practicality

Though I was frustrated by the lack of practical implementation shared at the conference, I also knew that the Purpose-Driven model was an incredibly effective model in its step-by-step, purposeful approach to Christian maturity. In that role, the Purpose-Driven model gave direction to solid biblical principles of church and discipleship growth.

It wasn’t that I disagreed with the plan or theology, but how to make it actually work at a little church, at any church, that was my question. They talked about moving people around bases of Christian maturity and the various models churches used—but again, how to make that practical, Sunday to Sunday? Yeah, the race car track or baseball bases model was cute, but how did you actually get people from point “a” to point “b”? How did people find out about the plan? How did you actually get them into the classes? Was it printed in the bulletin? Posted on the website? Did they do up a brochure? Did they have handouts for the classes? Did the big churches simply have some magic way to get folks in and grow them up in the faith?

I couldn't sit still and rather than yelling not nice things at the speaker, I said to my husband, "I have to get out of here and talk to the Lord."

Time in the trailer

Years ago, Shaddleback church had trailers on their property that they used for classrooms. I found an empty one, went inside, and prayed out my frustration. My frustration was for how to make the biblical goal of making disciples practical to my little church, and the thousands of church folks, who I met in my seminars, who had no money and few resources, but who cared desperately about being obedient to Jesus. How could I help them introduce people to Jesus and help them grow to maturity in him?

I don't remember how much time it took, but the obvious came to me:

"You do it through your communications. Step-by-step you can create communications that will lead people from outside the church to Christian maturity. It doesn't matter what church growth or denominational model you use, communications are what move people along. Big churches, little churches, we all must communicate our vision of the steps to salvation in Jesus and spiritual maturity—church communications are what will do it."

My focus on the teaching computer design skills had prevented me from seeing the big picture

The answer had been right in front of me, but I had not been able to see it.

For years, I'd been teaching church communications, traveling, writing, and helping churches create good-looking and effective communications, but I'd never thought of church communications as the foundation to growing churches and people to Christian maturity.

My overall approach to teaching church communications in the early days of desktop publishing had been more on how to use the then new tools of the computer effectively; how to do design, layout, and write effectively.

People were simply desperate to learn the new tools now available on their computer. In most churches the computer arrived on the desk of the church secretary and she was informed that by next week this is what she was supposed to use to create the church bulletin and newsletter. Unfortunately, that news was seldom accompanied with any training on how to use the computer or the desktop publishing program. I was very busy helping fill that gap: writing books, articles, teaching seminars on the various skills required.

I'd been involved in writing and communications all my life. I had my first article nationally published at age 16, continued professionally writing articles and books, did newspaper work, and was senior editor at two international Christian organizations. As part of my work as a professional communicator, I learned the computer creation skills when the first personal computers were invented. I'd previously worked with traditional design, typesetting, layout and printers

and realized at the first demonstration I saw of PageMaker that desktop publishing would change everything about the way we created church communications. I jumped at the chance to learn the new tools. Because I had a traditional design, print, marketing, publication creation, and typesetting background I already had all the communication and production skills, I only needed to learn the tools.

My first computer was a Kaypro when floppy disks really were floppy. I worked on mainframes and IBMs. I wrote the first book on desktop publishing in the church using one of the first MacPlus machines off the assembly line. The Mac Plus was hand-signed inside the case by everyone who worked on it. The technology of the Mac and the early versions of page layout software seemed almost magical.

In addition to writing, I was also a teacher. I started teaching as third grader teaching kindergartners in Sunday school and I'd been teaching something either in church or school nonstop since then. When I learned these new skills I wanted to teach them. I was hired as a desktop publishing seminar trainer for Padgett/Thompson, the nation's largest one-day seminar company.

Traveling and teaching seminars for Padgett/Thompson was an incredible experience and an extraordinary learning opportunity. I taught desktop publishing to the staff at Apple Computer and other Silicon Valley employees in the early days of the computer revolution, when just because you built a computer didn't mean you knew how to do anything with it. The Apple folks knew how to build them, but that didn't mean their staff knew how to create any publications with them. I taught them and people from large companies all over the U.S. how to do desktop publishing. In addition to the subject matter I taught when with Padgett/Thompson, I learned the survival skills of how to travel and the logistical skills that would serve me well in the future.

Even though I was making more money than I had ever made, and was promised a very profitable future, I quit working for Padgett/Thompson to focus on training folks in the church. Prior to this job, I'd always worked with Christian groups and I remember thinking that I really didn't care if Apple or All State or any of the other big companies that came to my seminars produced a good newsletter.

I wanted to help the church communicate what I considered the only message worth communicating: the gospel of Jesus.

Helping the church communicate the gospel message is my calling

Though many people told me I was crazy to give up the money and position as a national trainer, I quit Padgett/Thompson. I wanted to teach people in the church how to use the computer to communicate and I seemed to have the ability to make complex technology understandable. The church needed people who could do that and who understood how to do it in practical ways for the church. At that time, most folks in the church who had computers were the uber geeks and communicating to church secretaries how to do design and layout on the computer wasn't exactly something they wanted to do.

In addition to the professional communications work I'd done, I'd always created communications for the church and I realized how much computers could help. So, I began a ministry where, in my seminars and publications, church communicators learned how to use a computer to create publications: how many columns made for easy reading, how to write headlines that worked, how to use design effectively, what typeface to use, and similar, practical skills.

Though I had some folks write me and sincerely share their concern that computers were of the devil and I shouldn't be doing what I was doing (this really happened), I helped people apply professional communication principles to church communications using the computer. Most people doing communications in the church had little or no professional training and now the computer and desktop publishing required them to do all the work an advertising agency did in the past: choose and set type, do design, write, choose artwork, get the project printed.

I helped church folks learn and apply these skills to their church communication projects. A better looking bulletin, an effective newsletter, a postcard that was well-designed, those were the projects I taught. People came into my seminars confused and frustrated and left feeling confident and equipped. As the samples they sent me showed, simple communication training helped many people turn chaos on paper to understandable, ministry-effective communications. My early teaching was needed training for the new computer tools now ubiquitous in churches.

Software soon made design decisions for people

However, as technology advanced, particularly with the development of Microsoft Publisher and the templates available in it—I found I no longer had to teach people how to select type or create columns in a newsletter. The software did a lot of the basic design work, but church people seldom had the design training to make the most of the software and there was much to share on how to modify the templates and make things look better. My teaching approach in my seminars broadened, but still remained focused primarily on improving communication creation skills and creating better-looking communications projects.

As the software got better, teaching design, layout, and what typeface to select wasn't nearly as important as it had been in the past. Though the skills were still important and necessary, what I realized was also needed was a *new vision for how we use our church communications and the realization that we needed to create and use communications intentionally to move people from outside the church to mature discipleship*. The greatest looking church communication piece was worthless if it didn't move people along in the process. It wasn't enough for church communications to be pretty; they needed to work towards fully fulfilling the Great Commission.

Developing disciples a prior and present commitment

Before I explain how discipleship and design merged to form this system, it's important to understand the place of discipleship in my approach to ministry. I grew up in a Christian home and lived from sixth grade on in Colorado Springs. I attended a church that many of the founding leaders of the Navigators (a Christian group that emphasizes Bible study and discipleship, www.navigators.org) attended. In college I was involved in Navigator ministry, where I learned the importance of developing disciples. For many years I'd working in a variety of disciple-making ministries. I was married to a bi-vocational pastor and we had been very successful in growing ministries in the churches we worked with, but somehow, before that day in the trailer at the Shaddleback conference, I hadn't really combined what I knew about developing disciples with what I knew about church communications.

Previously communications was one area of my life; disciple-making was another. I used communications to create pieces to promote and teach, but until that day I'd never realized how the two were intertwined. To help me make the connection it took more than Pastor Rick's inspiration and Purpose-Driven theology. It took cookies.

How Debbie Field's cookies completed the plan

A clarification may be necessary. I'm not talking about the kind of cookies that sneak into your computer and junk up your hard drive. I'm talking about real cookies, not computer cookies, but munchy, chocolate chip cookies, sugar cookies, crunchy peanut butter cookies, the kinds of cookies you can dunk into milk. At the time of the conference, there were few people who made better cookies like these than Debbie Fields.

I'd been reading about Debbie Fields and her plan to market her cookies. Her contagious enthusiasm and marketing success inspired me. Based on her inspiration I had been working on some articles and seminar material on the five steps of effective sales and how sales theory might help people understand, in a practical way, the progressive nature of sharing their faith. If the traditional five steps of effective sales could be used in an innovative way as Debbie Fields had to grow her cookie business, I wondered if the five steps of effective sales might provide a sequential template useful for effectively growing churches.

The need for a sequential approach to church and discipleship growth

I felt a sequential process to bring unchurched people into the faith was necessary in ways not needed in the past when Christianity was part of our culture. In my ministry life, it seemed like it had become a lot more complex to share Jesus. In the past, in some ways it was much easier because even if someone disagreed with you, they at least knew what you were talking about when you asked them if they believed Jesus was the Savior. Those were also the days when I remember in the secular, public school I attended in Georgia, our teacher would read us a Bible story and say grace before lunch every day.

Nobody thought that was wrong—Christianity was part of our culture.

The Four Spiritual Laws and other quick and simple ways to explain the gospel worked well for sharing my faith in college (and can still be part of the process), but our world today presents new challenges.

The world in which we share the Christian message today

We now live in a post-Christian world, where Christianity is no longer the bedrock of our culture, not only in morals and values, but in simple understanding of what it's all about.

Becoming a Christian for someone who has no previous experience with the Bible or Christianity takes more than a quick one-time challenge if that person is to make an informed decision. Unchurched people need to go through a process, often involving many contacts and communications to make an informed decision about Jesus.

In the past, though people might not have agreed with it or wanted to be part of Christianity, most people understood that becoming a Christian meant a way of life under the Lordship of Jesus. They knew what the Bible had to say about how a Christian was supposed to live even if they didn't want to have anything to do with it. Christianity was an understood part of our culture in the past in a way that was no longer true.

We could babble on about postmodern loss of absolutes and values and how truth doesn't mean real truth to most people and all that, but the bottom line is that it's a whole lot harder and it takes lots more time to help folks understand the Christian terms you are using and what the church is about before you can expect them to understand who Jesus is and to make an informed decision about following him.

The gospel is not a product to be sold quickly

We've all been in a situation where a slick and emotionally manipulative sales person talked us into making a purchase we didn't fully understand. In a similar way it seemed that if we weren't careful, we could present the gospel in emotional, flashy ways where people might make an emotional response, without knowing what they were literally buying into.

Even more tragic than an unthinking initial emotional response would be for people to think they secured salvation if they had no concrete understanding of the authentic, uncompromising, graceful and yet demanding, Jesus of the Bible. He is the one who did not say, follow me and pick up goodies; he said follow me, take up your cross, and die to yourself.

In many ways our world had become a lot more like the one in which the Apostle Paul would reason for days with people explaining the background, proofs, and expectations of the Christian life and the reality of Jesus. Paul took lots of time; he had a process. He taught, argued, wrote letters, prayed, followed up, trained others.

As I thought about these things, suddenly, in that stuffy trailer, sitting at a little desk with papers strewn all over the floor, I began to scribble frantically as cookies, evangelism, selling and discipleship all came together for me.

The initial draft of The Five Steps was something like this:

- Sharing our faith in our post-Christian world required a process.
- The church provides the setting for the process.
- The Purpose-Driven model was a 5-step model that consists of 5 purposes: Evangelism, Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry and 5 groups of people: Community, Crowd, Congregation, Committed, Core ***footnote for Purpose-Driven purists: As with any system, over the years Rick Warren has rearranged the order of some of the steps and variations.*
- Sales theory consisted of 5 steps: SEE, SAMPLE, SELECT, STAY, SELL
- Debbie Fields had taken the 5 steps of sales theory to create an extremely successful business.
- Debbie Fields' example could make the Purpose-Driven model practical, if it was applied to sharing the gospel in place of selling cookies.

The Five Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing came together as an overall foundation for church communications when I realized that the five steps in the selling process would mesh perfectly with the five purposes of growing a church, like this:

Step One: SEE

In sales first people have to simply see your product. If your product is cookies, you open a cookie shop in a high traffic location, such as a mall, which was a totally new idea when Debbie Fields did it. You get cookies baking and people smell the cookies.

For the church, people might physically see your church, but when you decide to advertise an event (Halloween Trunk or Treat, Divorce Recovery, Community Picnic, Parenting classes, whatever) or aggressively promote your worship service, that enables people to *see how the church can be useful to them or can touch their life*. It's the difference between seeing a package of cookies on the shelf and actually experiencing the smell of cookies baking.

Step One, Purpose-Driven tie-in:

The first group we want to reach is our Community, the purpose is Evangelism. Just getting them to see that we have something that might be of value to them is our goal at this step. Outreach events are a way to do this and the communication pieces we create to get them there are instrumental in making the connection.

Step Two: SAMPLE

Like Debbie Fields did with her cookies, you want people to sample your product. She stood outside her store and offered hot cookies.

With your church, you have to give people a little sample of what your church is like when they attend your event. The bulletin handed out as folks come in the door or the information and come-back-for-more sheet given to them as they leave a special event are the sugar cookies of the church. If these communication pieces don't meet needs, answer questions, or make people feel confused or left out—if they don't taste good to hurting hearts or seeking minds, chances are people won't come back for more.

Step Two, Purpose-Driven tie-in:

The group in this step is the Crowd, these are the folks who show up to the church for Worship. We've got to create pieces that are structured in a way so they provide an appealing and realistic sample of what our church is about.

Step Three: SELECT

Debbie Fields found that if people liked the samples, they came back and bought the cookies. After sampling your church—helpful bulletin, great service, informational website—if done well, these communication pieces and events will bring people back and help them select the church as the place they want to be for worship.

You also want them to make the most important selection of their life when they decide that Jesus is the true way to God and to select his plan of salvation from the many competing religious messages in our world.

Step Three, Purpose-Driven tie-in:

The group that buys into the church is the Congregation and the purpose here is Fellowship. Many communication pieces are needed to make connections with the people, the church, Jesus, and each other.

Step Four: STAY

Debbie Fields wasn't content with one cookie purchase, she wanted folks to make her cookies become their cookie of choice and for people to come back and buy more frequently. To carry on the church analogy, you want people become followers of Jesus, join your church, come back every week, and frequently partake of the sacraments and services.

Step Four, Purpose-Driven tie-in:

These are the people in the church who are the Committed and Discipleship is the purpose they pursue. Continuing church attendance can't be taken for granted. We must continuously connect with and instruct people if we want them to continue with our church.

Step Five: SELL

Best of all, Debbie Fields wanted everybody to enjoy the cookies so much they would share their cookies with their friends. The analogy follows that if you have done a good job to this point and grown your people in their faith that they become so excited about Jesus and your church that they reach out to their friends, invite them to church, tell them about Jesus, and begin the disciple making cycle all over.

Step Five, Purpose-Driven tie-in:

Ultimately those who are most convinced of and dedicated to the church become the Core and they “sell” their faith most effectively. Church communication pieces at this level can work to encourage people to share and they can also provide tangible communication pieces for people to use as they share.

I began to work on a chart to illustrate this process

The chart needed a bit more refining because growth to Christian maturity isn't nearly as easy or appealing as munching lots of cookies.

In a church setting the people do not go through the steps automatically. Now that the process was in place, it was obvious the area that I needed to expand the practical ways to get people from one step to the next. The tool to do that was obvious: communications. In addition, what was needed was not just any church communication pieces, that looked good, but communications with a plan and purpose.

Simply creating random communications, no matter how professional or pretty they might be, were not the answer. Communications, to be effective, needed to be part of a progressive system to take people from outside the church to Christian maturity.

We can have the most orthodox, correct and cutting edge theory, but tangible communications, in print and online, that inform people about the decisions they need to make at each step: come to church, join the church, take this class, join a small group, sign up for service, witness to your faith, get the job done. Communications, in print and digital formats must clarify what people need to know, what decisions they need to make at that point, and then motivate them to the next step. After more than a little time in trial and error, the chart of the five steps resulted, which is covered step-by-step in detail in the next chapter.

In addition to being a great way to organize a church communication program, the chart revealed a reason why many churches aren't growing today

The more I studied this system, it seemed obvious that a major reason most churches aren't growing overall in numbers and most people aren't growing in spiritual maturity is that few churches are intentional about the communica-

tions they need to create to make personal and church growth occur. Most pastors and church leaders want their churches to grow, but a desire to have your people grow without clear communications on exactly how to define it or how to do it doesn't change anyone's life.

In addition, almost no church strategically creates communications to move people from one step of Christian maturity to the next, for example:

- Outreach marketing is done with little thought about how people will be involved in anything outside the special event. How to connect with the church or what the church would like guests to do next is seldom communicated.
- Church bulletins and websites often list events with little relationship to anything else in the church. There is no clear path of what to do next to progress in Christian maturity.
- Connection cards are often not used to do anything other than gathering another name for the database.
- Departmental communications in the church seldom refer to any department but their own which results in the church audience not understanding if or how the various parts of the church work together to help them grow in their faith.

We need to learn to do our individual church communications with the overall goal of discipleship for every member.

We need to always let people know not only what event is going on now, but how it relates to other Christian exploration and growth opportunities in the church. One of the best examples of this is what can be done when we create seasonal communications. How to use these times most effectively is covered in depth and with specific materials for various holidays on my website: www.effectivechurchcom.com. Please take the time to sign up for my free email updates, which let you know when new, free, seasonal materials are posted.

For example when Christmas is coming up, you can equip your people to invite others to special events with invitation cards and postcards. When people come to a special event you can clearly explain in your bulletin and other church materials what is going on and why Jesus truly is the reason for the season. In the same communications you can invite them back to regular events at your church and clearly explain what you offer for them. You can have a website that gives them extended explanations about your church, the Christian faith and how to find out more. You can follow up with seeker Bible Studies or small groups.

If we keep the Five Steps of Effective Communication and Marketing in mind, for both seasonal events and any other communications, we won't only concentrate on the piece in front of us, but we will always be asking these kinds of questions as we put together church communications:

- How can this communication piece get people to come to church or visit our website for the first time?

- How can this church communication answer questions of people who may know nothing about the church?
- How does this communication portray the church so people will want to find out more and how can we help them find out more?
- How can this communication help people take the next step in their faith journey?
- How can this communication help visitors and seekers come to know Jesus as Savior?
- How can this communication help church members and new believers grow in their faith?
- How can this communication connect people with the training or resources they need to continue on the path of spiritual maturity?
- What do we want our people to do next to involve them in service to their world? How can we use this communication piece inform them?

These questions are important to consider no matter what the form of our communication, whether it is print or digital, on paper, online, or on a screen. Success in our ability to use a specific method is meaningless if we don't have a disciple-building purpose for the communication.

Without the overall vision of The Five Steps, we also aren't making wise use of the powerful tools we have

Part of my frustration as I was integrating cookies, church growth, and ministry marketing, was the realization that we've got incredible communication tools today in personal computers and the communication creation software, but churches didn't seem to be communicating much better with these tools than they did before they got them. My frustration was that we can use these tools extremely well and at the same time, without a vision, we create more and more great communications with little eternal impact because they were often created in churches in a scattered and unrelated way.

The way these tools were being used was as if a carpenter was asked to build a house. The carpenter then creates a counter top and places it one end of the building site. He then constructs a beautifully crafted door, cuts some floor planks, nailed together some roof beams and scatters each project in various places on the building lot. If we had contracted with this carpenter to build a house, we probably wouldn't be terribly impressed if he walked us around the site and showed us the beautiful, scattered projects.

We'd want to know when he was going to get the house built. Each little project was nice enough, but they didn't build anything.

We've been instructed to build disciples. I wondered what our Master Carpenter thinks of our scattered communication projects as we work to complete that project. Some churches create an impressive website, a beautiful bulletin, or overall church brochure. Sometimes they hammer publications out wildly as

needed. But careful or haphazard, I realized if communications aren't created in a thoughtful, sequential way, they won't any more build disciples than the scattered construction of separate building projects will build a house.

The chart was launched and it has proved to be useful

My chart and the teaching based on it has gone through minor revisions over the intervening years, but the core ideas have remained incredibly useful as a way to help those who use it intentionally to build an effective church communication ministry. The Five Steps gives a purpose and a goal to a church communications and moves them from random, reactionary, separately produced pieces into a strategic system to help the church accomplish her goals and ultimately to fully fulfill the Great Commission.

The next chapter will give you a more detailed view of the various communication pieces that make up each step and how they work to move people through the disciple-building process.

Have some cookies while you create your communications—they always make the process more enjoyable.

Overview of the Five Steps

This overview is a little like the Trip-tiks from AAA, or for our digital age, similar to the directions on Mapquest. Though you can't actually taste the chili from the roadside stand you discover in route, the overview gives you a sense of the direction of the journey.

To continue the analogy, no doubt later, you'll want to linger at various destinations, for example, take time to discover all that goes into creating an effective church bulletin or website, which are presented in depth on the training site sections of my website (www.effectivechurchcom.com) or in other ministry publications. But for now, it helps to see the big picture because no matter how tempting each stop, you must keep the overall journey and destination in mind if you are to reach your goal.

To focus too long on one piece of church communications would be like camping out at a rest-stop. A stop might be necessary for a time, but you don't want to stay there. Today lots of churches spend inordinate amounts of time on their website, lots of fun perhaps, but to focus solely on that would be similar to camping out at a scenic overview, prettier than the rest stop maybe, but still, not the goal of the journey.

The destination of the church communication journey is to fully fulfill the Great Commission, to bring people to Jesus and to help them grow to maturity in him. It takes all of the steps and lots of effective communications to get there.

Overview of The Five Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing

The Five Steps of Effective Church Communication and Marketing:

#1 INVITE

#2 INFORM

#3 INCLUDE

#4 INSTRUCT

#5 INSPIRE

For each step I will:

- Label the step
- Define the task it is to accomplish
- Define the target audience it is primarily addressed to
- List the marketing strategy for that step
- List the ministry goals it is to accomplish
- List the communications that will accomplish this task
- Give additional notes on the implementation of this step

Please note: actual examples of the kinds of communications that make up The Five Steps, and comments on what makes them individually effective are illustrated and commented on in videos and individual training sections on the website, www.effectivechurchcom.com and publications about individual communication pieces. Once again, the individual pieces (bulletins, postcards, websites, et. al) will be much more effective in moving people from outside the church to spiritual maturity, if you have a strategic understanding of where they fit in the whole process of fully fulfilling the Great Commission.

No piece stands alone and is effective; all of them work together to one goal. All of them should help people take a step in their faith journey to mature discipleship.

Don't get distracted with design or creation concerns

As important as design and creation issues are, they are not the most important aspects of a church communication program. That is very hard for some people to hear, but from years of observing churches and the results of their communication, I've seen its truth. Great looks alone on a few pieces do not make a disciple-building communication program. People are not wowed into the kingdom.

At the same time, be assured that good design, great images and layout and especially well-used typography can make an important contribution to the

effectiveness of individual communication pieces. I personally love working on the design aspects of communication (I do all the publication design, layout, typography of my books, create my covers, etc.), but I am know that what will help you reach your world and grow your people into Christian maturity is not my designs—Lord willing, it is useful content.

My website has many materials that will help you with design from choosing software to the details of image selection, typography and many related areas, but don't get distracted by the details before you have a good grasp of the big picture. Once you understand all the communication pieces and processes that are necessary to lead your people to mature discipleship, you can go back and fine-tune your creation of the individual pieces.

While keeping in mind the big picture, don't be overwhelmed by it

In the next few pages I'll present in detail, what can be an overwhelming vision for church communications, especially for those of you who are struggling with cut-back or always small church staffs and staggering work loads—in other words, most church offices.

Please don't think you have to implement every communication piece with a perfectly structured plan to move people step-by-step to Christian maturity or you won't create effective communications. That isn't essential or possible.

Think about the following overview like this: when fashion designers (think Project Runway if you ever watch that on TV or some of the outrageous outfits you see each season in magazines) create runway fashions, they do not create these show pieces for the average woman to wear. They create a look, an ideal that other designers then use as inspiration. The copy of the designer dress that appears at J.C. Pennys can still be recognized as related to the ideal, but it is done up in a much more practical form.

That may have been a bit odd as an analogy, but I hope it makes sense. The following overview is an idealized design of the many church communications that make up an overall effective church communication ministry with the overall goal of making disciples. Of course you can't implement things all at once or even in several year's time. But if you are inspired by an over-arching vision and begin to look at all your projects as part of a ministry whole instead of isolated communications that look good, but serve little purpose beyond the moment, the parts of your program will become more and more effective.

Sit back, relax, have some coffee and watch each step parade before you in the following pages. Enjoy and be inspired.

The Five Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing				
TASK	Target Audience	Marketing Strategy	Ministry Goals	Key Communications <small>Far from exhaustive, the practical tools that will help move people from one step to the next.</small>
Step #1 INVITE	Unchurched people Visitors Community	See	Identify the church Unchurched into the church Become regular attenders Evangelism	Print & Digital Versions Identify pieces: logos, business cards, stationary, signage; Outreach: invitation cards, postcards, ads, door-hangers, tracts; Outreach support publications; Signage. Websites, emails, video, podcasts.
Step #2 INFORM	Visitors Regular Attendees Crowd	Sample	Personal Salvation Learn about the Church Join the Church Worship	Print & Digital Versions Bulletins & Bulletin Inserts; Visitor & Prayer Cards; Visitor & Member Communications; Gospel Presentations, Doctrinal & Denominational Literature; Church Overviews; Overall Church Newsletters. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #3 INCLUDE	Church Members Committed Attendees Congregation	Select	Participate in Church Events Experience Ministries beyond Sunday Morning or main meeting Fellowship	Print & Digital Versions Age, life-stage program info & PR: children, youth, singles, seniors, etc. Ministry specific: Newsletters, brochures, calendars, event info and PR. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #4 INSTRUCT	Involved Members & Attendees Committed	Stay	Spiritual Growth and Maturity Biblical Training Small Group Participation Discipleship	Print & Digital Versions Training materials: for all age and life-stage groups; Teachers: manuals, support materials; Corporate devotional and Bible reading; inspirational reminders Small group: PR, lessons, support. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #5 INSPIRE	Leaders, Workers, Key Volunteers Church Staff: professional, bi-vocational & lay Core	Sell	Ongoing Service & Outreach Lifestyle & Church Ministry Consistent Giving Missions Involvement Ministry	Print & Digital Versions Volunteer & Staff: recruitment, training, affirmation; Equipping publications; Encouraging & Inspiring materials; Financial publications; Missions involvement and support. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking

Overview of Step #1: INVITE

Task: The task is to invite people, to simply get them into the church, or to attend a church-sponsored activity or ministry. Your communications don't have to do or explain too much, just get folks there.

Target audience: Unchurched people, visitors, your Community.

Marketing Strategy: SEE and not only physically see your church, but see how it can be part of their life; see the church as a source of spiritual information, caring, the start of a spiritual journey.

Ministry Goals: Identify the church; bring the unchurched into the church, have visitors become regular attenders; Evangelism.

Communications that invite people to your church include: business and invitation cards, postcards, flyers, door-hangers, direct mail, outreach-

oriented parts of your website. Developing a logo and identity package is often a foundational step here.

Additional notes about Step #1: INVITE

When many church leaders and communicators think about church marketing, creating the communications described in this step to get people to attend the church or an event or ministry is usually all they consider. However, marketing, when used properly in a church setting, (see Chapter Three on Ministry Marketing for a true vision of marketing in the church) is always going on as you constantly need to inform people of ministry and spiritual growth opportunities that will move people to the next step of Christian maturity. In our secularized world, people need to be constantly, winsomely, and clearly reminded of why they need to attend events or become involved in ministries that will help them mature in their Christian life.

To implement this step of invitation most effectively requires a team effort in the church.

The communication step of inviting is more than outreach with a postcard marketing program you buy and are done with it. Effective inviting and outreach requires total church involvement with each part of the church involved in these ways:

- **The leaders** cast a vision of why people should come to the church or ministry event.
- **The staff** creates the communication pieces, including the website as the foundation of information, plus the additional digital and print materials that will clarify and help people connect with the events. They prepare the invitation pieces to give to the congregation.
- **The congregation** members are the ones who then take the invitations, postcards, and emails to connect their friends and unchurched acquaintances with the activities going on in the church.

Impersonal, mass communications either in print or online can be used periodically to cast a wide net, but the most biblical and effective invitations are ultimately personal. At the church you need to train your people to be inviters, and then give them the tangible tools (invitations, invitation cards with the connecting details) that will help them connect their friends to your church.

The training and resources available on www.effectivechurchcom.com, and from the various resources of this ministry will enable your church communicators to create professional, outreach pieces. It might take a little more time initially to learn how to create your own outreach pieces, but they will be much more effective because they have been created for a specific audience in mind. They will be uniquely yours and you won't experience the embarrassment of your church sending out the same mass-marketed Easter invitation sent out by three other churches in your city (as happens every year in our town).

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Step #5 INSPIRE	Leaders, Workers, Key Volunteers Church Staff: professional, bi-vocational & lay Core	Sell	Ongoing Service & Outreach Lifestyle & Church Ministry Consistent Giving Missions Involvement Ministry	Print & Digital Versions Volunteer & Staff: recruitment, training, affirmation; Equipping publications; Encouraging & Inspiring materials; Financial publications; Missions involvement and support. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking

Overview of Step #2: INFORM

Task: once you get people to the church or ministry event, you need to inform them in complete, clear, consistent, and caring ways about what is going on at the worship or church event they are attending. They also need to be informed about the big picture of what else is going on in the church and where this particular ministry or event fits into the overall program of the church. Always keep in mind that visitors may have no idea what else your church does.

Target Audience: Visitors, regular attenders, the Crowd.

Marketing Strategy: Sample, you want people to sample your church—the Sunday service and various ministries.

Ministry Goals: Personal salvation; learn more about the church: join the church; Worship.

Communications that inform people include: church bulletins, church bulletin inserts, church connection cards, PowerPoint® presentations, introductory brochures, visitor communications in both print and digital formats, visitor packets; overall church information and departmental sections (youth, children's, singles' and similar sections) on your website and in brochure format; follow-up special event handout materials.

Additional notes about Step #2: INFORM

This step is incredibly important because studies show approximately 70% - 90% of people who visit our churches do not return. I believe the communications we give folks when they visit has quite a lot to do with this.

Think about it: often, the first piece of Christian literature an unchurched person sees is your church bulletin. Scary thought isn't it? What does it say to them?

If it is filled with jargon, incomplete information about events that only longtime members understand, and if there is no order of service so they have no idea what is doing on, the visitor quickly assumes this is an insider club, they obviously don't belong, and they may not return.

In addition to not informing visitors about what is going on when they first attend your church, typically, most church communication ministries drop off considerably after this step in communications to the church membership itself. This happens because, unless you have a team doing communications, the overworked church staff typically has time to get basic communications such as the bulletin, newsletter, website, and staff assignments done, but no time for anything else.

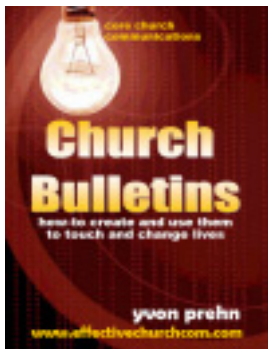
It is essential that your church form a communication team if you want to go beyond simply inviting people to your church and giving them the most basic information. In most churches you need to increase the number of communications produced beyond what you are currently doing if you want your church to grow and your people are to continue to grow in their faith. One or two overworked people in the church office, no matter how dedicated they are, can't do it all.

Special events also require special informational communications.

Effective use of Step #1 gets people to the event, but getting them there is not enough. We must be intentional about how we communicate when people come because the typical approach of most churches, when hosting special events (alternative Halloween celebrations, Easter children's or music events, Christmas plays, etc.) is often the unspoken assumption, just because you host an event, that: "Folks will think we are a neat church and come back next Sunday and if they have kids they will bring their kids to Sunday School." This is a totally false and misleading assumption!

People in our post-Christian, unchurched culture, often have no idea what a church does on a typical Sunday morning or that something called "Sunday

Two books that are incredibly helpful for this step are the books below on Church Bulletins and on Connection Cards. These are practical and detailed books that will greatly improve the information step for every church. Both are available from www.lulu.com/yvonprehn.



School” or “PromiseLand” or “Kids Kove” or whatever you call it exists. Nor do they have any idea what goes on there. YOU MUST give people specific information on what else you do and specifically invite them to it. Again, see the many materials about this (most free) on my website, www.effectivechurch.com. Church communicators must constantly remind themselves that what is obvious to those who work for the church isn't to those outside the church office bubble.

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Overview of Step #3: INCLUDE

Task: For people to grow in the Christian faith, they need to be included in more than Sunday morning. It is vital, if people are to mature, that the church communications actively work to include them in more than the worship service. At this step the church communications shifts from primarily external-focused communications and marketing to internal communications and marketing.

Target audience: Church members, committed attenders, the Congregation.

Marketing Strategy: SELECT, at this step you want people to select the church as **their church**; this is where they go on Sunday, this is the center of their church involvement.

Ministry Goals: Participate in church events, experience ministries beyond Sunday morning or the main meeting, Fellowship.

Communications that include people consist of: parts of the bulletin, the overall church newsletter and ministry brochures, flyers, visitor information center materials, with the details about events repeated in print and online. Communications at this step must intentionally take people who have shown up for an event to the next step of involvement.

For example, when you do PR for small groups, be sure maps, small group descriptions, how to contact the leaders, what to do to participate are all readily available if you really want to include people into them instead of only informing people about them. Connecting details are essential to take people beyond the step of information to inclusion.

Web-supported calendars, reminder emails, web-based explanations of programs and PR are also part of this step.

Depending on the age and demographics of the subgroup you are working to include, web-based social networking sites such as Facebook, text messages, Twittering, and other small screen and social-networking forms of communication can be used effectively to include people into fellowship groups and church events. It seems like some new method of digital connection is developed every week—you've got to be nimble and flexible. Give them a try. Don't be afraid to drop something if it doesn't work, but be prepared to be surprised at how much fun and useful many of these can be.

Additional notes about Step #3: INCLUDE

The most deadly phrase that can kill off communications at this point is: "Oh, everybody knows."

They don't. To get your people growing spiritually, you have to continuously communicate to them what the church office and staff know, but visitors and even frequent attenders don't. You have to constantly remind them about the ministries that can involve them in church life and lead them to Christian maturity. You have to remind them or teach them if they are new in the faith why they need to be involved.

The second most deadly phrase at this point is: "Call the church office for more information."

They won't. People today are extremely busy, and even if someone does call the church office, chances are they will simply get voice mail and end up more frustrated than when they started.

Communications whose purpose is to INCLUDE people in church events must provide all of the information for people to make an initial connection. Every communication piece should give people all the information they need to attend the event without any extra steps needed. Requiring a second call, more than an extra click or two on the website, or the requirement to ask or make a connection with another person for information will result in a significant drop in response.

In practice, this means if you want people to sign up for something, give them all the details, about the event and the direct email or phone number to sign up or the address where they are to show up. Don't require them to call someone at the church office to find out the specific time or location or to take the extra step to call and find out what person to call to sign up and find out where an event will take place.

The church is usually not the number one priority in people's schedules today

You must make it as easy as possible for them to be included in events that will grow them in their faith. You cannot make it more difficult to show up for a church event than it is to decide to go to a movie or Starbucks. If people have to take steps, jump through hoops, try to get information from a church office where no one answers the phone, or navigate through a website that hasn't been updated in months, they won't bother.

In addition to not assuming that people will know the details of time, location, etc., that will connect them with the activities in your church, please do not assume that people will know why they should bother to attend. You have to communicate the benefits, not in marketing way, but in a true biblical way.

For example, most newcomers to the church, or even many longtime members have no intrinsic, burning need to be in a small group. People are very busy today and they have lots of options for their spare time. A notice or two in the bulletin, listing the benefits of being in a small group as "a time for intimate sharing and prayers" might not be appealing to someone who has never prayed in a group before and has no desire to do so.

If you really want to involve people, you've got to work to find out what appeals to the folks you want to involve, not just what has meaning to you

Again, for the small group example, people were created for relationships, we know that ("not good to be alone," is a truth about us from the days of creation). As I write this, social networking on computers and cell phones is a very big deal. Maybe instead of talking about time "for intimate sharing and prayers" to advertise a small group growth campaign, I might use as a theme something like: "make the virtual, real." or "Love your cell phone? Try a Cell Group!"

Maybe. Probably not. I'm still working on this.

Try things, talk to people, get feedback from the people you want to reach before deciding on a campaign theme. I'm not sure what will work in any specific campaign ahead of time, but I do know if none of the hard work of well-thought-out, complete, and repeated communications are done, no matter how spiritually valuable the ministry, you will not get the involvement you would have if you did the hard, detailed communication work necessary.

In addition to newcomers, no matter how "mature" some folks in the church

might be, they need detailed communications to include them in the ministry tasks you want them to do. The church is not part of the everyday culture and of people's lives as it was in the past where often such details were not necessary. Sadly, so often in churches, instead of church leaders realizing they failed their people by not providing them with the communication tools they need to be successful to connect with ministries, leaders conclude that "people just don't care about spiritual growth or ministry service."

People do care and they care tremendously, but they need detailed communications online and in print to help them to connect with ministry tasks.

One more thing to remember as you work to involve people with your communications

This is depressing, so prepare yourself. People, in general do not trust, respect, or obey pastors or other church leaders in the same way they did in the past.

When I was growing up, if Pastor said you were supposed to be at an event, you were there. If Pastor said this program was important for your spiritual growth you showed up at that event. Furthermore, if you did not show up, Pastor followed up and wanted to know why you weren't there. Most likely next week you were at the church event.

It is an entirely different world today and not necessarily a more pleasant one. But it is what it is. People today are authority indifferent at best and often totally without civility towards leaders who voice any opinion they don't like. I mention this, not to moan and groan and talk about how awful it is, but to remind church communicators that you can't rely on your position for people to respond to your invitations to ministry involvement.

Position power aside, there are many ways we can serve people with our communications and help them see that the ministries offered will enable them to become all God created them to be. That is what the ministry of Effective Church Communications is all about. I really want to help you serve your people. If you can't find what you are looking for on my website email me at yvonprehn@gmail.com and I will try to help.

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Overview of Step #4: INSTRUCT

Task: Once you include people in events outside Sunday morning, you need to teach them something if they are to grow in their Christian life. This church communication function of intentional instruction in the Christian faith, in addition to the Sunday morning sermon, is often lacking in churches today.

One of the reasons why study after study shows that people who profess to be Christians live no differently than people who are not Christians is because many of them have never been taught they ought to live differently. People do not grow up in the faith and become mature disciples without intentional training and often this training requires a volume of Bible-based communication materials seldom produced today.

Target Audience: Involved members and attenders; the Committed.

Marketing Strategy: STAY, you want folks to stay and grow as disciples.

Ministry Goals: Spiritual growth and maturity, Biblical training, small group participation, Discipleship

Communications that instruct people include: Bible class outlines, teaching materials, take-home study guides, lists of verses, memory verse card materials, quizzes, adult and youth Sunday School quarterlies, teaching handouts, devotional reading suggestions, journal materials. Web-based in-depth discussion of class topics, reference materials, referral articles; web blogs on important topics, discussion rooms, question and answer opportunities. Extensive website linking to additional resources for your congregation can be incredibly beneficial.

Additional notes about Step #4: INSTRUCT

People have to have tangible, printed and online accessible material about the basics and advanced teachings of their faith if they are to grow in Christian maturity. Many churches bemoan the lack of Biblical, doctrinal, and denominational knowledge in church members today, but casual churchgoers aren't going to get it on their own. Simply attending services with an uplifting message and great music seldom grows mature believers. Even in churches that have the joy of a Bible-based preacher cannot grow believers with 30 minutes a week of training.

Bible study notes may be boring to produce, but they can be life-changing. Putting them on the website in addition to printing them is additional work, but adds additional opportunities for learning. People can review the notes online. If you encourage people to download, share and use the materials in their own teaching, you provide another opportunity to expand your teaching.

Apologetics isn't just for the unchurched

Apologetic training on the basics of defending the Christian faith is not only important as an evangelism tool but is also essential to give people the confidence they need in their Christian faith to enable them to share it.

It's hard to be a confident Christian who wants to share your faith if you are afraid someone will ask you a question like, "How is your Bible different than any other religious writing?" or "How can you say Jesus is the only way to God?" If you don't provide on-going instruction and the communications necessary to support learning in the many areas needed to grow your people, you are not fully fulfilling the Great Commission.

A class on *How we got our Bible*, with step-by-step handouts and website references to back it up, in contrast, can be a life-changing and disciple-making experience for your church members.

This step should also be intentionally multi-channel

Some who may not sit still to read their Bible, may listen to a series of podcasts about the Bible or audio version the Bible itself. Church-produced videos, which

can be extremely easy and inexpensive to do today, and can be shared on a church website can provide expanded teaching opportunities.

Christian radio provides teaching 24/7 from extraordinary Bible teachers. You should become familiar with what is offered and refer your people to it. Most people are listening to something on car radios and MP3 players; encourage them to make the most of this time by using it to grow in their faith from the teaching available on Christian radio.

Many materials are available for this step, you need to take advantage of them

One of saddest things about the lack of communications given to church members to instruct them in the Christian life is that there is an almost endless supply on them available online. Many of them are free and the only requirement to use them is the time it takes to download them. Some of the sources include:

Denominational resources: These are vast. Check out your denominational website for resources and links. If you belong to a smaller denomination or a nondenominational church, check out the ones of larger denominations.

Apologetic resources: www.equip.org

Bible study resources: www.blueletterbible.org

There are so many more, but rather than listing them here, go to my website, www.effectivechurchcom.com and you'll find lists and links to them under the category of "Spiritual Resources."

Overview of Step #5: INSPIRE

Task: Communication at this step goes beyond the "feel good" aspects of inspiration to inspire people with a passion to reach out to a lost world and to live lives of unselfish devotion to Jesus. At this step, inspiration also applies to inspiring members of various ministries, such as small groups, to reach out and invite friends to join them in a ministry.

Target audience: Leaders, workers, key volunteers; church staff, professional, bi-vocational, and lay; Core.

Marketing Strategy: Sell—at this step you want people to be actively sharing their faith with others by acts of service & mission. You want them invested in the church and showing it by the sharing of their time, talents, and treasure.

Ministry Goals: Ongoing service and outreach, life-style and church ministry, missions involvement, Ministry.

Communications that inspire include: The brochures, web entries, lists and flyers that form the tangible, touchable, communication instructions of how to get involved in a ministry. For example, people need to know the details such as these:

- how to help at the Rescue mission

- the schedule for the Habitat for Humanity build.

The Five Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing				
TASK	Target Audience	Marketing Strategy	Ministry Goals	Key Communications <small>Far from exhaustive, the practical tools that will help move people from one step to the next.</small>
Step #1 INVITE	Unchurched people Visitors Community	See	Identify the church Unchurched into the church Become regular attenders Evangelism	Print & Digital Versions Identity pieces: logos, business cards, stationary, signage; Outreach: invitation cards, postcards, ads, door-hangers, tracts; Outreach support publications; Signage. Websites, emails, video, podcasts.
Step #2 INFORM	Visitors Regular Attendees Crowd	Sample	Personal Salvation Learn about the Church Join the Church Worship	Print & Digital Versions Bulletins & Bulletin Inserts; Visitor & Prayer Cards; Visitor & Member Communications; Gospel Presentations, Doctrinal & Denominational Literature; Church Overviews; Overall Church Newsletters. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #3 INCLUDE	Church Members Committed Attenders Congregation	Select	Participate in Church Events Experience Ministries beyond Sunday Morning or main meeting Fellowship	Print & Digital Versions Age, life-stage program info & PR: children, youth, singles, seniors, etc. Ministry specific: Newsletters, brochures, calendars, event info and PR. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #4 INSTRUCT	Involved Members & Attenders Committed	Stay	Spiritual Growth and Maturity Biblical Training Small Group Participation Discipleship	Print & Digital Versions Training materials: for all age and life-stage groups; Teachers:manuals, support materials; Corporate devotional and Bible reading; inspirational reminders Small group: PR, lessons, support. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #5 INSPIRE	Leaders, Workers, Key Volunteers Church Staff: professional, bi-vocational & lay Core	Sell	Ongoing Service & Outreach Lifestyle & Church Ministry Consistent Giving Missions Involvement Ministry	Print & Digital Versions Volunteer & Staff: recruitment, training, affirmation; Equipping publications; Encouraging & Inspiring materials; Financial publications; Missions involvement and support. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking

6

chapter
5 Steps of
Effective Church
Communications & Marketing

Strategies

Strategy: etymology: Greek strategia generalship, from strategos

1. The science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war.

2. A careful plan or method; a method worked out in advance for achieving some objective.

adapted from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, copyright © 2008 by Merriam Webster, incorporated

You've seen the overview of the Five Steps of Effective Church Communication and Marketing that can take people from outside the church and progressively move them to Christian maturity.

You have the overview. You are in a position similar to how a general might look the overview of battle plans and know the objective is to take that beachhead or this bridge, but the general knows that it will take more than an overview of the battlefield to get from where the army is to where the army needs to be to declare victory. It takes strategy.

You need strategy: "the science and art of employing.....maximum support to adopted policies...a careful plan, ...a method worked out in advance for achieving some objective" to make The Five Steps practical and useful for your church.

We have objectives far more eternally significant than the capture of a beach or bridge. We want to help the mission field entrusted to us come to know Jesus and all our people to become mature in Christ. The following chapter will provide you with strategies to help you accomplish those objectives.

Strategies that apply to each of the Five Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing

The strategies you need to keep in mind for every one of The Five Steps are:

- Strategy #1: Create multi-channel communications
- Strategy #2: Divide your communication team into two production levels
- Strategy #3: Always be who you are, where you are
- Strategy #4: Don't let money be a determining factor
- Strategy #5: Do not confuse irreverence for relevancy

As with every other part of this book, the website, www.effectivechurchcom.com has lots more information available on the practical implementation of these strategies.

Strategy #1: Create multi-channel communication

In this time of ever-changing options for communicating in our churches, it is easy to be overwhelmed and we naturally want to simplify our communication workload. This is expressed by the question I get frequently in my seminars and through email when people ask me, "What is the best way to communicate with people today? Is it the web, email, or podcasting. Do we still need to do print? What works best?"

People may not realize when they ask that they are asking for a ranking of communication channels: print, online, web, small screen, and many more are the communication channels used to communicate today. When overwhelmed with channel choices, it is natural to want to narrow it down to one or two that will be effective.

I always feel bad as I answer because I know people want me to give them a simple answer and to tell them that one channel, especially if it is the one they prefer, is all they need, but I can't do that. I can't do that because to be effective in your church communication ministry, to fully fulfill the Great Commission, there is no *one* way.

Today to be an effective church communicator, you have to use every channel available to you.

It is the time of both/and, not either /or

No one channel will work because people aren't any more alike in their communication preferences than they are in other areas of likes and dislikes. Today there are also technical differences. Some folks love to go online; others don't have a computer. Some love words; others prefer images and videos. Some love to listen to podcasts; others don't have any idea what a podcast is.

Some text; some won't read anything that isn't on paper. It's challenging because all of kinds of folks just mentioned go to your church. We can't simply pick out one way to communicate because the Lord has put us into a body of wonderfully diverse people and it is our responsibility to create communications that are useful for all of them.

To make this situation manageable for practical application in church communications, I've divided the many communication channels into three overall groups, which will be discussed along with implementation ideas for each of them. It is much more difficult to communicate in all these channels, but I trust this section will encourage you and give you some strategic ideas how to be more effective as you work.

The three channels of effective church communication

Channel #1: Print

This channel consists of printed bulletins, newsletters, postcards, invitation cards, connection cards, instruction materials, printed matter of all kinds, sizes, and quality that we create in the church. Print, in color, black and white, and all its forms is still one of the primary and most important ways we communicate with people today and will be for some time. Almost everyone has access to this channel.

Channel #2: Digital

This channel is the latest tool we have to communicate the gospel message and we use it in PowerPoint® presentations, the internet, our website, email newsletters, cell phone and small screen communications, and anything else that makes up the newest, latest, and greatest communication technology. This channel is still emerging, developing in new ways, and expanding constantly. Not everyone has access to this channel and speed of adaptation varies tremendously with age and socioeconomic groups.

Channel #3: People

This communication channel is often easily forgotten, but it is probably the most important in any church communication program. You can have the most beautifully designed bulletin and the most complete and functional website imaginable, but if the folks at your welcome center ignore visitors and prefer to chat with each other, if the person answering the phone (assuming a real person can be reached) is having a really bad day and takes it out on all callers, or if the members of your congregation ignore visitors, the most beautiful and cutting edge communications, no matter if they are in print or digitally presented, will be useless. We are the church—the church throughout the ages is made up of people. Our people are always the primary message delivery tool of the gospel, accessible at all times to all people.

We are living in a time of great communication transition

We need to keep this transition time in mind as we consider the various channels of church communication. A few hundred years from now, things may settle down a bit and everyone will perhaps receive messages beamed wirelessly into their brain stem in a way that can be turned on and off with the blink of an eye, but right now we are in the midst of the biggest communication revolution in the history of humanity and this revolution floods us with communication options of every kind.

The church communicator's challenge is that people in your congregations, who you are trying to help grow to Christian discipleship, are in a variety of places in the process of this communication revolution. Some people are only comfortable with a style of technology that has been used from the time of Moses—words on a paper surface. Others are primarily comfortable with communication used from the creation of the world—the spoken word. Others are tiptoe on the bleeding edge of technology—with a Blackberry in one hand and an iPhone in the other. Some jump from place to place—some days glued to the computer screen and other days writing handwritten thank-you notes during television commercial breaks.

Is one communication channel “better” than another? Is one communication channel “more effective” than the other? Today we can only answer questions like this for individuals, not for a church or even a group within the church as a whole.

What are church communicators to do? If we can't focus on one communication tool, how can a church keep up?

The church can keep up with this constantly changing communication revolution in the same way it is successful in every other ministry endeavor and that is to realize that the task is not for one person, but for the body. No one person can keep up with technology; no one person can create all the communications needed for a church communications program to ministry to all of the people at all the various stages in their ability to take in communications. In practical terms this means:

You need a communications team made up of people who are proficient with the various channels of the communication revolution

Some who love print; some who dream in HTML code; some who love images; some who love type and words in order; some who can create a great postcard and others who can text with their eyes closed.

People tend to create best and promote the channels and methods they personally love and are comfortable with. You can't force a word-processing only church secretary to be excited about working on the website (although she might enjoy it with some adequate training). It would probably be just as

difficult to have someone who communicates primarily in text messages create a detailed, printed church employee handbook.

Encourage the communication strengths of people and give them training in new skills if they want to learn new areas. A great website for inexpensive online training is www.lynda.com. On this site for \$25 a month a person (and they have group rates also) can take as many online training classes as they want. I've taken ones on many topics from MS Word, MS Publisher, and PowerPoint to Adobe CS3, WordPress website creation, HTML, CSS, and PHP from them and have found them all to be extremely helpful.

Don't make the mistake of assuming people of a certain age are more interested or proficient in certain areas than others or that any age can't learn new things. There are grandfathers who have been programming since the days when a computer filled a room and there are teens who are tired of technology. There are baby boomers who run the gamut of the super-tech savvy to the completely computer phobic, as was the case in our home until I told my pastor husband I wasn't answering his emails for him anymore. I've used computers as a writer from when they were first invented, in contrast, computers were not in use when my husband attended seminary. Today we have his and her laptops. I caved in about the email—I still answer most of his email, but he now knows how to read them and do Bible research online.

The skills and ages don't matter; respect and mutual encouragement do

As stated earlier, age is unimportant, what matters is that the team mutually respects each other and realizes that every channel can be and is used today to communicate the gospel message. Team members must not allow expertise in any tool or technological skill to be a source of pride. Remember Jesus could at any time raise up the stones in the parking lot to praise him more effectively than any of us are able. We are to constantly build each other up in our work and to never make someone feel small or inadequate. Newer tools do not necessarily make superior communications.

Don't worry about changing the content of your message as you adapt it to different channels

The content of your message needs to be consistent. Your communication team can then take that content and then put out the message using the various channels. For example, perhaps your content is a campaign to get the congregation involved in small groups. The communication team members, using the same content and perhaps similar colors and images, can create a variety of communications to accomplish your ministry goals including: a print brochure, a bulletin announcement and insert, a PowerPoint® presentation, a website directory of small group times and locations, a print directory with the same information for the welcome center, an email newsletter designed to inform and encourage people to sign up. Each channel should repeat the message a number of times.

Never forget the people who don't have access to the easily created channels

It is very difficult to take time to do a print postcard for the three people who don't have internet access when fifty other people in the class are so easy to reach via email. Or to make a copy of the newsletter (in large print at that) and mail it out to the ten people who vow never to use a computer when everyone else in the congregation can access it on the church website.

Jesus left us a very clear example of what to do in these situations. He told the story of the shepherd who went after the one little sheep who wandered off. Jesus isn't nearly as concerned about the efficiency of our newsletter delivery as he is that we care for the wandering little sheep just as much as he does. That little sheepie was probably a naughty little sheepie and wandered off for no good reason. Jesus still went after him and carried him home lovingly. Sometimes we might feel that some folks in the church make our communication tasks more difficult just because they want to be onery—and that might be true. But Jesus still expects us to love and serve them, just as much as the rest of the congregation.

Finally, consider times in the church service when you demonstrate the various channels available and how to use them.

Sometimes people don't make use of certain communication channels because they simply don't understand how they work.

For example, using the idea of the small group ministry, perhaps during the church service you could demonstrate to the congregation how the website has a listing of groups, directions on how to get to them, the profiles of the people leading the groups, and lesson downloads for those who miss a week. In addition, you could show sign-up cards for those without access to the web and give out the phone numbers for people who have questions.

There are a number of new church management systems that allow church members to access their records online, including financial records. There are lots of exciting options for these kinds of programs, but unless you take extensive time teaching your congregation how to use them, they will be a constant source of frustration. New technology in any form is seldom as "intuitive" and easy to use for the members of the congregation as it seemed to be to the staff person who was excited about using it and who has spent hours learning how to use it.

There is an age issue to consider here

Many of us over a certain age did not grow up with computers and we don't always understand the language or certain practices that are second nature to people who grew up with them. It's not that we can't do things or are too stupid to learn—the lingo just doesn't make sense when we first hear or see it. It's often in funny, little areas that this comes up.

Over the last few years I've been learning how to do blogs and websites and I've discovered that they really aren't difficult once you learn the terminology. For example, what is a "dashboard" on a blog? I avoided getting a blog for months because I kept running into that term in statements like "really easy-to-use dashboard on this blog system...." and always the context assumed you knew what they were talking about. When I finally took an online video course on www.lynda.com about blogs, it showed you and explained that this was the page on the blog software that had all the different tools you needed to create blogs, organize them, etc. Made perfect sense the first time I saw one. Now I access the dashboards of various blogs and websites numerous times in the course of a day now and don't even think about it.

Keep that in mind and demonstrate for your people what might be obvious to you—you may get some people involved who were feeling confused or intimidated and were afraid to ask for help.

Offering your church communications in the various channels is true servant work

To create all the communications you need to create in all the channels necessary to reach all of the people you are called to reach is an almost impossible task. To be able to do it, we need to remind ourselves that we are not doing this to impress people with the variety of our communication offerings; we are doing this as an offering to Jesus and an acknowledgment of the precious value of every person to him.

The Apostle Paul called himself a "bond slave" of Jesus and sometimes it will seem like slavery to accomplish what he calls us to do. I realize it isn't popular to talk like this in our day when even people in ministry make totally inane statements like, "If it isn't fun don't do it." We don't do the hard work of creating our communications in a variety of channels because it is fun all the time (though sometimes it can be tremendous fun, that can't be denied), we do it because the hard work results in a variety of communications that are the most effective way to reach people. We all have jobs to do, that often are not fun, but that doesn't mean we don't do them.

The words of John Wesley, one of my heroes of the faith gave the following advice that I think is appropriate for this foundational strategy of multi-channel communication:

**Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.**

Strategy #2: Divide your communication team into two production levels

You need a team of communicators to get all the work done you need to in any size of church. Some may be paid staff, some volunteers, or they might be all volunteers. Whenever I mention volunteers in my seminars there is a gasp and the spoken or unspoken fear expressed, “What if I can’t get them to do what I want them to do? What if volunteers create materials that are not appropriate or up to the quality we want for the church?”

These are valid concerns and I’ve found that almost all of them can be answered if you divide your church communication team into two production levels.

A real-life example of the two production levels of church communications

Before I get into specific recommendations, let me share how this worked out in practice for me and what motivated me to come up with this division of labor in church communications. My pastor husband and I have worked for many years in Single Adult Ministry. A number of years ago, the group we were sponsoring was over 300 in membership and growing. I was doing all the communications as a volunteer, balancing that work with my ministry travels, seminar teaching, and writing. I did the overall newsletter, PR, and all the communications that related to the church: prayer requests, bulletin inserts reports, etc.

I realized as we grew that I did not have time to create all the PR material for many of the additional events that we had going on. More out of desperation than any well-thought-out plan, I announced that if someone was sponsoring an event for singles (we had a procedure in place for that) the person or team had to be in charge of doing their own PR.

An event came up and the young man and his friends who were sponsoring it were quite excited and more than happy to do up their own flyers for it. When he showed the finished result to me to me, my stomach knotted up. I estimated that he used almost every typeface he had on his computer on this one piece of paper and almost as many small pieces of clipart (yes, that is an exaggeration, but that is what it seemed like to me). He was so excited about it. I wanted to throw up; it was honestly one of the ugliest flyers I think I’d ever seen. It did have all the complete information; it gave good directions, had a map, and clearly explained what was going on, but to my designer-trained eye....it was ugly.

But did I tell him that?

I’m sure the Lord sent an angel to cover my mouth, but this is what I heard come out of it, “That is wonderful—thank you so much for all your hard work on it!”

He printed up the flyers in color (made it worse, I thought), mailed and gave them out. The event was a huge success.

I learned an important communication lesson. I learned that if you are a lonely single person and you find out about an event that is free, that nice folks will be at, that has food and free child care and you get a flyer that clearly communicates all of this—do you really care what typeface is used? Or how many pieces of clipart are on the paper? The core message was there, it told you how to get to the event. People came and their lives were blessed, even by (what I considered) an ugly flyer.

I realized then that a church communication ministry could have two production levels, one to be carefully managed and one to joyfully turn loose and encourage. As time went on we developed a communication team and a number of people developed skills in communication ministry. The Single's ministry flourished and I didn't have so many projects to try to fit into a crazy schedule.

In similar ways, I have found many churches are able to accomplish all the communications they need to fully fulfill the Great Commission if they are able to divide their communication ministry into two production levels.

The Two Production Levels of Effective Church Communications are:

- The PR Communication Production Level
- The Ministry Communication Production Level

It is important to understand these two levels in terms of:

- The communications produced in each one
- Who does the communications in each one
- The guidelines and standards for each one

For both of the levels are described following. Keep in mind the communications produced can be in either print or digital formats.

PR Communication Production Level

1. Communications produced

Overall pieces that represent the church or ministry area, such as the logo, stationary, business cards, primary bulletin, newsletter, major outreach pieces and major ministry brochures. In the case of a ministry within the church, the primary pieces and the pieces that interface with the church communications program overall would also be included.

2. Communications producer

Usually a staff person, whose job may or may not have other responsibilities. The larger the church, the more it is recommended that the church hire someone specifically to create and oversee communications. This could also be

done by a volunteer who has the time and commitment to work closely with the church staff, or who is in charge of a ministry communications program within the church as I was with the Single Adult group discussed previously.

In addition to being the primary producer of communications, this person should also be in charge of training staff or volunteers in the various ministry areas of the church so they can create the volume of materials that are needed to complete all The Five Steps. This training should include training in software (MS Publisher is best for volunteers) and in design expectations. My website, www.effectivechurchcom.com has lots on it that will help you in this area.

3. Communications standards

Usually somewhat strict, as these pieces reflect the overall vision and reputation of the church or of a ministry within the church. Also, this is the level where the standards are set for what is expected in all other communications. My recommendation past this first level (e.g. for the postcard that goes out to remind the guys of workday), be pretty flexible. If you try to be too strict in areas other than key communications, people just won't do them or they'll do them and avoid the church office entirely.

Ministry Communication Production Level

1. Communications produced

Everything else in the church outside the communications listed above, from very simple notices, lessons, flyers and announcements to more complex communication projects. These are the many, many pieces that are needed within individual ministries of the church. Some that come to mind include: children's, youth, women's, men's, missions, singles, etc. So often these ministries need communications done, but the church staff simply does not have time to do them. They may not get done if standards are too tight or the church staff is expected to do everything; events aren't promoted or explained; and the overall ministry suffers.

2. Communications producers

THIS IS IMPORTANT: here a staff person or perhaps a key volunteer may oversee, train, encourage and help, but that person cannot do everything needed for a complete publications ministry in the church, nor should they. Ideally, every ministry in the church (children's, youth, men's, women's, etc.) should have at least one person who can help do the communications needed for that ministry. Usually that person is a volunteer. At this level, the overall ministry communications staff member becomes a coach and encourager.

3. Communications standards: much more flexible

You do not need the same standards of design or perfection for a one-time postcard to remind the guys of the men's breakfast that you do for the four-color, outreach brochure for the church.

If you are too hard on volunteers, they'll quit. People do improve in communica-

tion creation skills with time, training, and encouragement and the ministry communication staff person needs to decide what is really important in standards and what simply picky personal preference is. Train to bring up to important standards and let the personal preference issues slide.

Remember, the Lord put us into a body in the church, in part so our gifts can help and build up each other. The Two Production Levels of Effective Church Communication gives you a way to practically live out this biblical reality.

Strategy #3: Always be who you are, where you are

God called you to a specific church, in a specific location, with a specific audience to reach for Jesus. As part of creating communications specifically for your audience, don't try to make your communications look like those from any other church and be cautious in the use of glossy, pre-done, nationally sold pieces. The same goes for fancy websites, the sort of expensive templates that all use beautiful, grinning people in the website headers.

Don't be guilty of bait and switch where you send out some slick, fancy piece, or have an over-designed website if you're a little church plant meeting in a basement. Big, glossy and professional is not always more appealing—many people are looking for a real, intimate, and honest interaction about God. They might miss you if you come across looking too slick and professional.

Keep in mind the parable of the talents

Jesus did not expect a person with one talent to do the work of the five talent person, but Jesus expected the one-talent person to make the most of what he or she had. If you are a tiny church with few resources, don't feel you have to create publications or a website like the ones you saw at whatever big church conference the staff most recently attended. Be who YOU are, communicate to your people with the resources you have, and the Lord will bless your efforts.

Variety is standard in professional communication

The reason there are so many different types of professional designs is because there is no ONE perfect way to create any one communication piece. An excellent example of this is the variety in magazines. Go to your local Barnes and Noble or other big book store and look at the magazines. The design, style, and even the paper used, is very different for *Architectural Digest* than it is for *Car and Driver*. Both are professional, well-designed publications, but both serve a very different audience and their style reflects that audience, not some absolute standard.

For the editor of *Car and Driver* to think he'd be more professional, or cutting edge if he created an issue of his magazine in the same style as *Architectural Digest* would make about as much sense as it makes for the pastor of a small neighborhood church pastor of 300 in a farming community to attend a mega-

church creativity conference in Dallas, come home and decide the church needs to create publications that look like the ones the mega-church in Dallas created. That is just goofy.

Why conference clones don't make a successful church communications program back home in your church

Goofy or not, it happens all the time. In seminar after seminar people come up to me and ask what to do after their pastor comes home from the big conference with a stack of samples or the notes from some design or web seminar they attended (usually given by a staff member of the mega-church who has absolutely no concept of the resources and realities of smaller church communication ministry) and ask that the church secretary to figure out how to create stuff like this. The person asking me is usually the church secretary or communication person who is overwhelmed with their current work and has no idea how to implement what is now asked. In addition, that person often knows that the proposed cloning of communications:

- requires a financial outlay in terms of software, images and reproduction systems that the smaller church most likely cannot afford,
- will create materials that might have worked for the conference-sponsoring mega-church, but are not appropriate for their little local church,
- requires the current communication person possess skills or software and a budget they don't have to create the desired results.

The sponsoring church of course has a way to solve the problem if you are not able to produce communications at your little church like the big host church—you can buy them! The mega-church offers templates, copies of their sermons, PowerPoints® slides, and graphics for sale on their website. To buy them is goofy multiplied.

For a little church, in a different state, with a completely different culture, to suddenly start handing out slick communication clones from a mega-church half a nation away *will not* automatically make you a big, impressive church. Visitors and spiritual seekers want authentic encounters with real people and purchased PR isn't the way to do it.

Doing our best does not mean imitating someone else

We all want to do the best we can for our churches, but to imitate communications created by a completely different church in a different setting, with totally different resources and audience is not the way to do it.

It's easy to forget that the big church currently admired, didn't create the fancy stuff they do now when they were a little church. The fancy communications they do now are not what got them to where they are when they sponsor the conference.

I've seen this reality firsthand. As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, I got my

inspiration for The Five Steps from a Shaddleback Church conference. One other thing I have from that conference is an 8 ½ x 11 manila envelope I purchased at their Resource Tent. It is filled with some black and white photocopies of examples of the communications they used to grow the church over twenty years ago when it was first starting. Needless to say, they are all very *different* than the pieces they use today.

What they used then was appropriate when they were a much smaller growing church; what they use today is appropriate for the mega-church in Southern California they are today. Don't confuse what is appropriate for a church at a different time and place in their growth process with what is appropriate for you.

In being yourself, keep in mind your church culture

By culture, I mean everything that makes your community and congregation unique. Your uniqueness can include everything from denominational distinctives, to ethnic mix, to local interests, to popular media for either the church itself or the audience you want to reach. I can make suggestions and give you practical tips, but you know your people best. Always create your communications with them in mind and tailor everything you do to appeal to them.

For example, I live in Southern California. For many years my husband and I were involved in a ministry targeted to older single adults. The way my husband and I created communications for that ministry group, in our location, would obviously have a different style and approach than communications created by a church staff for a holiday outreach for all age groups at a large mega-church in New York City, and both of ours would be different than the communications created for a college-age ministry in Kansas.

To be most effective, create communications for the different cultures within your church

The style of communications that will be effective for the youth group mission trip is not the same style that will work for the pre-school play group, or for the men's ministry, or for the ladies tea. Not only individual events, but most ministries within a church have a distinct personality and communications to that group will be more effective in direct measure as to how closely they understand and speak to the culture of that group.

The obvious way to make them most effective is to have someone who is part of the group be a member of the communications team of the church. People can be trained (not always quickly or easily, but it can be done) to use MS Publisher, to proof materials, and to get things in approximately on time, but it is very difficult to train someone in the culture of a group.

I cannot recommend strongly enough that you train people within various ministries to do their own communications. To give them a sense of ownership and to have them experience the success of consistent communications is

worth the time and expense involved. The bottom line is that when every ministry in your church is communicating (print, web, blog, tweet, newsletter, invitation cards, emails, postcards, Facebook, whatever it needs) every ministry will grow and the kingdom of God will expand.

Strategy #4: Don't let money be a determining factor

The Five Steps can (and I have seen examples of this many times) can be implemented in any size church and on any budget. If you have (or are) a faithful communication creator who uses only MS Word, or WordPerfect, or MS Publisher or whatever—wonderful, useful communications can be created. You do not need to use high-end, expensive design programs.

The Adobe Creative Suite, Quark and other high-end programs can produce amazing things, but if you aren't trained to use them incredibly well, someone who is well-trained in MS Publisher for example, can produce materials of comparable, or even better, quality. ***It is never the program that determines the quality of the final piece, it is the person who uses the program.***

My personal favorite for communication creation for most churches is MS Publisher. Some very large churches with complex print needs may need Adobe CS. I use Adobe products to layout the books I produce because MS Publisher doesn't handle longer documents as well.

However, book layout is a fairly specialized task and even churches who might use a more expensive program for some church communications, benefit from using MS Publisher to equip their communications team. Lots more about this topic on my website and in other materials, but MS Publisher is a great program, costs very little, and will create just about anything you can think of inexpensively and professionally.

In addition to being able to inexpensively create print materials, creating many web-based communications are FREE!

If you have no money, you can create incredible blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and all sorts of social networking communications for no cost, other than time. You can create great websites and have them hosted for no cost—see my section on my website about Websites for how. Podcasting costs very little (just the cost of a microphone and a \$29 one from Target is what I use to record mine) to create and nothing to distribute. Extraordinary artwork, images, and photos are all available on the web, legally and free. You can then create slick, glossy, professional publications and have them printed in days for bargain prices through online publishers. My website, www.effectivechurch.com gives you instructions and resources on these areas. More materials are being created that will go into detail in these areas. My next book project is one on creating websites with WordPress and lots of material associated with that. Be sure you are signed up for my email updates on my website to be notified of its release.

Loving people and Jesus and being in tune with what works for your folks, in your town, at your church, to the audience you are called to reach is far more important than attempting to create communications to meet some generic, professional publication standard, created by slickly marketed, high-end software, or buying communications from some company who tells you they are the answer to your needs if you will just spend a certain amount of money to do things for you. YOU DON'T NEED TO DO THAT!

You will always be tempted to spend more money for some new tool, but the training of your people and their commitment to fully fulfilling the Great Commission are the most important ingredients required to create of communications the Lord can use to change lives and you don't need much money to do that. If you have extra money, use it to feed hungry kids.

That last statement was not a gratuitous Christian remark. When we stand before Jesus, he will not ask us what software we used to create the glossy, four-color bulletin or if we pulled off a website with scrolling images in the header. We do have to let him know about what we did about hungry kids.

Strategy #5: Do not confuse irreverence for relevancy.

We serve a holy God.

There is a tendency today for some in church communications circles to use shocking or flippant language or advertising with the excuse of making the church appeal to the unchurched, or to make their communications appear cutting edge, professional, and contemporary.

This is wrong. As Jesus' ambassadors and representatives our words and lives are to reflect that. The Bible is clear in how this relates to our communications:

Eph 4:1; 25-31: Live a life worthy of the calling you have received. . . . Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. . . . Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Col. 4: 6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Graceful, worthy words, no corrupt communication, are just a few of the many, many worthwhile terms that should characterize our communications. As obvious as these passages seem, their message of holy, worthy words is not universally accepted in all circles of church communications today.

Some believe that it is OK, in the interests of sharing the messages of the

church, to use language that shocks, offends, or frustrates. In addition to language that would have caused my mother to wash my mouth out with soap, some of this persuasion believe sexually suggestive images on billboards and sermon topics will get people to church—where of course then a proper biblical message will be preached.

I categorically believe this is an unbiblical and unworthy approach. There is much that can be said about this (and a book is in process, after finishing the web one), but as politically incorrect as it may seem today, our communications need to reflect holiness and a holy God. Jesus somehow mastered the ability to be totally relevant and yet completely without sin. Perhaps if we study him more, rather than aping what appears to work in secular marketing, we might become better at relevance without irreverence.

Snarky, profane, and cynical is the default mode of secular communications, not Christ's followers

This is not easy to refrain from being snarky, profane, and cynical.

I personally struggle greatly with it. I grew up the daughter of a WW2, drill-sergeant, career military father, whose language was colorful to say the least and often critical. Like most kids, I naturally talk like my father, and it is a constant struggle to make my speech and communications reflect my heavenly Father rather than my earthly father. But that is what they must be if I am to communicate for Jesus.

Whether part of our upbringing or not, it is often easier to reflect the cynical, critical, superior tone of contemporary secular communications. That is the default tone of our sinful nature. To pick apart, to find fault, and to laugh the superior laugh of those in the know as opposed to those who create church communications that don't please our refined taste, can be delicious fun, especially if we can share it with like-minded cynical souls.

To carry that attitude into our church communications, to reflect the flippant, irreverent attitudes of the secular world in our communications becomes a goal. Thinking we have to communicate like the world to communicate to the world seems to be the savvy thing to do. But it isn't right.

Make it a matter of prayer

Pray for discernment in your choice of content, words, and images so you reflect our holy God in all you create in your church communications. Pray for discernment so you will create what is pleasing to the Lord as your primary audience, not an online coterie of witty communication critics.

This is an extremely serious issue, not one to be taken lightly or to be relegated to matters of taste or to dismiss it as the viewpoint only of old, out-of-it folks who don't know how to relate to the younger generation.

No matter what age group we attempt to reach, how we initially communicate the gospel message will have a lasting effect on how people live out their faith.

If Jesus is presented using profanity, off-color language, or overly sexualized advertising (which some members of the Christian communication community do and if you are not familiar with their work, consider yourself fortunate), how can we ever, with integrity challenge these believers to purity in speech and life? How can snarky become sanctified?

We must go beyond bad language and a critical attitude to make sure our communication correctly portrays Biblical reality. If Jesus is presented as the giver of your best life now and all the goodies you can desire from parking places to first class upgrades are yours if you follow him, what will we say when the new believer who bought into this version of Christianity is laid off with no health insurance and his wife discovers she has cancer? Or when a drunk driver kills a child? Or when work is downsized, hours cut, and even feeding the family becomes a challenge? How do you explain believers in other nations who are starving or the victims of genocide?

It is impossible to guide new believers to Christian maturity if you misrepresent the foundational truths of the Christian faith. Bait and switch in any area of advertising results in resentment and anger. Bait and switch in the presentation of the gospel can have eternally harmful consequences.

We can create professional, beautiful, and effective communications without reflecting the voice and values of the world around us

We are to be salt and light. This isn't easy to do, but it is what we must strive for. No matter how we do it, at the end of the day we always need to look at what we have created in our church communications and always ask, "Does this reflect a holy God? Is this Christ-honoring?"

I'm reminded of one of the prayers of the early Christians. As they waited in the dungeons below the amphitheater before being taken out at dawn to be torn apart by wild animals, they knew clearly what awaited them. There would be a huge crowd, screaming for their blood.

They also knew this was their last earthly chance to represent Jesus. How they died would be their last chance to witness for their Lord. History tells us they prayed:

"Lord Jesus Christ, don't let me cause you shame."

May that always be our prayer as we create communications for Jesus.

7

chapter 5 Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing

Characteristics

It's not just what you say but how you say it.

That statement is true in all of life. We speak with our actions as well as our words. Take serving a meal, for example. Getting the food from one person to another is a fairly simple operation, but what does it say about the people preparing the food and their opinion of the recipient if:

- They throw mystery meat and gluey potatoes on a metal tray and shove it to the recipient?
- They heat a microwave dinner and serve it out of the cardboard container?
- They fill a picnic basket with crusty French bread, soft Brie, and Jarlsburg Swiss cheese, imported ham, crisp apples and seedless grapes. Homemade chocolate chip cookies filled with pecans, white, dark and milk chocolate chunks are added for dessert. Depending upon your part of the country, either ice-cold sweet tea or iced herb tea accompany the food in an insulated thermos. The picnic basket contains plates & flatware in colorful colors and is tied with a bow. What does this say?

In the examples above, everybody got food. But how they got it and the content of the food makes all the difference in how the recipients were viewed by the cooks and no doubt in the recipient's response to it.

It's the same with The Five Steps. Every church needs them, but how you create them and the content in them makes all the difference—this chapter shows you how to avoid mystery meat and serve a picnic treat.

The Four Characteristics of Effective Church Communications are:

Every publication, in every step should have these characteristics if they are to be most effective at leading people to Jesus and Christian maturity:

- Congruent
- Complete
- Caring
- Consistent

Now I'll describe each characteristic in detail and how it works out in practical church communication ministry.

Characteristic #1: Congruent, what it means in practice

We can't only create Christian communications; we must live like Christians. I'm including this as a #1 characteristic because who we are in our obedience and love for Jesus as we create our communications is radically important. I intentionally use the word "radical" emphasizing it's meaning of "at the root." It's a little bit like the story of when the children of Israel conquered the promised land. We all know the story of how they took Jericho, but after that great victory because Achan took some of the treasure he was forbidden to take. Israel lost the next battle and Achan and his family died for his sin. I use this story as a reminder because though he was fighting the right battle, he didn't do it God's way. God's judgement seems so harsh, but I think this lesson is instructive when many churches have the greatest tools, equipment and design skills and still it doesn't seem like the Lord is blessing their work.

We need to take spiritual inventories

In my seminars I often remind church communicators that peace in the church office (and there are few things that can cause a lack of peace more than communication creation disagreements) is not an option. God cannot bless your communication efforts if there is sin in the camp. Being pleasing to the Lord goes beyond not fighting and should be the root of all we do in our church communication ministries.

Being identified as Christians, doing our work as church communicators should be more than a label. It should permeate not only the content of our message, but how we carry it out. Psychologists refer to this as being "congruent" which is what we are if our beliefs and practice match up.

In theological circles we refer the two areas of belief and actions as "orthodoxy," for right belief and "orthopraxy," for right living. We always need to keep these two areas in mind as we work out The Five Steps of Effective Church

Communication in our church communication lives. As communication representatives of Jesus, we want the two parts to be in agreement.

The orthodoxy part is, in some ways the easiest

We don't want to communicate false or unbiblical content. While all of our materials should be part of the process of either introducing people to Jesus as Savior or helping them grow to maturity in him and though these are our primary goals, the scope of communications needed to accomplish them is vast. It includes all the nuts and bolts communication of the church, including directories, manuals, postcards to remind folks of the elder board meeting and all the seemingly mundane business communications in addition to the colorful PR and outreach materials. All these communications bring in people, introduce them to the faith, and build up the church. It isn't difficult to check out our content to make certain that it is written in a spirit of reverent love for God, care for people, and fidelity to God's Word.

Orthopraxy is more difficult to put into practice

This means that in all we DO in communications, not just in what we SAY, that we reflect the full gospel message. Following are two examples of this how easy it is to be motivated by something less than a biblical view of people in how we treat people in the communication setting and in so doing not be honestly congruent with our Christian values in the practice of creating church communications.

One more reason for including these examples: the church in America today is losing ground even though we have the most extraordinary tools available in technology to share the gospel message. Something is wrong. The tools themselves are neutral—and we do well to remember that God could raise up stones in the parking lot to declare his glory better than any computer system. Perhaps we need to look at how we are using our tools to see if our practice is pleasing to the Lord. We are never to compromise biblical values for the sake of technology.

Example #1: Upgrade technology congruent with gospel values

I received an email from a young man who detailed how he wanted to “upgrade” the technology of his church, to bring it into the twenty-first century. To him, as to many others I receive similar communications from, that meant doing away with every form of communication except for the internet.

He was particularly partial to streaming media of all forms. He also seemed quite attached to podcasting (he'd secured three domain names related to podcasting for his church). I'm a great fan of streaming media and podcasting, no problem there. What concerned me were two other parts of his proposal.

My first concern was in the section where he asked if I could recommend a communication consultant to help the church in its communication process. I

was dismayed at his question, not because he wanted a consultant, but because nowhere in the half dozen pages he sent me of a *Request for Proposal* for the communications consulting, where he listed what he wanted from that prospective consultant, did he refer to the importance of gospel message and the necessity that the consultant cared at all about the content of the gospel, be a Christian and carry out the consulting role with concern for its congruence with the gospel message and values. I was concerned because if a communication consultant does not come out of a strong, biblical base, the communications program of the church is reduced to the most effective and efficient forms of technology and marketing as defined by secular standards. Secular standards can be very different ways to measure communication success than biblical standards. Advertising methods and measurements for success in the secular world can be totally opposed to measurements for success in the church. Many things secular advertisers do are not necessarily illegal or immoral, but they are not appropriate for the church.

What secular advertisers and consultants do in their jobs is their business, but to intentionally put a person with divergent value system in a position of making decisions for the church was a concern for me.

The second part of his proposal that greatly concerned me showed the logical result of a focus on a secular standard. If your standard is on efficiency and productivity, you will make decisions based on values that are not necessarily biblical. In this part was his recommendation to do away with the television broadcast from the church, which he said was used by a large number of elderly and shut-in members. He acknowledged that would cut them off from the church service. He assured me they'd "figure out something to do about them."

I couldn't see into that gentleman's heart, but from his words and actions, either he was using financial statistics to rationalize what he wanted to do, which was focus on podcasts and streaming media instead of television production, which he didn't like, or he was intentionally deciding the elderly and homebound were not important enough to be a factor in the church adoption of what he considered essential technology. Either way and though I don't doubt he had excellent reasons to want to do the podcasting and online video outreach (which can be done for almost no cost), he was not being congruent with repeated biblical commands to care for "the least of these."

Example #2: Make staff decisions in communication technology congruent with biblical values

A young pastor approached me at a seminar break and asked what would be valid reasons to terminate the person who did his church communications. I asked him if there was sin involved and he answered that, no, the person was very godly. I wanted to know if she refused to work or didn't respect him, again the answer was no. He had nothing but good to say about her as a person, as a Christian, and the quality of her work. As I probed a bit more, I realized that the only thing he didn't like about this woman was that she was older than him and he didn't think she could learn to do the "cutting edge" website he wanted.

I suggested that there are often ways to get special “cutting edge” projects done by volunteers or a part-time hire and that it takes people of all skill levels and communication expertise to make an effective church communication team. I reminded him that a trustworthy church secretary (which is what she was) who handles far more than creating a killer website, is a jewel to be treasured. He could find a part-time web person, but to find a web person who would also will do church secretary work might be a bit harder. My words so far provided practical advice, but were not the most important thing for him to consider. I knew he wouldn’t like what I had to say and I was fearful of being considered a biblical shrew, but I took a deep breath and asked:

“Is she a widow and is this her only source of income?” I asked.

“Yes, she is a widow,” he replied, “I don’t know about the income.” He paused before he continued, “Her only income? Probably.”

I forced myself to say as calmly as I could, “It seems to me that James 1:27 is pretty clear that a priority our faith is to care for the widows. As her pastor, you need to be much more concerned about her financial and emotional welfare than cutting edge communications in your church. In addition to providing her with a living, she most likely works 60 hours a week at the church taking care of all the administrative and people details, protecting you from many problems. Also, the church is most likely her entire emotional and social network; it gives her identity and a sense of worth.”

“I never thought about that,” he said.

He should have. Years later, that incident alternately makes my blood boil and makes me want to cry. I know communications challenges can cause huge staff challenges, but I also know that many people, of every age will surprise you at what they can do if given training and encouragement.

James 1:22, 27, is not a suggestion

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. . . . Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (James 1:22, 27).

If we are willing to cut people off from the church service because their needs don’t fit in with our technology upgrades and a plan to fire widow whose life and income are bound up in the church are not secondary issues. These contemplated actions go to the core content of what we propose to communicate. We cannot say we believe gospel content and then do church communications ministry ignoring that content. We must be congruent in our actions and message if we expect the Lord to bless our work.

The world looks at the statistics of adoption of new technologies; the church looks after those who are the “least of these” and who don’t have the latest and greatest communication device. The world makes decisions primarily on what is cost-effective and efficient; the church works to be a wise steward, but also sacrifices time and money required to reach the marginalized and ignored.

Figure out how to meet the needs of those without access to new technologies before you implement the new ones.

It is much harder to do it this way, but people and their needs are the biblical priorities. Please do not misunderstand me here. I am not saying don't add podcasts or a killer website—these are important multi-channel ways to communicate today. However, there are many ways to be obedient to both the biblical commands and the demands of current technology, even though that obedience takes time and may seem an unnecessary bother. It takes patience, prayer and extra effort, but God does not command a way to live without giving us the means to obey.

I know communications challenges can cause huge staff challenges, but I also know that many people, of every age will surprise you at what they can do if given training and encouragement. Don't be too quick to get rid of the person who keeps the weekly bulletin clear and complete in favor of a young hot shot web person who most likely isn't the least bit interested in the less exciting aspects of church communication such as making certain the church bulletin has the right songs listed (and who knows the music minister will change the list at least three times in the course of the week) or making certain that the shut-ins get sent cheerful, hand-written notes each week.

Don't forget—most older folks have two extremely valuable and often ignored skills—they can type and they can spell. These skills may not be the most cutting edge, but they are rare and precious in the age of texting.

Implement communication policies that transcend current trends

Our technology is always changing and this won't stop or slow down.

Church on television, seen as outdated and a useless expense to the young man in the story above, not so many years ago was considered quite risky and perhaps not something a church should embrace. A time will come for all of us when the technology we hold dear becomes outdated. Perhaps someday it will not be cost-effective to podcast because of a yet undreamed of technology is the new cutting edge and his podcasting domains seem a quaint relic of misplaced technological enthusiasm.

What is certain is that technology will change. We must remember technology is always only a tool we hold loosely for the time the Lord asks us to use it. We need to be gentle with those afraid to try new tools, while being diligent to learn the new ones he gives us.

Today these young men are the ones excitedly promoting new technology, while at first ignoring the older folks and their needs. I pray they will pause and live congruent with their message. But regardless of how they live, they won't always be young and cutting-edge.

Someday they will be old. Their technology and position in the church will be considered expendable. They may no longer be listened to, but may be relegated to the list of people "we'll deal with later." We do well to remember the

biblical command to treat others as we want to be treated, when we set policies and precedents in the church.

Have a healthy communication program

It's said that one sign of a healthy, integrated personality is when a person's inner values match up with their outward actions. In a similar way, it is the sign of a spiritually healthy church communications program when its outward actions are not determined primarily by the demands and appeals of current technology, but by our core gospel content in both our beliefs and actions.

When we are congruent we can communicate confident in the Lord's pleasure and power.

Characteristic #2: Complete, what it means in practice

If there is one thing that I think would change the destiny of the Christian church and make it far more successful at reaching our world today and effective at communicating our message, it would be for church communicators to stop assuming that everyone knows what they are talking about and to communicate the church message completely.

In communication after communication, in print and online I see incomplete messages. As a result people don't respond. Then church leaders get discouraged and think people don't care anymore.

But they do! People care about their earthly well being and eternal destiny, as the huge following of every new self-help program shows us. But many are not responding to the Christian message because church leaders and communicators forget what it's like to be an unchurched person or a casual church attendee.

Why complete communication is more important than ever

The world today is post-Christian. Many people grow up not knowing anything about church, the Bible, what it means to be a Christian. One part of our brain knows this, but from over 20 years of evaluating church communications, I've found that churches in general seem to forget this reality when they sit down to create their communications both in print and digitally. Because of that, we need to evaluate our communications when people have a hard time connecting with us and understanding our message.

For example, churches might think they are "seeker-friendly" and really want others to come to faith, but if your bulletin is filled with phrases such as:

"Adult Bible Study at the Johnsons, same time, same place." (Does this mean only people who know the Johnson's can attend?)

"The kids will be doing their yearly Lock-in & Movie Marathon. The cost and format same as last year." (What is a "lock-in?" What if I

was there and can't remember? What if I'm new and my son is shy, who do I call?)

"Fill out the form on the website if you want to be part of a small group." (What if I'm really lonely and want to be in a group, but don't have a computer?)

The list of examples such as these is almost infinite. The details that connect people to ministry may seem small, but they are the vital links. Today few people will take time to call the church office for more information. Many people do not have access to the internet. We need to put COMPLETE information about events in every communication piece we produce. It is impossible for people to connect without these details.

It isn't easy

Putting in these details is excruciating, detailed, hard work, impossible to understand in its difficulty if you have not had to personally track down the details of the multitude of events going on in a church and then put them into a pleasing, clear form in the church bulletin, newsletter, and now website. But these details are the keystone; they are the foundational links that if not there, all the hard work of praying, planning and putting on a ministry event will not accomplish our prayed-for results.

People are not universal mind readers. If you don't completely communicate about an event people simply won't show up. It is not the responsibility of the audience to find out all the details needed to connect with you—it is your responsibility.

In practical terms being complete in church communication means including things like these details:

- Starting and ending time
- Location, directions
- Cost if any
- Who can attend, audience
- Lists of options, when needed, such as how many small groups or classes are offered
- Contact information, mobile number, email, etc.
- Explaining what is actually going on. In the church we have many insider names for events that make no sense at all to a visitor or new member. To a visitor, the announcement of "Games and Goodies" means little. But if that visitor is a lonely single lady, if you don't have a complete announcement that informs her it is a free dinner and game night for Adult Singles (which is what it was at the church where I met my husband), she might spend another night alone. Complete details can change lives.

I truly believe many people do not show up for church events, not because they don't care or aren't interested, but because of little details we leave out such as the time something starts or directions on how to get there.

Think about it this way—consider a flyer a flyer for a reoccurring event. One flyer has incredible graphics, wonderfully appealing pictures and a catchy slogan, followed by the statement—“same time, same place, we look forward to seeing you!” The other is sort of ugly, but it has time, location, a map and let's you know that child care will be provided. If people are new to the church, which one do you think will connect them with the event?

Completeness is also important when you want people to volunteer

Many churches have traditions and hold events that are meaningful to longtime church members, but don't mean anything to new members or people new to church. Consider these pleas for volunteers:

- Help us tie up baby blankets—join us the third Saturday at Patti's.
- We need 5 more trunks for Halloween, note if you help on your connection card.
- Heartwarmers really needs new members and supplies to fulfill our obligations, we hope you can join us.

These are all slightly modified (to protect the creators), but actual announcements that did not get good responses. The reason why (again, not the copout that people don't care, or during the recession that they don't have the money) didn't get a response is that none of them make sense as to what they are really about. If they were to give complete information, what would it be?

The baby blankets—I asked, but I confess I still don't quite understand this one, but it's a way to tie together (instead of any sewing) baby blankets—the church does them for the local hospital.

Trunks needs—This refers to more folks needing help for Trunk or Treat. NEVER assume people know complete details about an event the church has held for years. Lots of new folks might want to be involved who know nothing about it the traditions of your church.

Heartwarmers—is a really neat group of women who knit for missionaries. They love to teach men and women how to knit and folks who find out what they do love being a part of it. They also need yarn donations and are happy to share where sales are going on.

No matter what the event or ministry, always explain completely. Don't use the excuse there is not room in the bulletin or newsletter.

The web provides unlimited space for completeness

Your church website is great for detailed, complete explanations, directions, reasons to be involved. The web is the natural destination for people seeking additional information today.

Make certain you have complete details in place on the website so people trust it. If you are inconsistent or incomplete, people won't trust you. Yes, this is difficult, tedious and time-consuming, but very important.

To be completely complete, be sure your website is accessible on a mobile phone. Though this is a developing area, more and more people access information on their cell phones. If the time, location and directions are accessible that way, many more people will be able to connect with events. (Lots more information on how to do this will be available in upcoming materials on websites.)

The characteristic of completeness is even more critical when it comes to introducing people to Jesus

In the past, when the culture, school system, and world view was Christian, when you talked about Jesus and accepting him as your personal Savior, most people knew what you were talking about. They may not have believed it, they may not have thought it applied to them, but part of their cultural worldview was a Biblical view of the historical Jesus. Again, they may not have accepted it personally but they knew the facts about who and what they were rejecting. It is very different today.

Now, when you mention Jesus, you need to be very complete and clear what Jesus you are talking about. Are you talking about :

- A Jesus who is in every person, a sort of divine spark, which is what many new-age folks believe?
- A Jesus who was a first century Jew and who did good works and taught ethical precepts, but was not the Messiah, as Jewish people believe?
- A prophet, but not *the* prophet, as the Muslims believe?
- Or are you talking about the eternally existing second person of the Trinity, who came to earth, died, was buried, physically rose from the dead, and who is coming again, which is what evangelical Christians believe?

This is just the start of what you need to completely communicate about Jesus: his life, substitutionary death, his physical resurrection, his intercession for us today, his coming return. All of these truths are not part of most people's current world view. You cannot assume that people have any knowledge of them when they come to your church. You can't ask them to commit to a savior if they don't even know who he really is.

A practical example of the dangers of incomplete communication about Jesus

Imagine it is Christmas and your church hosts a Christmas concert: wonderful organ music, uplifting choir pieces, moving poetry, and Bible passages all as background to a moving Christmas pageant. In the beautifully designed program (that the church communicator worked for hours to create and that

cost a small fortune to print), is the statement:

If you have not accepted Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, we trust that the joy of the music and message will so fill your heart that you will accept the true peace and joy of Christmas and become a Christian.

I do not want to be cynical, the Spirit can move in any way he desires, but if a person would then check on a card that he or she responded to this message, what does that mean? Does that person have any idea of the complete gospel message? Of the Jesus of history and not just the Jesus of beautiful hymns? Of cross-bearing and the crucifixion of Jesus and not simply Jesus the tiny baby in a manger? You may feel that you shared the gospel, that you challenged people to become Christians, but if someone responded to this incomplete gospel presentation, what really happened?

The early church required that potential converts go through a lengthy teaching time of many weeks and in-depth instruction before they were allowed to publicly proclaim their faith and be baptized. If we are not careful to completely proclaim the Christian gospel and completely teach people what a response to that gospel involves, we may be responsible for souls who think they have become a Christians but who are tragically, completely wrong.

Beyond the details of events and the essentials of salvation

The need to be complete goes beyond being certain we have all the details of events in place, though this is very important if we want to connect people with life-changing events. Being complete also moves beyond being certain people understand what it means to become a Christian, though that is the essential starting point.

We must also be complete in preparing our people to defend the faith. If we don't take the time to completely explain, defend, and teach in depth about our faith, our people will be unprepared for those who oppose the Christian message, but who take time and care to completely put forth their false teachings. Though this component of effective church communications is most emphasized in Step 4, INSTRUCT; we must keep it in mind in every step of our communication ministry.

The challenge of those who do not believe the biblical, Christian message are sometimes more complete in their communications than we are.

The enemies of our faith are complete in their attacks. For example, a New York Times best-seller, *Misquoting Jesus, the Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* by Bart D. Ehrman, has been weakening and destroying the faith of many for years. Ehrman, who claims to have been a believer at one point in his life, drones on and on and on for 218 pages, in complete (though often distorted) detail, about why we cannot trust the Bible.

His book is not difficult to refute, as his logic is faulty, his conclusions dubious, his seemingly shocking statements about supposed biblical inconsistencies hardly news to any reputable biblical scholar. In addition, for any so-called scholarly author to use himself and his books, again and again as a primary citation of the truth of his facts, as Erhman does, is ludicrous.

But he is **complete** in a rambling, false, repetitive way and for a casual reader the simple volume of his argument is persuasive. I am not recommending his method, but it is effective.

Why his volume of distortions convince people

We somehow assume that if an author or authority takes the time to expound on a topic in detail and depth that it is important. Conversely, if we aren't told about or taught about an important topic in depth it is easy to assume it is not very important. Consider the above two examples:

1. A Christmas gospel presentation of one paragraph.
2. A lengthy book detailing why the Bible can't be trusted.

Based on the sheer volume, number of citations, seeming care and time taken to explain each topic, it would seem that author of the book about the Bible took his topic much more seriously, that he obviously cared enough to research and write about it in more detail. An unformed seeker might consider it more true because of its completeness.

In contrast, a challenge to consider an eternity-changing decision presented in one brief, emotional paragraph, doesn't have the same apparent importance. You may protest that a Christmas program is not the place to do into a lengthy, apologetic discussion of the Christian faith and that's true. However, the lack of space in the program does not mean we should not explain the plan of salvation in its completeness.

Here is where the communication tools we have today and the ability to do multi-channel communication can be useful. We don't have to put the complete details about salvation in the Christmas program. Keeping in mind the multi-channel resources we have, in the Christmas program, could be a short statement like this:

Becoming a Christ-follower is a decision that will change your eternity and the way you live the rest of your life on earth.

Don't make the decision lightly. To explore what it means to be a Christian, please check out our website at www.churchwebsite.com.

There you'll find answers to questions, links to explore the faith, and email addresses of folks waiting to interact with you. Not wanting to go there? Call 555-5555 and there will be someone to talk to.

We need to take time to be certain the messages of our church and the gospel are presented in completeness. Yes, setting up a complete web links, finding

and training people to interact through email and the phone is difficult and time-consuming. But, if the enemies of truth can take the time to do this, we can do no less. Even if you can't go into this much detail, at least including a well-done tract would be useful, but without anything more than a brief mention to consider Jesus, it's hard to take the challenge to consider Jesus as Savior and Lord seriously.

One more note: An in-depth, complete critique and series of articles showing the falseness of Bart Erhman's thesis is available on www.equip.org, the Bible Answerman's website. In addition, one of the most complete apologists of the Christian faith is Lee Strobel and his book, *the Case for the Real Jesus*, deals with Erhman's and other current critics of the Bible and Jesus and provides in-depth answers to their false claims. I highly recommend both sources and have used them prior to Christmas to do a series of lessons on *Why Jesus is the Reason for the Christmas Season*. (Before I get lots of emails on this—I'm going to try very hard to get those lessons in pass-on-able form before the Christmas season 2009—please sign up for my email newsletter on my website at www.effectivechurchcom.com to be notified about them.)

Characteristic #3 Be consistent in all your communication

Once we have our message complete, we need to be consistent in how we present it. This is practical nuts and bolts communication practice. It means:

- Each time we share the message we have the same facts, times, instructions.
- We remember that even though we see it every time it is created, our intended audience may only see our communication about an event one out of four or five times we put out the message. This usually means we need to put out our message so many times that we become sick of it for our people to see it even once.
- We need to give enough time for people to see it consistently and so be able to respond. Nothing beats planning ahead for success in communications.
- We shouldn't change how we present the message. People will think it is a different message if we keep changing how we present it.

Consistency is a core characteristic of successful marketing

Well-remembered, famous advertising campaigns keep a consistent message for years. Nike's "just do it" is one of the great examples.

In contrast, I've found communicators in churches think they have to keep changing things. They don't. They often protest that people will get bored. Readers don't get bored. Readers get confused. The creator of the communication is who gets bored.

Church communicators often create far more work for themselves than is necessary when they keep changing things. Not only are they making their

communications confusing, but they are ineffective. Professional communicators keep location of information, colors, layout the same. They do not want readers to have to “decode” the layout or color scheme each time they look at a communication. They want people to look past the layout to the information.

In the church we sometimes do that because we know the information so well, we want to fiddle with the presentation. We forget our audience probably isn't bored with the presentation—most likely they saw only one out of the 5 communications we created—what they want is the information.

I imagine the folks who create *USA TODAY* are sick to death of that layout. It never changes—always the same material in the same sections, same colored headers— but readers love it. Your church publications might not ever attain the popularity of *USA TODAY*, but a bit of consistency in how you present information certainly couldn't hurt.

What this means in practical terms:

Putting ministry notices in the same place in your communications, both online and in print. You wouldn't like it if the sports section (or whatever you like to read in the newspaper) was scattered in parts through out the evening paper because the layout artist thought it would be “more interesting” that way. People want the youth news, birthdays, the senior section, whatever it is they look for in church communications to be in the same place.

Being consistent in how you list the details of an event: time, location, cost, whatever. Make the connecting details easy to retrieve.

Don't use junk or rah-rah words at the start of lists: “Don't miss this!” “Mark this on your calendar!” “Greatest event ever!” Phrases like these mean nothing. When you have a list of events if you put the age or interest area first in each announcement, people can quickly skim, find what is important to them and read that announcement. For example: **Youth Group** meeting at; **Mission Committee** hosting.....; **Craft Sale** to feature.....

Always put in the connecting details. It may be the tenth time you publish sometime in print or online, but every time you put it out will be the first time some people will read it.

Beware—creativity can be the enemy of consistency

The idea floats around that just because something is creative, it has value. Or that if something is “creative” enough people will think it is neat or cool, or some other current adjective of value and then that they will think the church is neat or cool and they will want to attend.

What a silly thought. The complex financial schemes prior to the current recession were creative. Sheer creativity for creativity sake is not always a positive. Creativity can be wonderful, but it is not the most important factor in determining if people are attracted to an event or to the church.

Be consistent in clearly representing the gospel message. Be clear and complete in the details of upcoming events. Congruently live out your communications. Use creativity constructively to make those goals primary.

Characteristic #4: Caring, what it means in practice

This is the practical outworking of Jesus' continual reminders to us of the importance of love. It was said that the early Christians were known for the love they had for each other. There is a loving way to say even the most difficult things and if love does not characterize our communications, we shouldn't be surprised that the world doesn't recognize they come from the followers of Jesus.

This characteristic can further be illustrated through the following two devotions that come from my book, *The Heart of Church Communications*, (this book is available either as a download or as a paperback book from <http://www.lulu.com/yvonprehn>).

Devotion #1: Our communications should reflect the redeeming nature of our Lord, not condemnation

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (John 3:17).

This verse is a caring challenge to our attitude as communicators. What is the overall tone of our ministry—is it to condemn or to save?

Look at the ministry of Jesus. This verse is part of his talk with Nicodemus, the teacher of the Law who came to Jesus at night asking questions. I wonder if Nicodemus might not have left more confused than when he came. Here was a man people were calling a prophet, but he wasn't like any prophet who went before him.

He didn't call down fire from heaven; he turned water into wine at a wedding—good wine and quite a lot of it. He didn't part the sea or send plagues; he played with children and set out picnics on the beach for his disciples.

When Nicodemus asked Jesus about his message, he didn't retell all the shortcomings of the world he had come to straighten out. Instead he told him that God loved the world, and that he did not come to condemn but to save. He didn't demand Nicodemus do penance for his sins; he invited him to be born again. He didn't even chide Nicodemus for his cowardice in coming to Jesus at night. He graciously answered questions at a time and in a way this fearful leader needed.

Do our communications reflect this redeeming nature of our Lord? How easy it is to take pen in hand (or today, mouse and keyboard) and to pile on guilt. Not that there is never a time to point out error, but for the most part we do well to remember it is the Holy Spirit's job to convict of sin (John 16:7-9). It is our job to

share the good news of salvation and the joy and fulfillment of living for Jesus.

Most people today know they fall short. They aren't sure quite what of, but a pervasive sense of guilt fills many lives. Alcohol, drugs, food in excess, unhealthy relationships, and overwork are some common attempts to medicate the pain.

People don't need more bad news from the followers of Jesus. They need examples of hope and love. They need clear directions to events that can change their lives and clear communications on what they need to do. We need to pray for clarity in all we create. We need to pray that our tone (in ways we may not even be aware of) always reflects the welcoming, saving love of Jesus.

May your communications be filled with messages of salvation, of the grace and love of your Lord.

Devotion #2: Do all you do with love or it's just noise

"Words without love are just noise," is Rick Warren's commentary on the verses from one message in his *40 Days of Community* series. Though these words apply in every interaction we have in life, I think they are especially true in the world of church communications.

If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever. (1 Cor. 13:1-3 NLT)

I've often said in my seminars that I can tell when I look at communication samples if the person who was doing them was having a grumpy day or not. People often laugh. But it really isn't a joke.

Who we are, the mood we are in, and how much we care for the people for whom we are creating the print or digital piece comes through loud and clear in church communications.

Not that long ago, I was shown a sample of a church bulletin still produced on a typewriter, then copied on an old copier and hand-collated. The tiny church was very poor and it was the best they could manage. But it was organized clearly and was complete in the facts communicated. The person doing it obviously took time and care putting it together, but there was one more thing about it that brought tears to my eyes. When the church secretary hand-collated and folded each one, she did it in an off-set way and then on the top sheet, she hand cut each page with the sort of scalloped scissors used for scrapbooking. She did that she said, so that "people would feel special" when they got the

bulletin. I'm sure on some level, people not only felt special, but knew they were loved.

I've seen other examples of love in church communications in many ways. I remember a church bulletin from a Greek Orthodox Church, where the creator of the piece took time each week to research and then to write little stories of the saints of the church so members would understand their heritage of faith.

At a large church I visited in California, there was a table on the patio that had cards on it done up for all of the small groups in the church that described each group, told what they were studying, and invited newcomers to attend. The cards included upbeat photos and maps and were created in a positive, welcoming way. Keeping a project like that current is a huge labor of love.

One of the most loving responses I've seen to visitors was from a pastor in Canada whose welcoming letter included two free coupons for latte and an invitation to *Latte with the Pastor* and along with that an invitation to "ask any question you'd like about God."

I've seen humorous expressions of love, like the one from a lady who tore the borders of announcements for the ladies events and then scattered them on the floor, because, as she told me, the ladies in her church were very tidy and this way she knew they would pick them up and read them.

There are lots of ways to express caring in your church communications. You know your people best. Create your church communications with creativity and love and your words will be much more than "just noise."

Conclusion to the Four Characteristics

Many additional characteristics can be deduced from these four and the materials produced by Effective Church Communications fill out and expand them, but these characteristics are a good start and make for initially worthy goals.

Congruent, complete, consistent, and caring: if these four characteristics describe your communications they will assist you in making the individual communications you create in The Five Steps effective in fully fulfilling the Great Commission.

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chapter
5 Steps of
Effective Church
Communications & Marketing

Evaluation

We aren't creating church communications to please ourselves. We create them for the specific purposes of introducing people to Jesus and helping them grow to Christian maturity as disciples. In other words, we create communications to fully fulfill the Great Commission.

If this is our purpose, then these two criteria should be our standard for evaluation of the success or failure of our communications.

We shouldn't evaluate based on personal preference, current technology or creative trends, or the latest great idea we got from a mega-church conference or online blog.

The previous statements were so easy to write, but can be incredibly hard to implement. But because the results of our evaluation in church communications can influence the eternal destiny of the people receiving them, we need to put aside our personal preferences and prejudices and learn how to evaluate professionally.

This chapter will give you some ideas on how to do that.

The Five Steps give you a standard for evaluation and a way of settling disagreements about personal preferences in church communication

Church communications is one ministry area where everybody has an opinion. Often every person on the church staff has a different opinion about what makes “good” communications and what doesn’t.

Communication and marketing are areas where a person totally untrained in either field is often completely comfortable expressing a strong opinion of what he or she thinks makes a good looking bulletin, website, logo, or other communication piece. Not only do they express that opinion, but if they are in a church leadership position that person has the power to enforce their personal preferences, or to approve or deny the creation of various communication pieces based on personal preference alone, no matter how valid that preference or how effective it is to accomplish ministry goals.

In most other areas, professionals and professional standards are respected

A church leader would never tell a bank officer that he doesn’t think the loan terms for the church building are not what he wants and have to be changed to something he thinks is the way to structure a loan.

A senior church staff member would never tell his doctor that he thinks he has a better idea for how to treat heart disease that he feels will be more effective than what the doctor proposed.

Most folks on the church staff would never consider pushing aside the professional coach of a basketball team and proceeding to tell him or her that they don’t think the defense the coach is using looks right. Nor would they consider insisting that the coach run the same plays week after week that had the team simply running around in circles because the church staff leader thinks people running in circles is an effective way to play ball.

It obviously doesn’t make sense to make personal opinion policy when dealing with a loan officer, doctor, or coach. It makes the same amount of sense, for someone who has never been trained in communications or marketing, to forcefully express their opinion about communications and to make the communications team carry out their decisions simply because they like things a certain way.

It might take a bit of time for the consequences of not listening to the loan officer or doctor to become apparent, but there is a very quick and easy way to settle the discussion of whose opinion is more valid on the basketball court. Play ball. No matter who prefers what, what strategy scores baskets?.

The Five Steps provide a fair way to decide what to do in church communications

The Five Steps provide a way to keep score in church communications. To keep peace in the body of Christ, this can be very helpful in that the bottom line for evaluating the effectiveness of any piece of communication or church marketing is not whether someone likes it or not. If the goal of effective church communications, as measured by The Five Steps, is to fully fulfill the Great Commission, the measure of success is whether this goal is being fulfilled or not. Just like in basketball--you look at the score.

The score in fully fulfilling the Great Commission has two parts:

1. That people come to know Jesus as Savior
2. That they grow to maturity in their faith and become disciples

Let's get real and honest in our evaluation

Effective church communication involves much more than who thinks they are right and who doesn't. It matters much more than who likes what or who is not wanting to change a way they've "always done" something. It also means you don't change things or do away with something because somebody went to a big church that did this or that.

You look at lives. You look at behavior.

Are they changing or not as a result of your communications?

Keeping score starts by simple counting

This is not rocket science. Score-keeping in church communications is determined by first of all by attendance, the simple numbers of people that respond (or didn't) after you created and distributed your communications.

The score is determined by asking questions such as these:

- Did you do a mailing? Send a postcard? An email? Web announcement? Pulpit announcement?
- Did you equip your people with communication tools? Connection cards, postcards, website links?
- How many people attended event? How many were new to the church?

The simple numbers of how many new people attend the church, why and what brought them there is important because you cannot start the road toward sharing the message of salvation without people getting inside the church and becoming part of the process. Whether your church accepts individuals as believers with a simple confession of faith after one visit or whether becoming a Christian is defined by a series of explorations and classes, followed by a decision and baptism, or any combination of these events, whatever your tradition, it must start with simple attendance.

Be honest in record keeping and evaluation

For example, if you put on a Christmas outreach event and you spend thousands of dollars, what was your return on investment? Again ask the questions above: how many are now attending the church because of the event? How many have become Christians because of the event?

I suspect far too many churches do Christmas and other holiday events because the people currently attending the church really like to put on the events. To determine if this is the primary motivation—track the results. To repeat: how many new people are now attending the church because of the event? How many have become Christians because of the event?

If you aren't tracking costs and results, why not?

Even without tracking it, if you know the answer is something along the lines of “We didn't do a very good job of communicating it to people outside the church and we can't honestly point to anyone who is now attending or who has come to know Jesus because of it,” you then have two choices:

1. You can learn to communicate more effectively (and this book and my website give you lots of ways to do this) so that your holiday events will yield measurable results in the future.

or

2. Quit spending all that money to entertain yourselves and give it either to a mission group or church that is successful in outreach or give it to feed hungry children.

Track more than holiday events; track all ministry events

Tracking our communications and the results of them will keep us honest in church programming and evaluation.

It can keep us from over spiritualizing. What I mean by that is that it is easy to conclude that people aren't interested in something such as spiritual growth, when in reality we simply didn't advertise it very well.

Honest evaluation can also keep us from false excuses. As talked about earlier in the book, you can create many communication pieces today for little or no cost (see Strategy chapter). A popular excuse in the fall of 2009 as I write this is that “We just can't afford to advertise church events because of the recession.” There is a lot of marketing that doesn't cost much: web-based, email-based advertising, creating websites and blogs with Wordpress.com; making sure what you do create has complete details, involving your people instead of buying mailing lists, e.g. equip them with inexpensive postcards to mail to friends—all these ideas can generate lots of church marketing for little or no money.

A lack of money might force us to try new things. Even if finances improve, we don't have to spend increased money on communications now that we've

learned how to communicate more cost-effectively. Giving to missions and to hunger relieving projects is far more important than unnecessary advertising expenses.

Questions to ask as you try new communication and marketing methods

Some areas you might want to look at as you expand your communication evaluation in after you track communication and the resulting attendance for Sunday or special events, would be to ask questions like these:

- Are your small groups growing in numbers?
- What is the attendance of your adult spiritual education classes?
- How many people are involved in mission and service projects?
- How many people are involved in actively sharing their faith and inviting friends to church?

You determine the success or failure of your communication projects by having a baseline number, creating a series of communications and recording responses.

These numbers can be tricky to evaluate honestly, because the expectation of personal spiritual growth in most churches is so low. If your church has 2,000 members and 200 attend a class on “How to Study the Bible,” that might seem like a big class, but for only 1/10 of your people to be growing toward discipleship is not a number to celebrate. If you have 500 people on the church membership list, involvement of 50 in spiritual growth classes might seem like a big turnout, but it leaves out 450, who are not obedient to the commands of scripture.

You must keep track of these numbers so that you can make wise decisions concerning your communication efforts. Track numbers when you change something, for example, by altering how many times and the ways you advertise small groups or adult education options, track to see if the attendance increases. Use the results as you make decisions on what works and what does not in ministry communication and marketing decisions.

When you have solid numbers to work from, e.g., “We advertised small groups using bulletin inserts and a web blog in addition to the usual PowerPoint® announcement and had a 50% increase” you then have a way to evaluate effectiveness.

This takes the discussion out of decision-deciding comments like: “Our Music Minister is convinced that beautiful PowerPoint® slides are all that are needed to make an impression.” If slides alone got 10 people to sign up and slides, a bulletin insert, and a web blog on small groups with the complete details content and connection details listed got 100 people to sign up, it isn't a matter of opinion, but the numbers that determine effective communication. We don't do this to show who is “right” or not. We evaluate to use resources

effectively and to keep peace in the Body of Christ.

Once you have numbers, ask questions

If you don't have the turnout or response you want, first of all, don't be too hard on yourself or anyone else in the church office. Church communicators today are asked to do very complex marketing and communication work without previous training in difficult disciplines.

But also don't be too easy on yourselves. Look for solutions. Try various ways of doing things. Remember people's eternal destiny is at stake.

Explore why you got the results you did. Informally, call or email people and ask them for an honest response on why they attended or didn't. One great way to get an honest answer is to ask something like: "Why do you think your friend didn't want to come?" People will usually give you an answer about how they feel, but it doesn't put them on the spot.

Big deal, expensive mail out sorts of surveys don't work very well. Sometimes quick email ones do and informal conversations, honestly conducted, always do. You aren't seeking scientific data here, but honest responses.

Try; evaluate and try again and evaluate

There is seldom one perfect way to advertise or communicate anything. Try a new way, record, evaluate, try something else, record, evaluate.

The key is to try to remain objective and calm and to remember to hold communication creation ideas loosely. We want to work for what works best for our people, not only for what we like to do.

One more thing to always do: Pray

As part of your evaluation, look at how much time you spent in prayer as you planned and created your communications and marketing. This isn't a secular business. You represent the Lord Jesus. Perhaps your communication was not as successful as it could have been because you did not listen to your Leader.

Evaluate if you prayed enough. If your results in communication haven't been what you want, remember James tells us we do not have because we don't ask. If you charged ahead without asking you were on your own.

When you do ask:

Pray for wisdom. James 1:5 promises you'll receive it:

If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking.

Our God who created the galaxies and quantum physics understands the computer. We sometimes forget that. We can pray for needed wisdom every step of the way as we create our communication projects. We can pray for help

with the technology we need to use; we can pray we'll learn and effectively apply all the tools available to us.

Pray that people will be open to your messages; pray for prepared hearts. Pray that their calendars would be clear and no hurdles will get in the way. We know our Lord wants people to come to him and these are prayers he wants to answer:

2 Peter 3:9:

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent.

That's the bottom line for our evaluation—are people coming to know Jesus?

The hosts of heaven are watching and cheering us on as we are successful in our tasks.

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9

chapter
**5 Steps of
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Practical Endurance

Though the Five Steps of Effective Church Communication and Marketing provides an overall vision and strategy, it does not provide any practical how-tos for each communication piece.

What's difficult about grasping a new vision for church communications, which is what I hope this book has done for you, is that you can believe in something with your heart and soul, but that belief alone won't make a difference. You can passionately champion the idea that your church communications and marketing can be an effective way to fully fulfill the Great Commission and that a sequential, strategic way of doing it as The Five Steps, the Strategies, and Characteristics recommend is the way to do it. But no matter how much you believe what I've shared, if you don't take concrete action, nothing happens.

There are few shortcuts or easy ways to implement a church communication ministry. There is much day-by-day, challenging, and often boring work to be done, but if you understand The Five Steps and realize that every communication piece you do can either help people come to faith in Jesus or grow them to maturity in him, it will give you strength and passion as you work.

This chapter is intended to be an encouragement to you for the practical endurance you need to make vision tangible.

God seldom gives a vision and immediately fulfills it

In the Bible we read the stories of God giving a great vision to people. After the great vision is when the real work began. Many of the great purposes of God involved plodding, repetitive, sometimes difficult steps taken one tiring day at a time by faithful people.

You may be excited about the vision that you can see your church communications accomplishing after you read this book, but now the work starts. It won't be easy. You won't see results for a long time, but that's always how God works.

When you get weary updating the bulletin, fighting with the website, or trying to convince staff members it takes more than one mention to launch a ministry, remember:

—Noah had to cut each board and fit each one together for years as he built the ark that would save his family and the animals from the coming flood. He had to do it in front of a mocking audience that he knew would perish if they did not respond. He went into the ark as a total failure as a preacher. But God used him to give humanity and the animals a new start on a cleansed earth.

—After forty years of wandering in the desert and finally getting into the promised land, Joshua's work was just beginning. His reward for faithfully trusting God and finally being put into a position of respect and leadership was to fight battle after battle town-by-town to take possession of the land. It was never easy. He had to deal with the sin of Achan and the deception of the Gibeonites. But he conquered the land and Israel had a home.

—The Old Testament priests had to sacrifice innocent animals every day—bloody, smelly, nasty work, as the centuries went by in preparation for the Messiah, who would be the final sacrifice for sin. For many years, countless unnamed priests saw only the blood without fulfillment of the promise. God used their work to prepare people when they heard John the Baptist's proclaim: "Behold, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world."

—The Apostle Paul had to go from town to town, preach for hours, argue, and debate to reach a few converts; get bloodied, beaten and kicked out of town. His reward was to go to the next town and start all over: preach, argue, debate, convert, get beaten, go to the next town. After years of faithful service he did not get a quiet retirement. He was imprisoned, abandoned and died at the hand of Nero. His determined, difficult work, faithful work to share the message of eternal life in Jesus converted much of the known world in his day.

I'm sure in each instance above, the human hearts of those involved at times became tired and discouraged, but so long as they had a vision for God's purpose and a trust in what he could do, they could be faithful in the daily steps they needed to take towards God's goals.

That is my prayer for you as you consider and implement the strategy of the Five Steps of Effective Church Communication & Marketing.

Keep your eye on the North Star of creating communications that have as their goal to fully fulfill the Great Commission by helping people come to know Jesus as Savior and growing to maturity in him.

Day by day do what you need to do to create the needed communications and get them to the people God called your church to reach.

When your vision is clear, you'll have the strength to learn the tools

The faithful steps to take you to fully fulfilling the Great Commission through your church communications are many: learning software, hardware, typesetting, design, writing, layout, production and website creation and much more.

My website (www.effectivechurchcom.com) is an ever-growing resource to help you learn these skills. Always remind yourself that you are learning them, not as a checklist to be completed, but as tools to accomplish your vision.

We don't have any idea what tools Noah used to build the ark or how hard it might have been for him to learn to cut wood and what it took to make the ark watertight. What we remember is who he saved. We can't imagine the horrors of fighting hand-to-hand combat to win the promised land. We remember Joshua won a homeland.

To borrow a phrase from Amazing Grace, "when we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun," we probably won't remember how difficult it was to learn to create a website or to edit the bulletin week after week. But we can look around heaven and see the people that will be there with us because we worked faithfully to master the tools that brought them to Jesus.

With his help, YOU can master the tools needed; with his help, YOU can do everything that is needed

I don't only mean "you" in the sense of "you" in general as a church communicator who Jesus will help, though he most certainly will. I mean YOU as in the folks at your church—that the people in your church, the collective YOU can do all the work you need to do.

There are many groups that want to sell churches all sorts of communication services, in logo design, print, website services, etc. Many of them are wonderful folks who do a great job and there may be times you need them. However, I find it incredibly irritating for various websites and books to give you all sorts of supposed advice, when the primary underlying message is that those of you who actually work in the church aren't capable of doing what they recommend and so you need a "professional" to do it for you. Maybe. But reality for most churches is that they cannot afford "professional" communications help and in most cases, I truly believe, they don't need it.

There are so many training resources available (if you need to learn how to use

software, check out www.lynda.com). On my website I not only the ones I provide but I point you to many others. I provide video reviews and written evaluations and recommendations. I can't pretend they are totally objective-- I'm not. Some things I honestly believe are helpful and some aren't--but you can be assured that any recommendation or opinions I have are honestly mine and not purchased endorsements. All of this on my website and in all my other resources is done ***without any outside advertising or without any affiliate or other hidden programs.***

I do not take outside advertising or participate in affiliate or referral systems for many reasons which are detailed on my website if you want to read about them, but the bottom line is that I honestly believe with the right tools and training, you (again, all the people in your church) can do all you need to do to create the communications you need for your church.

There are many people in your church with tremendous creative gifts, sometimes you simply need to put them together. It takes time, work, practical endurance, but I know *you can do it.*

Perfect and professional is not the goal, authentic communication is

Some of you may think, "Well, the people in my church won't do as "professional" of a job as some big company." True, maybe not. But maybe it will better reflect YOUR church, not the style of the big company. And maybe some creative people in your church might just surprise you with what they can create with a little bit of training and encouragement.

In addition, you may be able to periodically afford a professionally produced postcard or banner or some other piece (and there are times that might be exactly what you need), but there is no way any church can afford to have someone else produce all of the materials needed to promote all the ministries of the church in the way they need to be promoted. A professional may be useful for one or two projects in one or two of the first steps, maybe to create a logo or give you initial guidance, but there is no church who can afford to outsource every communication project to complete all Five Steps of Effective Church Communication and Marketing. Every department needs people producing communications in print and online with the goal of not just getting people into the programs, but of growing them to maturity in their faith.

The Great Commission comes with a Great Promise

As you look over the chapters in this book and the chart it is easy to become discouraged—there is so much to do in our church communication ministry if it is to truly be a tool to fully fulfill the Great Commission.

In church communications work, as in many others, Jesus never promised us that Christian ministry would be easy. Instead, he said, "in this world you will have tribulation," but in the same passage, he also said, "but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!"

When we are working to communicate for Jesus, we can be assured we have his help in overcoming the difficult challenges we face.

Growing people to maturity in their Christian faith and creating a comprehensive program of communications to enable your church to do that is a huge task, but not an impossible one. The Lord that gave us the command to win the world, also gave us the promise, “I am with you, always.”

The entire journey through the Five Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing, other strategies, and all the work involved in creating communication to reach people for Jesus is long, difficult, and will take years to accomplish. But you are not alone on your journey. The Lord is with you every step of the way, helping you fulfill his command to “make disciples.”

My ministry commitment to you

With the Lord’s help, I want to help you. For almost thirty years now I’ve helped church communicators use the tools of tradition and technology to create church communications. I’ve written and traveled and camped out at my computer creating online resources, videos, podcasts, PDFs, templates, books and CDs. I’m not sure of all of the paths and detours of this journey, but my goal to help all of you is clear and lifelong.

In my favorite book of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Dawn Treader*, there is a passage where the crew of the ship has the option of resting at magical table that would always supply their needs after a dangerous, frightening, and seemingly futile journey. Or they can press ahead over unknown waters to the goal of their journey: Aslan’s Land. As the sailors debate the wisdom of this perhaps fatal journey, the brave little mouse Reepicheep speaks:

“My own plans are made. While I can, I sail east in the Dawn Treader. When she fails me, I paddle east in my coracle. When she sinks, I shall swim east with my four paws. And when I can swim no longer, if I have not reached Aslan’s country or shot over the edge of the world in some vast cataract, I shall sink with my nose to the sunrise....”

I have no idea where this new journey of using the internet for creating and sharing church communications will lead, but as long as I am able, with resources or support or without them, I will continue to pray for all of you and to create and share resources and encouragement that will help your church communications fully fulfill the Great Commission.

Let’s fight together

I am committed to do my part. You must do yours.

As Churchill said, when encouraging war-weary people, “Never, never, never give up.” The English people endured; they were victorious.

A greater battle than the blitz-bombing of London is being waged for eternal

souls and many people in and outside the church don't even know there is a war going on. But the battle is real and in our responsibilities as the communication center for the armies of the cross we must be resolute.

The victory has been won when Jesus rose from the grave, but our rightful king has not yet taken possession of the land. We are the resistance army, communicating the truth of our Lord to a world lost in lies.

There are wounded soldiers who don't feel they can fight another day. We must communicate encouragement and hope to them.

There are lost people who face days of futility and eternity of darkness. We must communicate the message of salvation to them.

Our calling is clear, our daily work ahead of us to create communications that will fully fulfill the Great Commission.

Set your face towards the dawn and never, never, never give up.

Final note: Please share the materials in this book and the chart on the next page.

We've got to change how the church and the gospel of Jesus Christ is perceived in our world.

To do that, we need to communicate clearly.

We need to commit to a communication plan that will step-by-step take people from outside the church to Christian maturity. The Five Steps of Effective Church Communications and Marketing will help you do this.

You have my permission to copy, reproduce, pass on anything in this book. PLEASE post excerpts on your websites and blogs and pass around in staff training. PLEASE share with denominational church communicators and leaders.

My website: www.effectivechurchcom.com provides lots more instruction and training, without outside advertising, Google adwords, or affiliate programs to junk up the one purpose of helping your church create communications that will fully fulfill the Great Commission. Please encourage other church communicators to go there and sign up for my email updates so they will be informed of new materials that can help them.

My storefront, www.lulu.com/yvonprehn has additional resources produced by the ministry to help you.

Feel free to email me: yvonprehn@gmail.com with comments, questions, and suggestions on how I can help make you a more effective church communicator.

My blessings and prayers are with you as we all work to fully fulfill the Great Commission.

Yvon Prehn

The Five Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing

to help churches create communications that will fully fulfill the Great Commission

TASK	Target Audience	Marketing Strategy	Ministry Goals	Key Communications Far from exhaustive, the practical tools that will help move people from one step to the next.
Step #1 INVITE	Unchurched people Visitors Community	See	Identify the church Unchurched into the church Become regular attenders Evangelism	Print & Digital Versions Identify pieces: logos, business cards, stationary, signage; Outreach: invitation cards, postcards, ads, door-hangers, tracts; Outreach support publications; Signage. Websites, emails, video, podcasts.
Step #2 INFORM	Visitors Regular Attendees Crowd	Sample	Personal Salvation Learn about the Church Join the Church Worship	Print & Digital Versions Bulletins & Bulletin Inserts; Visitor & Prayer Cards; Visitor & Member Communications; Gospel Presentations, Doctrinal & Denominational Literature; Church Overviews; Overall Church Newsletters. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #3 INCLUDE	Church Members Committed Attendees Congregation	Select	Participate in Church Events Experience Ministries beyond Sunday Morning or main meeting Fellowship	Print & Digital Versions Age, life-stage program info & PR: children, youth, singles, seniors, etc. Ministry specific: Newsletters, brochures, calendars, event info and PR. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #4 INSTRUCT	Involved Members & Attendees Committed	Stay	Spiritual Growth and Maturity Biblical Training Small Group Participation Discipleship	Print & Digital Versions Training materials: for all age and life-stage groups; Teachers: manuals, support materials; Corporate devotional and Bible reading; inspirational reminders Small group: PR, lessons, support. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking
Step #5 INSPIRE	Leaders, Workers, Key Volunteers Church Staff: professional, bi-vocational & lay Core	Sell	Ongoing Service & Outreach Lifestyle & Church Ministry Consistent Giving Missions Involvement Ministry	Print & Digital Versions Volunteer & Staff: recruitment, training, affirmation; Equipping publications; Encouraging & Inspiring materials; Financial publications; Missions involvement and support. Websites, emails, video, podcasts, social networking

Core Components of Effective Church Communications

- Based on a Biblical Vision: the Great Commission, Commandment, Goal, and Promise.
- Modeled after Church Growth Theory that is: progressive, structured, time-intensive.
- Informed by Marketing Theory: communication that is targeted, multi-channel, complete, repeated.
- Implemented using a variety of hardware and software, publication tools and tactics.
- Modified for and tailored to the denomination, location, size, culture, and budget of each church.
- Measures success by attendance, conversions, church growth, and changed lives.
- Accomplished by tangible publications, team effort, prayer, and trust in God for eternal results