

Mission minded : a tool for planning your ministry around Christ's mission

Bolt, Peter G.

Bolt P.G. Mission Minded 1 - 75 75 pp

<https://myrrh.library.moore.edu.au:443/handle/10248/11413>

Downloaded from Myrrh, the Moore College Institutional Repository

FORM OF NOTICE FOR PARAGRAPH 49(7A)
(c) OF THE COPYRIGHT ACT 1968
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
Copyright regulations 1969

W A R N I N G

This material has been provided to you pursuant to section 49 of the Copyright Act 1968 (the Act) for the purposes of research or study. The contents of the material may be subject to copyright protection under the Act.

Further dealings by you with this material may be a copyright infringement. To determine whether such a communication would be an infringement, it is necessary to have regard to the criteria set out in Part 3, Division 3 of the Act

WARNING

This reading is NOT complete.

Copyright restrictions limit the amount included in this file.

To complete the reading the book may be accessed through the Moore Theological College (Donald Robinson Library) catalogue

MISSION MINDED

**A tool for planning your ministry
around Christ's mission**

by

Peter Bolt

St Matthias Press

Contents

This book is for anyone who is doing or looking for a way to do for all
Whichever ministry you are in, or looking for, or trying to do, it contains
a simple plan of things that can be done to make things that you are
currently doing, what you might be doing, and what you might be

How to use this book	5
Individuals:	
1 Mission or maintenance?	7
2 Aiming at something biblical	11
3 The left-handed game: analysis	19
4 Planning towards mission	29
5 Mission means people	35
6 People mean ministry	43
7 Supporting Christian ministry	47
8 Back to the program	53
9 Over to you!	67

1

Mission or maintenance?

Are you involved in Mission or Maintenance? What a question! How do you know? And who wants to answer it anyway? The way the question is often put makes it clear that you take a risk if you answer it. Your answer will firmly place you in only one of two groups—it will place you amongst the real movers who are going somewhere and taking their group of Christians with them, or it will reveal that you are part of the vast mass of Christian leaders who have supposedly renounced that title in practice, are going nowhere and taking no-one with them! So what does the question do for you? Does it bring on cold sweats, as you feel your whole life and ministry and self-esteem threatened? Or does it give you a touch of Pharisaic pride, seeing that you know you are on the right track and can revel in the answer you have been invited to speak about?

These two M-words seem to have become a new dividing stick amongst Christians, and a new way to evaluate a minister's work. Recently I heard of one group of people on the prowl for a new pastor who bewailed the fact that 95% of the people they interviewed were in 'Maintenance Mode' not 'Mission Mode'. It sounds like two competing Christian fashion magazines, doesn't it? This group were

after a 'Mission Minded' not 'Maintenance Minded' pastor, and so they hadn't, at that time, found someone for their charge. We can only speculate about the 95% they left behind: did this group of concerned pastor-seekers inform the rejected clergy of their ailment, and what happened when they did? Were the Maintenance men hard-liners who had chosen to be 'Self-consciously Maintenance Minded', were proud of it, and glad to see the backs of these Mission Seeking Morons! Or were they 'Accidentally Maintenance Minded', somehow not noticing that they had left their Mission behind until this group of nouveau Pharisees kindly informed them that they hadn't met the standards of this new law? Or were they 'Occasionally Maintenance Minded', vacillating between moments of Mission and moments of Maintenance, and unfortunately happened to be wallowing in the latter when they were visited by the 'Mission Mafia'? Were they left in their offices wondering where they went wrong?

Of course, there *is* a point to the distinction, even if it shouldn't be used against fellow Christians for whom Christ died. Every Christian is drafted into Christ's Mission as soon as they are converted. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Lk 19:10), and on the latter side of his death and resurrection his people are to carry on this task until he returns. To follow Jesus as his disciple means to be unashamed of him *and his words*, being prepared to suffer for his sake *and for the sake of his gospel* (Mk 8:35, 38). It is a usual reaction for converted people to want to "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet 2:9), and as soon as you open your mouth you step into the Mission. Mission is clearly the priority for individual Christians, and for groups of Christians, for it is the priority of our Lord and our God. Then there is Maintenance. In the Mafia's vocabulary this is clearly on the down-side. They mean by this term 'simply maintaining the status quo', long after the reason for that 'quo' has been lost or outdated or forgotten or brutally murdered. So whatever gets started keeps going on and on and on and on. Nothing ever changes; this year is the same as last year, and the year before that. The only reason for doing anything is that 'We've always done it that way'. The only reason needed to *not* do something is that 'We've never done it that way'. This kind of Maintenance smells very much like the traditions of men that get in the way of the real things of God's Kingdom (Mk 7:5-8), and it sounds very close to the man-made religious practices that God hated in the Old Testament and that Jesus and the apostles attacked in the New. What Christian wants that? And what Christian leader wants to be leading

in that direction? Such Maintenance is rightly despised.

But the confusing thing is that there is a right kind of Maintenance. Isn't it right to nurture people's faith, maintain their Christian walk, keep them persevering to the end, and all that? Don't some of the things already going on in the church help maintain such good directions? Why should they be changed just to avoid the slanders of the Mission Mafia? Of course there is a place for maintaining the status quo—as long as the status quo still serves a useful purpose in furthering Christ's Mission to a lost world. That is the key.

Another problem is that we can all get in a rut. Despite good intentions and commitments to stay in 'Mission Mode', the pressures and busyness of normal twentieth century life combined with the pressures and busyness of normal twentieth century Christian ministry, seem to drag us towards a 'Maintenance Mentality'. It is far easier to stay with what we've got. And it is just plain hard work to get something new up and running. It is a breeze to do whatever others thrust upon you, but a stormy process indeed to think of what you would like to thrust upon them. It makes you so acceptable to others when you respond to their needs, rather than saying 'No' to them so you can pursue your own agenda on their behalf. Scratching people where they say they have an itch pleases everyone—everyone, that is, except that confounded Mission Mafia! They persist in shaking their heads in your direction and whispering to each other behind their hands.

To save face with this group, what can we do? But the issue is more important than that, isn't it? To help overcome the natural drag away from Mission, what can we do? For Christ's Mission is about saving the lost. Without Christ, people are utterly lost. With Christ they are utterly found; they are utterly saved. It is therefore of the utmost importance to be involved in his Mission, and to maintain only those things that further his Mission. The question is, how can we do it?

Part of the answer involves setting goals. But we can set goals about anything and everything—just setting goals is not the thing. Our goals ought to be *Mission* goals, and these Mission goals ought then to govern our ministry. That *doesn't* mean that there will be no Maintenance, but it *does* mean that Maintenance will be justified according to the Mission goals, like anything else that gets a guernsey in our ministry.

Mission goals will consist of some fairly general things that will always be a part of any Christian ministry, for these things are determined by the Bible. People will always need to be evangelized; Christians will always need to be edified in their faith and equipped for

Christian service (Eph 4:12); faithful people will always need to be freed up to teach other faithful people to teach other faithful people to... (2 Tim 2:2). Such general and necessary goals may take different specific forms in various places and at various times, or to various types of people. But no matter what specific form they may take, they are plainly drawn from God's Word and should therefore govern everything else.

What follows is a simple tool. It is not 'Everything you wanted to know about ministry, but were afraid to ask'. It will not give you all the answers to becoming Mission Minded about ministry—I hope I'm not that big-headed. It will also need further refinement from you as you use it in the specific context of your ministry. But it is a tool that will help you think through your ministry in a way that is governed by Mission goals.

It is a tool that will be useful to anyone engaged in Christian ministry. And that means you—for all Christians are involved in ministry (Eph 4:12). It is helpful for:

- ministry one-to-one
- churches setting up new ministries
- churches analysing their old ministries
- anyone with some leadership role in a structured ministry situation such as a Sunday School Class, a youth group or an Adult Bible Study
- a pastor who has oversight of all the ministries in a church

Without further ado, let's take a look at it. Who knows, you may have it mastered before the Mission Mafia next comes knocking on your door!

2

Aiming at something biblical

The tool to help resurrect us from Maintenance to that far more acceptable 'M' is extremely simple. It has to be, right? Who wants something that is so complex that no-one even knows which way is up?

The tool consists of a piece of paper. That's right, an ordinary piece of paper—any colour, practically any size, and it doesn't matter if it has a Bible verse along the bottom or not. Along the top of the paper are listed several very general goals that are drawn from the Bible. Several? Okay, basically it is only two, but they are subdivided so that the tool doesn't look *too* basic (we have our pride, don't we?). Two? Well, there is also an additional 'supportive goal' which I'll mention later. Under these goals we have columns drawn and, to the far left, we have a column that is blank for the moment. In the following chapters we will discover that the contents of this left-hand column are variable, depending upon how the tool is being applied. Here is a diagram, so that we are all picturing the same thing right at the beginning:

Variable left-hand column	GOAL 1			GOAL 2			Supportive Goal
	Subgoals			Subgoals			

There are two goals that every Christian involved in ministry ought to adopt. These general goals form the basis of this mission tool.

1. Evangelism

The first is evangelism. God's chosen way of bringing people into his Kingdom is through the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. As men and women hear of Christ's death and resurrection on their behalf, and his present reign as Lord before his promised return, and they believe, so they enter into God's Kingdom. Such people then experience the joy of forgiveness of sins, the certainty of eternal life, and the freedom of Christian discipleship in fellowship with other believers. But the entry point is the proclamation of the gospel. Whenever the gospel is proclaimed, that is evangelism. Therefore, part of our Mission goals must be that Jesus' name is proclaimed as the only way of salvation. "Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). In another place, Paul says: "For how can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?" (Rom 10:14-15). When he says this, he is making the point that Israel in fact *received* the necessary preaching and still refused to believe. But, for our purposes, we simply need to notice the logical questions that he asks in the course of his argument. Evangelism is necessary for anyone to hear about Jesus and so believe and be saved. Evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel. This proclamation needs to be done by somebody.

Before a person can hear the gospel they need to be in contact with a gospel preacher, that is, a Christian. It is God's chosen method that

he sends preachers of the gospel to others. I guess he could have done it some other way if he had chosen to do so, but the fact is, he didn't. Evangelism is done by people to people for people. This then gives us a sub-goal: there must be contact between the Christian (the gospel preacher) and the one who needs to hear the gospel. Christians need to be in contact with people so that they can take the opportunities that God will provide for gospel proclamation.

Now, a lot of people cross our path in the course of normal life: neighbours, workmates, family and friends; other people's neighbours, workmates, family, and friends; visitors to church, casual acquaintances, etc. These people have contact with a Christian by virtue of these relationships. But there are other people who never come into contact with a Christian in the normal course of life. How can these people hear the gospel? Surely they must somehow be reached as well. This gives us another sub-goal: We ought to attempt to raise people's awareness of the gospel or Christians or our church, in the hope of making contact with them in the future.

It also seems fairly common that people are in contact with a Christian for some time before an opportunity for evangelism is taken by the Christian. This period of time can be called 'pre-evangelism'. Certainly the Christian ought to be praying for opportunities to share the gospel so that the relationship is heading towards evangelism. However, until the gospel is actually proclaimed it is not evangelism, just pre-evangelism.

So, under our first main goal of Evangelism we have ended up with four sub-goals, all heading towards the proclamation of the gospel to a non-Christian. These can be set out as follows, with an arrow to indicate the desired direction of movement:

Variable left-hand column	GOAL 1 = EVANGELISM				GOAL 2
	Raising Awareness	Initial Contact	Pre-evangelism	Evangelism	
	→	→	→	→	

2. Edification

The second major goal is Edification. It is God's desire that all of his people are conformed more and more to the likeness of Jesus Christ. Edification is the building up of Christians into this likeness. Of course, this will only be completed on the Last Day, but it is the present aim of every Christian's life to progress towards the maturity that will be theirs on that Last Day.

This goal can also be broken down. When people are first converted to Christ, it is always beneficial to give them some special treatment, some basic 'follow-up'. It seems that the apostle Paul was keen to do this with the Thessalonians, since he writes to them and also sends Timothy to find out about their faith (1 Thess 3:1-5). In fact, a good case can be made that it was his constant practice to 'follow-up' new believers.

But the need for edification never stops, for when it ceases we will have arrived in heaven. (And does it stop there? I'll wait and see!) Until that day, all Christians need to be 'nurtured' in their Christian life.

Two further sub-goals can now be added to the tool:

Variable left-hand column	EVANGELISM				EDIFICATION		Supportive Goal
	Raising Awareness	Initial Contact	Pre-Evangelism	Evangelism	Follow-up	Nurture	

But there is more to the Christian life than being followed-up and nurtured. If that was all, we would not be too different from the Pharisees who were so scrupulously concerned about their own piety. This self-centred religion may be the natural default state of every human heart, but Christ's followers know that this is not true religion. Christ, in his mercy, has given each Christian a 'work of service', a ministry, to be engaged in for the sake of his body, the church (Eph 4:11-12). His aim in doing so was that the church might be edified. In other words, it is not just individual Christians that need building up,

but the whole of Christ's church. His purposes are far wider than this individual or that individual; he is creating a whole new people for himself. And it is as "...each part does its work" that the "...whole body...grows and builds itself up in love" (Eph 4:16).

Within Christ's church, some people have a special kind of ministry: Those people who bring God's word to the rest of the church have been given to the church so that all ministries will be developed and nurtured. "(Christ) gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some as pastors/teachers, to prepare God's people for their works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph 4:11-12). These people are to train and equip Christians, by the explanation of God's word, for their works of service (their 'ministries').

This enables another sub-goal to be formulated. As soon as you have Christians, you have people who ought to be engaged in and trained for ministry for the greater benefit of Christ's body, the church. Therefore we ought to aim at training Christians for ministry. Our tool is now getting wider:

Variable left-hand column	EVANGELISM			EDIFICATION			Supportive Goal
	Raising Awareness	Initial Contact	Pre- Evangelism	Evangelism	Follow- up	Nurture	

3. Support to Ministry

There is one more goal to be added to our basic tool. It is in its own category, which we can call 'support to ministry'. Now, I know that whatever ministry a Christian is involved in could be called ministry in the full sense. But it will be seen below that it is useful to separate Ministry proper—i.e. the activities that have some specific role in either getting the gospel to people or growing the church—and those activities that *support* this ministry. Perhaps this category is close to what the Bible calls the gift of administration or 'helps' (1 Cor 12:28). This