
LAKESIDE CHURCH OF CHICAGO

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The

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IN CHRIST AND FOR CHRIST - TO KNOW CHRIST AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN

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A CHURCH ON A MISSION

If you google the phrase "man on a mission" you will get about 435,000 hits. Pope Benedict XVI, Al Gore, Dan Rather and Nicolas Cage, among others, have received the title. Its counterpart, "woman on a mission," garners 48,500 hits. The mission of the myriad of people varies, but it refers to something that they want to accomplish in their lifetime. It may be difficult, it may even be impossible, but it defines the direction and dedication of their lives.

Mission statements are standard fare in the corporate world now. Similarly, they now appear in church publications more frequently than statements of faith. Most people believe life has purpose, and defining that purpose protects against swimming circles in the fish bowl, or scampering endlessly on the hamster wheel.

A mission statement succinctly states what a church does, the primary purpose for its existence. The children of God have many purposes, such as the worship of God, bringing glory to God in everything we do, building one another up in love, etc. Most churches, however, choose to reduce their mission statement to the activity unique to its earthly existence. And most use Jesus' "great commission" at the core of their mission statements.

This final instruction to His disciples occurs at the conclusion of Jesus' forty days of activity on earth following His resurrection. The gospel writers recorded very little about that period of time, but all of them document some form of this instruction. It is significant that the book of Acts opens with this mission stated in yet another way. The Lord charged His disciples with making disciples of Him.

Lakeside's mission statement reads: *We seek to be an independent, biblically based church family whose primary ministry is the fulfillment of Jesus' "great commission" (Matt. 28:19-20) which is making disciples of all the nations, baptizing them (leading them to faith in Christ which is acknowledged by their public baptism) and teaching them (assisting believers toward spiritual maturity).* Lakeside exists as a church for the purpose of leading people to saving faith in Jesus and equipping to be fully devoted followers of Jesus.

According to Jesus, "making disciples" involves two clearly defined phases. First, a person must cross the line that divides death from life (John 5:24). She must renounce citizenship in the kingdom of darkness and assume citizenship in the kingdom of Christ. Discipleship implies an entry point, and baptism provides the symbolic rite for this entry. Second, new followers of Jesus must be trained and equipped to function as citizens in their new kingdom, learning how to cooperate with God as He transforms them. No disciple of Jesus completes this phase in the earthly life. The only graduation ceremony occurs when Jesus returns to judge all humans.

This means that if Lakeside neglects either phase of making disciples, it has abandoned its mission. It has stepped on that hamster wheel. One important function of church leadership is to keep the church on its mission. Although the mission never changes, the context for doing the mission does change. This requires continuous evaluation and adaptation to the current culture. Lakeside must orient to a climate of change if we want to pursue our mission with integrity. We must expect course corrections, designing new strategies, and deleting ministries and practices that do not effectively contribute to the mission.

The mission must compel all of our behavior. Why? Not because it determines quarterly profits. Not because it gives the image of a cutting edge church. Not because it inflates the egos of the leaders. We pursue this mission alone because our Lord gave it to us. It is not optional. We do not get to pick between equally exciting missions, trying to find the one that most suits our fancy.

Ironically, we grow in passion for this mission as we progress in the mission. As we mature in our devotion to Jesus we find our desires being transformed by His desires. As we advance in the disciple-making process we embrace the mission more fully. If we want to be fully devoted followers of Jesus then we must submit our priorities to Him for rearrangement. It cannot work any other way.

Lakeside has entered an exciting season of life. We are trying to adapt ourselves to a new community. We are trying to adapt to a new congregation. We are trying to adapt to a new century. We are changing, hopefully so that we can stand before Jesus with a clear conscience, having invested ourselves entirely to accomplish the mission He has entrusted with us.

Pastor Stan