



EQUIPPER

The monthly e-zine from the U.S. Church Administration and Development (CAD) team of Grace Communion International.

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Dear minister on mission with Jesus:

Recently in *Equipper* we've been looking at ministry effectiveness. This is a topic where it's easy to fall into one of two unhelpful ditches: ignoring the topic thinking that a focus on effectiveness is legalistic, or becoming so obsessed with being effective in ministry that other matters of the Christian faith are ignored. Both ditches threaten to lead us away from the stunning reality that Jesus is alive and invites us to participate with him in the Father's mission. Clearly, we want to participate effectively. But how do we do that?

To help us think about this topic, we've included in this issue the third part of a series from regional pastor Randy Bloom addressing a Christ-centered, Trinitarian approach to mission. I hope you'll discuss this article with your team, asking, "Are we effective in our participation as a congregation, with Jesus in the mission of God?" Then discuss how you can become equipped for greater effectiveness. If you have questions or are looking for helpful resources, don't hesitate to discuss this issue with your regional pastor.

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I believe that a key issue here is remembering that Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, is actively ministering in the world. If we are to participate (and he wants us to!), we have to know what to look for. By studying Jesus' ministry as outlined in the four Gospels and in Acts, we learn a great deal about the basic pattern of Jesus' ministry both then and now—a pattern we often refer to as Jesus' *disciplemaking pathway*. It has four basic steps:

- **Seek the lost**—Jesus befriends people who do not know him and invites them into his community. Jesus then invites us to share in this ongoing ministry of evangelism to multiply disciples of Jesus.
- **Nurture believers**—Jesus cares for those who have begun to follow him, instructing them in his way of life. Jesus invites us to share in his ministry of helping his disciples become spiritually formed.
- **Equip workers**—Jesus trains and otherwise equips his followers to take an active part with him in seeking the lost and nurturing believers. Church leaders are called and gifted by the Spirit to take part in this ministry of equipping.
- **Multiply leaders, ministries and churches.** This is the fruit of Jesus' work in the first three pathway steps. Jesus invites us to join him in advancing this movement of multiplication.



For helpful instruction and resources related to the disciplemaking pathway, refer to the church development section of the GCI website (<https://www.gci.org/strategy>).

On journey with Jesus and with you,
Greg Williams, CAD director

Equipping all kinds of churches for all kinds of people in all kinds of places.

Implications of Trinitarian theology for church and mission, part 3

By Randy Bloom (for parts 1 and 2 of this series, see the Sept. and Dec. 2014 issues of *Equipper*)

Trinitarian theology teaches us that God (Father, Son and Spirit) is “on mission” in the world and we are invited to participate! We participate as we actively engage with Jesus, by the Spirit, in our Lord’s various continuing ministries, which, by grace, extend the life and love of God to all people everywhere.

Occasionally we wonder if it’s OK to focus on being “effective” in our participation. After all, isn’t Jesus responsible for the effectiveness of his own ministries? It’s good to exercise some caution here—we don’t want to drift into legalistic thinking regarding “how well we’re doing.” Inappropriate concern about our effectiveness can lead to increasingly frantic activity, discouragement and feelings of guilt over an apparent lack of “results.” So how should we approach the topic of ministry effectiveness? Perhaps an analogy from my own life will help, though analogies are never perfect.

One day when I was a teen, my Dad informed me that I would be joining him in his house painting business. I knew nothing about painting and had no painting skills. But he took me to work with him anyway and provided resources and taught me basic skills. Dad could have continued to paint houses without me. But he didn’t want to. Among other motives, he wanted me to be with him and be part of what he was doing. I could have been uncooperative (it wouldn’t have been the first time!), but I chose not to be.

Several positive things took place over time as I participated with him in his enterprise. I learned how to paint houses by listening, observing and applying what Dad was teaching me. I was mentally, physically and emotionally engaged. I developed relationships—making friends with people who worked on Dad’s crew and with his clients. We made homes more beautiful—and I made some money! While I grew in effectiveness as a painter, Dad and I grew closer as father and son. All this was possible because Dad provided the opportunities and resources—he supported me. My “effectiveness” grew as I was fully engaged, learning and applying skills, which took time and practice. I was clumsy and messy at first and early on I didn’t enjoy the process. But that changed over time. With a willingness to learn and a lot of practice I began to enjoy painting houses and even took pride in my work. I’m sure you have had similar life experiences.

So it is with our participation in ministry with Jesus, who includes us in what he is doing to fulfill the Father’s mission to the world. By uniting us to his Son, the Father has adopted us as his children and included us in the “family business” of reconciling people everywhere, drawing them into his life and love. We grow in effectiveness in that work as we participate actively—physically, mentally and emotionally engaged as individuals and congregations in what Jesus is doing to fulfill the Father’s mission.

Sometimes that participation is “passive” as we pause to pray, listen and discern. Then there are times when we move forward, actively engaging in what the Lord has called us to do with him (you can’t paint a house just praying about it!). Our participation with Christ is thus both passive and active. Whether or not that participation is “effective,” in the sense of bearing fruit, is God’s responsibility—it’s his doing, but note that he bears fruit through us. He freely chooses to do so because he loves us and wants us to experience his life with him. He wants to see us learn, grow and enjoy being and doing with him. He wants us to share in the joy of touching and transforming the lives of others. Our effectiveness in this comes through his provision—he produces the fruit of changed lives through us. What a privilege we have to be involved in our Dad’s work!