

ONE MISSION OUTREACH

The Church exists for mission as a fire exists for burning.

EMIL BRUNNER

INTRODUCING ONE MISSION OUTREACH

It is significant that one mission outreach is the first priority in *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church, Second Edition, Strong, Healthy Congregations Living in the Grace of God*. Now, it is the first key in value, importance, and priority. It is not, therefore, the first key we do. We may develop one or more of the other keys, on our way to developing this key as a strength.

Mission means *to be sent out*. *Mission, missions, missionary*, all stem from the same idea of being sent out with a task to be accomplished. The very word *mission* reminds us that the Gospel is not something we can keep to ourselves. We are encouraged by Christ's invitation to take the message of grace out from the center of our church and share it with others. A congregation which is self-interested and turns in on itself has no sense of mission. It is not fully a congregation. God encourages us to be mission congregations.

One means the congregation has focused its mission on a particular hurt and hope, life stage, common interest, or concern in the community. Some congregations are encouraged by God to offer help and hope to people who are suffering particular hurts, for

example, alcoholism, poverty, homelessness. Some congregations serve a mission with a life stage: early elementary children, youth, senior adults, or other possibilities. Some congregations are drawn to help with a common interest or a community concern. It is helpfully important that congregations share in “hands-on” ways, as a people of compassion, with one, helpful, generous mission with others.

Helpful means that practical help is actually given, not just planned or publicized. Planning, research, prayer, and publicity may well precede the mission, but the mission is not helpful until action is begun. Jesus calls us to very concrete tasks—*feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner, heal the sick* (Matthew 25:34–40). The mission can include help both with persons in their need and with the social conditions which caused the need. A congregation may be concerned with the needs of older persons in nursing homes. It may also look at the legislation governing the management of such homes, to prevent further exploitation.

Legendary means that the one helpful mission becomes a legend on the community grapevine. The congregation does the mission for the sake of the mission. The mission is their generous gift. The mission is genuinely helpful in people’s lives. The by-product is that the congregation becomes known for its self-giving mission.

*Refer to the chapter in **Twelve Keys to an Effective Church, Second Edition.** Check your understanding of these important thoughts: Mission, One, Helpful, and Legendary. Can you illustrate these qualities further?*

LOOKING AT THE BIBLE

LUKE 7:18–23

John’s disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

When the men came to Jesus, they said, “John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.

So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

“Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.”

John the Baptist’s message was the promise of the imminent coming of the Messiah or Christ. He had proclaimed the coming of the Lord in terms of the Old Testament expectations of a conquering king. He had realized the uniqueness of Jesus whom he had baptized, but Jesus didn’t quite fit the ancient stereotype. John was now Herod’s prisoner in the dungeons of the Castle of Machaerus. He knew he didn’t have long to live. He wanted to know if Jesus really was the Messiah.

Verse 20: When **the men came to Jesus**. The congregation advertises itself as the representative of God, the Body of the Christ. People have a right to come to a congregation and ask, *Are you really God’s servants, or should we look elsewhere?*

How would you answer this question on behalf of your congregation?

Verse 21: **At that very time Jesus cured many**. Notice the immediate proof Jesus offered. At that very time Jesus demonstrated his power of love and healing. He didn’t say, *fifty years ago our forebears did a great work here, or look what I did last year, or I will*

someday do a great work here. The evidence was there for all to see **at that very time.**

Is there sufficient evidence to persuade persons in your community that God is in the midst of your congregation now?

Verse 22: **The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.** This is quite specific. These are helpful mission events of grace happening now. The proof is overwhelmingly conclusive.

What are some of the human hurts and hopes, life stages, common interests or concerns in your immediate community which are calling out for help?

Are there two or three people in your congregation who have the same interest as you do with a specific mission outreach in the community?

UNLOCKING THE FIRST KEY

1. Many congregations share one major mission outreach in their community.

Discuss the implications of this for your congregation.

2. There are a number of possibilities for sharing one major mission outreach: a human hurt and hope, a life stage, a common interest, or a concern in the community.

Consider your own longings and yearnings for one of these possibilities in your life, family, and community.

3. Think of persons or groups who are delivering concrete, effective help with one of these possibilities for mission outreach.

Share one illustration of persons or a group who are delivering concrete, effective help and doing it well.

4. Congregations become a legend on the community grapevine for their help with one specific mission outreach. These congregations have a deep sense of humility and a spirit of grace about their mission.

Reflect on the sense of humility and the spirit of grace present in your congregation.



*So long as the Church seeks to be the center of people's lives it is no different from the other entities of our culture that clamor to gain the central place in people's lives. When the Church decides to be **in** the center of people's lives, the Church transcends the entities of the culture. It gives up its own self-seeking, survival-oriented tendencies and becomes an entity focused on compassion, on serving, sharing, and caring.*

Whenever the Church does this, the Church is truly the Church.

—Kennon L. Callahan

Lift your heart and mind in prayer. Invite the grace of God into your life.

