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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

Tonight, I am going to be sharing with you our proposed Missions Statement. This has not been a brief process. Over a year ago at one of our deacons' meetings, I asked our deacon body to divide into groups and write what they thought was the purpose of GABC. They did that and we discussed what they turned in. Last spring at our staff retreat, our staff spent some time working through the purpose, the mission of GABC. We took that info and delivered it to our Strategic Planning Task Force and they worked on it and have been meeting on Wednesday nights and this has evolved, through a series of discussions and prayer. This is the result of a lot of people's efforts. I am very proud of the work of our Strategic Planning Task Force in devising this purpose statement.

Our church will vote on this mission statement a week from this Wednesday night. That is the only thing our task force is going to present—this mission statement to guide and direct our church. Our Strategic Planning Task Force shared this with our deacons at our last meeting and they approved it unanimously. Tonight I am very happy to share it with you.

What is a Purpose Statement and why do we need one? Why do we exist as a church? If you went down to Trane and asked them why they exist as a company, they will give you their purpose or mission statement. It will probably read something like, "To manufacture heating and air conditioning units." The same thing at Carrier. If you went out to Kelly Springfield and asked, "Why do you exist?" They would probably say something like, "To manufacture tires." If they got off track at Kelly Springfield and started doing something else, like producing hula hoops, their business would go down, because they are committed to a specific mission, a specific statement.

Now, strangely, few churches have a mission statement and there is a lot of confusion about what churches ought to be doing. A number of years ago the Gallup Poll did a survey in churches and asked this question, "Why does the church exist? What is the purpose of the church?" They came up with an interesting result. Eighty nine percent of the laypersons of the church said that the purpose of the church was to minister to "me, my needs and my family." They asked the pastors and ninety percent of the pastors said the purpose of the church is to reach the world for Jesus.

So you have one group, the laypeople, saying the church exists to minister to me and my family. You have the pastors saying the church exists to reach the world for Christ. No wonder there is conflict and confusion. Unity is found when we can agree on what it is we are setting out to do. Churches that do not have a clearly defined Purpose Statement, many times, do not know what they are doing.

When I was a child, I used to go to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina for vacation, because my aunt and uncle lived there. There was an amusement park there and inside this park I remember a machine, a contraption about the size of a travel trailer. This was the most amazing, complex, intricate machine I had ever seen. There were bells, whistles, belts, pulleys, gears and it all moved. You could sit for hours and watch how that machine was inner-related, and in constant motion, working, working, working. The sign on the machine read, "This machine doesn't do

anything, but doesn't it do it well?" I'm afraid that is true of lots of churches. They don't do anything except meet from week to week, but they do that really well.

I. EXALT GOD'S GREATNESS

Let me share the Mission Statement of Green Acres Baptist Church. This is one sentence, but I will be dividing it up. The mission of Green Acres Baptist Church is number one, to exalt God's greatness. The word "exalt" means to lift up, to set on a shelf for display, to hold up so everyone can see the greatness of God. Look in 1 Chronicles 29:11-13. This is King David, as he is praying and preparing to turn leadership responsibilities over to Solomon who will be building a temple.

1 Chronicles 29:11-13. "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name."

When we think about why we exist as a church, we first need to focus on worship. We exist to be a body of believers who will exalt the greatness of God. In John 4:24, Jesus tells the woman at the well, "They that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Then he said, "The Father is looking for people to worship Him." Can't you imagine God the Father, with all his children, looking around for people who will worship Him with sincerity and enthusiasm, in a genuine spirit? We will continue to make the importance of worship a high priority.

Let me remind you of some of the reasons we worship:

- Worship is for celebration. We come, as the Bible says, to celebrate the greatness of God.
- Worship is for inspiration. We come to receive strength and encouragement, strength to go out and serve the Lord.
- Worship is for meditation, to be still and know that He is God.
- Worship is for preparation. Worship is not an end in itself; it is something that prepares us for ministry. Just as King David prayed the prayer and talked about how God is exalted as Head over all, one of the parts of our purpose is to continue to exalt the greatness of God.

II. EVANGELIZE GOD'S WORLD

The second part of our Mission Statement is to Evangelize God's World. Each part of this purpose statement is biblically based. A church with a purpose statement that is not based on the Bible should not call themselves a church. You will notice at the center of each one of these four statements is God, because He is the center of all we are and all we do. You will recognize this as the Great Commission,

Matthew 28:18-20. “Then Jesus came to them and he said, ‘All authority (the KJV says “power”) 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 will be with you always to the very end of the age.’”

The focus of this part is missions and evangelism. Notice it doesn't say “evangelize our community” or “evangelize our state.” It says, “evangelize God's world,” because the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. We call this the Great Commission, because it is the marching orders of our Lord Jesus. He says, “This is what I want you to do. I want you to go out and share the good news.” The word, “evangelize” is not a translated word; it is a transliterated word. That is the word in Greek. We don't have an English word for it. Evangelism means “tell the Good News.” Tell people the good news that God has sent a Savior to die for us.

When we start talking about evangelism, a lot of Christians are like Arctic rivers—frozen at the mouth. They don't want to talk; they don't want to share. Many people are afraid when it comes to evangelism, because throughout our lives, people have put guilt trips on us, because we are not out witnessing every day of the week.

I have a pastor friend who attended a youth rally when he was in college. The speaker really whipped the young people into a frenzy. He said, “I want every one of you, before you go to bed tonight, to share Jesus with three people.” It was almost 10:30 p.m. and this evangelist laid a guilt trip on them and said, “I want everyone who will share Jesus with three people to come forward.” My friend said he didn't come forward, because he felt that guy was laying a guilt trip on those teenagers, manipulating them. People looked at him when he didn't go forward and said, “What's the matter with you, buddy? You aren't going to witness?”

You have probably heard sermons and heard Sunday School teachers say, “You ought to witness, to share your faith.” We get a mental picture of evangelism as someone with a big Bible going around knocking people over the head saying, “If you're not saved, you're going to hell.” We need to remove the terror from evangelism. Evangelism is simply telling the good news, telling folks what has happened to me.

Let me share five words to help you understand the different kinds of evangelism. One may not work for you, but another one may.

1. Confrontational evangelism

Number one, is confrontational evangelism. That is where you go up and confront people. That is basically what CWT does. Have you come to a place in your life where you know for certain you have eternal life and you will go to heaven when you die? Some people have the boldness and ability to walk up to a stranger and confront them with that. That approach is not for everyone, but it is for some.

2. Intellectual evangelism

Number two is intellectual evangelism. This is usually done by people who tend to be thinkers and they share, perhaps in a book or in writing, the claims of Christianity. It is non-confrontational. It is not harsh. It is not abrasive. You take an intellectual approach and you say, "There really is a God and He has revealed himself through Jesus Christ and through the Word. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and either He was who he claimed to be and is Lord, or He was a liar and a lunatic." It is a very soft approach.

3. Testimonial evangelism

The third is testimonial evangelism. In John 11, the man who was born blind said, "How he did it, I don't know. All I know is that once I was blind and now I can see." A testimonial approach says, "This is what I used to be and this is what Jesus has made me. Let me show you the difference in my life."

4. Relational evangelism

The fourth is relational evangelism. I like this approach where you build a relationship with someone, you become a friend and build bridges of relationship and then you walk across that bridge and share some type of verbal witness with them. In Mark 5, after Jesus cast the demons out of that man who had a legion of demons, that man said, "I want to go with you, Jesus." Jesus said, "No. You go back home and tell your family what has happened." He went into his own family because he already had those bridges of relationship and he shared Jesus with them.

5. Invitational evangelism

Number five is the easiest of all: Invitational evangelism. You just invite someone to come to church. If you don't feel bold enough or skilled enough to take a tract or make a gospel presentation, just say, "God is doing great things in my church. Why don't you come with me? I invite you to come to my Sunday School class." This takes place in so many ways.

What does it do to you when you see people come to know Christ and are baptized? Have you seen it so many times that it doesn't affect you any more? The Bible says, "There is joy in the presence of angels over one sinner that repents." I don't know about you, but I get mighty excited when people are being saved.

What do you think would happen if everyone in this room picked out one person in the next 12 months—just one person—and you try to cultivate that person and win them by being their friend and lead them to Christ? Can you imagine what would happen if everyone in this room could bring one person to Christ, slowly, gradually, not abruptly. Real revival would break out.

My heart beats for evangelism and I thank God for those who came to know Christ this year, but I really believe a church like Green Acres Baptist Church could see 300-400 people saved and baptized every year if "every member evangelism" started happening.

I don't want to put a guilt trip on you; I'm just talking about building relationships and inviting people to come to church. I believe the very best tool for evangelism is the Sunday School. That is what the Sunday School was designed for. If your Sunday School class has become so self-centered and introspective that you are not willing to reach out, your Sunday School class is an obstacle to evangelism.

Over 50 years ago, there was a great man named Arthur Flake who worked for the Baptist Sunday School Board. He came up with a formula, later known as "Flakes' Formula" for Sunday School growth. All five steps of Flakes Formula still work great today.

- (1) Visualize the possibilities. What is possible? Right now you have 30 in your SS class so why couldn't you have 60? Now we are running 2500 in Sunday School – why couldn't we have 3000? Look at the possibilities.
- (2) Enlarge the organization. Create new classes. If you have five adult classes, have six. If you have six classes, have seven.
- (3) Provide the space. To keep growing and reaching people for Christ, you must provide the space. We are at our limit for space right now and there will be some recommendation from our task force about the direction we will be going to provide space to reach more people.
- (4) Enlist and train the workers. Isn't that simple?
- (5) Go after the people. It is amazing what will happen when a church follows that simple time-tested strategy for an evangelistic Sunday School.

This is evangelism and missions. Let's not get nearsighted. Let's remember there are 5.4 billion people on this planet and at least 1 billion of them have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe missions is the middle name of Green Acres Baptist Church. This purpose statement not only reflects our commitment to evangelism locally, but our commitment to world evangelism.

III. EQUIP GOD'S PEOPLE

We really believe the mission of Green Acres Baptist Church is to exalt God's greatness; evangelize God's world and thirdly, equip God's people. This is a very important part of our purpose statement. Once a person becomes a Christian, they are evangelized, and then what do we do with them? One of the biggest problems of churches in our land is we dip them then we drop them. We win them to Christ and we say, "God bless you. You are on your way to heaven." We let those fledgling Christians die.

I heard about a little boy who was in bed one night and he fell out of bed and hit the floor. His mother went to her crying son and said, "Honey, what happened to you?" He said, "I stayed in too near where I got in." That's the problem of a lot of Christians—they get in but they stay too near where they got in and never move on and grow. Part of our Mission Statement is found in Ephesians:

Ephesians 4:11-14. "It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until 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."

1. Bible study

This means we ought to be equipping God's people as a church. There are two ways we do this. Our focus is on Bible study and discipleship. Sunday School, which is at the hub of everything we do, must maintain the balance between nurture and outreach, between Bible study and evangelism. That means when we gather with our Sunday School class, we need to study the Bible, but we don't need to be so focused in on Bible study that we don't reach out. We are willing to grow and bring new people in. Bible study is part of equipping the saints. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." If there is anything we need to strive for as a church, it should be that we are biblically literate people.

I thank God that our first graders now have new Bibles so they can begin to read them. I thank God that our children are learning scripture and having Bible drills. I thank God for every discipleship group where people are studying the scriptures. Many years ago, I enrolled in the University of the Word of God. Although I have studied it for many years, and though I have degrees from colleges and seminaries, I am still a student of the Word of God. If I ever refer to myself as an expert in the Bible, I hope one of you will call me down, because I am not an expert—I am a *student* of the Bible. Some people say, "I have read the Bible before." You don't understand the word of God if you say you have read the Bible before and you don't need to read it again. Every time you open it, God speaks to you something new.

2. Discipleship

There is Bible study and then there is discipleship. What is the difference? Discipleship is a process involving more disciplines: Prayer, ministry, discovering your Spiritual gifts. I am thankful for our church leaders who are experts on spiritual gifts. They understand what it is to take a group of people, believers, and help them to understand what their spiritual gifts for ministry are and to plug them in. One important part of our Mission Statement is to equip you for ministry and to train you for maturity.

IV. EXPRESS GOD'S LOVE

The mission of Green Acres Baptist Church is to exalt God's greatness, evangelize God's world, equip God's people and to express God's love. In John 13:34, Jesus is speaking on the night before he is crucified and says to his disciples:

John 13:24. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

As I've said many times before, the only way you demonstrate you are a Christian is if you have love for one another. God says, "If you say you love me and hate your brother, you are a liar and the truth is not in you." We express God's love to other people by service. Every time you go to the Good Samaritan Outreach Center and serve food; every time you work in our benevolent ministry and every time you visit the nursing home and every time you visit one of our hospitals, you are expressing God's love.

Let me ask you to be careful and do what Jesus said to do in Matthew 10:42. "And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward." This means when we serve, we do it in the name of Jesus Christ. We don't even need to do it in the name of Green Acres Baptist Church. We don't need to do it in the name of our Sunday School class or our group. Jesus said to do it in my name. When we serve food to those hungry people, we ought to say we are doing it in the name of Jesus. When we give to Coats for Kids, we ought to say we are doing it in the name of Jesus. If we are not doing it in the name of Jesus, Jesus said it doesn't count anything in heaven. There are so many ways we can express God's love.

Let's look again at this purpose statement. I hope you will memorize it.

The mission of Green Acres Baptist Church is:

To exalt God's greatness
To evangelize God's world
To equip God's people
To express God's love

(There is one more phrase that is very important)
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This last line was added because that's the thing that makes us different. As believers, everything we do is through Jesus Christ our Lord. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

CONCLUSION

The reason we need a mission/purpose statement is so we can use it to evaluate everything we do. Some long-range plans are building-based or ministry-based. I think a good plan for the future of our church is based upon our mission statement. What is it we think we ought to be doing? Every ministry in our church ought to come under the evaluation of this statement. If there is any ministry that is not fulfilling one or more parts of this purpose statement, we ought to remove it or revise it so it *does* accomplish this purpose statement. As a congregation, we can say this is why we exist: To exalt God and worship Him, to evangelize the world with local

evangelism and missions, to equip God’s people for ministry and to express God’s love to hurting people—through Jesus Christ our Lord. When we do this, the future of this church is wonderfully bright as God leads us.

OUTLINE

The GABC Mission statement:

I. TO EXALT GOD'S GREATNESS

"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name." *1 Chronicles 29:11-13*

II. EVANGELIZE GOD'S WORLD

"Then Jesus came to them and he said, 'All authority (the KJV says "power") 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 will be with you always to the very end of the age.'" *Matthew 28:18-20*

Types of evangelism

1. Confrontational
2. Intellectual
3. Testimonial
4. Relational
5. Invitational

III. EQUIP GOD'S PEOPLE

"It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until 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." *Ephesians 4:11-14*

1. Bible study
2. Discipleship

IV. EXPRESS GOD'S LOVE

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." *John 13:24*