



MentorNet #74

INTEGRATE VITAL MINISTRIES IN THE BIBLICAL WAY

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Military, medical, and industrial executives have found that developing strong interaction between units and departments is vital to achieve top performance. Scripture demands it, too. Jesus is the great integrator: “In Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17). Has your church discovered the vitality that God imparts when it merges gift-based ministries as He requires, rather than specializing excessively in isolated programs? It is not a question of merely doing ministries at the same time; 1 Corinthians chapters 12 through 14, Ephesians 4, and Romans 8 all require churches to *combine* them. Have you overlooked biblical integration when organizing? If so, pause and ponder this vital concept, considering an example.



A child learns to add by dealing with one variable, the items he is counting, whether puppies, pennies, or peppermints. Then, the child grows, and uses math to track *two variables*, such as (1) the percentage of residents in a neighborhood that follow Christ, and (2) the crime rate, showing that less crime coincides with more Christians.



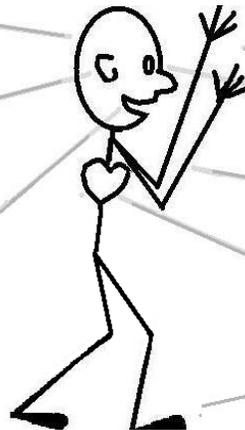
The child matures, joins the army and learns ballistics, to integrate *many factors* in aiming artillery. Spiritual warfare requires just as strict integration of the activities that God requires a church to do, if it aims to expand Jesus’ reign in a hostile world. Your coworkers must know not only what ministries to do and how to do them, but also how to harmonize them with each other, drawing on the Holy Spirit’s help. Paul exhorted the Corinthians by comparing gift-based ministries to organs working in harmony in our physical bodies.



HEAD. Keep Jesus as a church’s Head; obey Him above all, or no effort to truly merge gift-based ministries will work.

EARS. Hear and learn. Develop and use gifts of wisdom and knowledge.

MOUTH. Convey God’s truth. The New Testament purpose to prophesy is to strengthen, exhort and console, 1 Cor. 14:3. Prophecy is often accompanied by healing, and other signs of God’s power.



HANDS. Praise God and use the gift of exhortation to encourage others to join in.

EYES: oversee God’s work. Use the gift of leadership to shepherd.

ARMS: serve the Lord of the harvest. Use the gift of evangelism to reap ripened fields.

HEART: Only agape love harmonizes all gifts; it especially motivates using the gifts of giving, mercy, and serving others.

FEET: go to needy and neglected peoples, near and far.

Consider whether you should better merge any of the following factors with each other:



Social factors. How well do believers in your church love and relate to one another, form work teams, treat coworkers and neighbors, and help others develop gift-based ministries? Love for God and each other is the catalyst for all integration in a church body. Only love that is ‘fruit of the Spirit’ makes one willing to give others preference over one’s self (Gal. 5:22; Rom. 12:10).

A practical way to put this type of *integrative* love to work, is to link the ‘love chapter’ (1 Cor. 13) to chapters 12 and 14 (as it originally was), to show believers how to use their spiritual gifts in concert. Without this kind of love and humility, ministries become isolated and too specialized. Arrange for believers to spend a lot of time together, talk freely, and serve one another. The Good Samaritan had to

draw near to the wounded Jew before he felt compassion for him (Luke 10:33). Meetings with every moment tightly programmed disallow the mutual interaction that the New Testament requires. Gifted teachers are often guilty of usurping time that should be spent having all *harmonize* their gifts.

Evangelistic factors. Mobilizing harvesters for Jesus and bringing repentant believers into God's family, should be an integral part of most church ministries, not an isolated or 'special' ministry. When you show mercy while doing evangelism, both will be stronger. As soon as possible, add new believers to the integrated body by baptizing them, in order to harmonize discipling them with the other vital ministries within the body (Acts 2:41).



Communication factors. By being more conscious of the need to integrate, most Christian workers can markedly improve the way they apply truths to local needs, bond with folk of other cultures, and communicate in a way that creates understanding and motivates action. 1 Corinthians requires use the prophetic gift in practical love. One way to facilitate it is to deal with all three dimensions of a doctrine: (1) its *origin* in the Old Testament in historical events that revealed God the Father's eternal decrees and attributes, (2) its perfect *completion* by Christ in the Gospels, and (3) its current *fulfillment* by believers empowered by the God the Holy Spirit, as seen in Acts and the letters. Such action-oriented teaching requires close coordination with leaders of other ministries.

Mental factors. Hearing, interpreting and applying God's truths through gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and discernment are required to deal with challenges outside of teaching sessions. Do not let valuable teaching opportunities slip by, failing to apply God's truth as Christ did, to immediate situations, interests, errors, and questions. Teachers often remain too zealously focused only on a book or topic, avoiding even temporary deviations to deal with needs as the apostles did. At least part of the time, use a *menu-based* curriculum to mentor apprentice leaders, so that both trainer and trainee can choose studies that fit current needs and deal with whatever is lacking in groups, homes, ministries, or outreaches. Keep evaluating progress and problems, reporting findings to all concerned, and treating urgent needs as they arise.



Organizational factors. In overseeing and leading God's people, conscientiously follow New Testament guidelines rather than mere traditions or humanly devised bylaws. Help believers relate to each other in edifying ways, keep apprenticing new leaders, coordinate tasks among more people, and seek for a blend of gifts when forming cell groups and ministry teams. Avoid *always* grouping according to commonalities; for example, adults find it invigorating to share activities at times with children and youth.

Liturgical factors. Provide believers ample time to chat and interact when they gather to worship. It is not enough merely to ask folks to greet each other. As an example, some churches let people sit together in small groups to take the Lord's Supper, so they can also pray and encourage one another, deal with needs and share blessings.



! **Missional factors.** The Antioch church's leaders let the entire body participate to send out Paul and Barnabas. Equip every group in your church to recognize those who have the itchy feet that are typical of an apostle's gift, and to help prepare and send them to neglected or needy people outside of their flock. Let children and young people as well as all adults participate actively to promote missions, giving missions a prominent place in teaching curriculum and event schedules.

Resources

See tested workshop manuals for training trainers: <<http://www.paul-timothy.net/pages/workshop/>>.
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