

4 what?

The story of what God is calling us to do

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1. Interactive illustration

The Domino Effect – Understanding what sort of things God calls us to in mission.

THE BIBLE BOOKENDS

- Set up a train of dominoes in a place where everyone can see them.
- Lifting the two dominoes at each end in turn, offer the following explanation.

The Bible is a big book framed by the context of just four chapters. The first two chapters of the Book of Genesis and the last two chapters of the Book of Revelation give meaning to everything in between.

Genesis chapters one and two give a snapshot of the perfection of the origins of this world. Revelation chapters 21 and 22 give us a view of the perfect destination towards which God is moving history. These 'bookends' of the Bible offer views of utopia - the most written about subject in human history. This real utopia centres around two realities, our relationship with God and the exercise of God's rule providing the perfect conditions for human flourishing.

CREATION RESPONSIBILITIES

- Show a domino with two spots on it, to represent the two responsibilities God shared with humanity at creation, offer the following explanation.

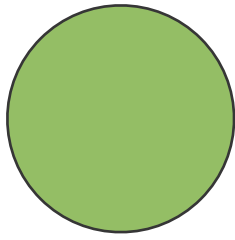
In the first two chapters of Genesis, God shares two responsibilities with humankind - relating to Him (2v.15-18) and ruling over creation (1v.26-28).

RESTORING RESPONSIBILITY

- Show a domino with two spots on one half and one on the other, the single spot representing the third responsibility God shares with us after the Fall.

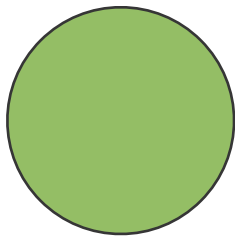
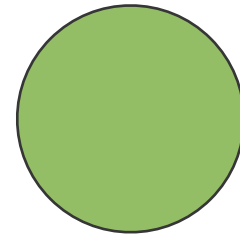
After the Fall, God invites us to join in a third responsibility with Him, that of restoring His fallen world (3v.15). Of course, the life and work of Christ is the centre piece of God's restoration plan, but either side of His coming and ascension, God carries out His restoring activity through the lives of His people. Paul puts it like this in 2 Corinthians 5v.17&18, 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is

a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation’.



How can we help others to come into a personal relationship with God in Christ?

How can we help our community to experience something of the benefits of living under God’s rule in Christ?



How can we help to restore lives and communities broken by the harmful effects from which Christ came to redeem them?

OUR PART IN GOD’S MISSION TO THE WORLD

- While explaining the following, lift a domino from the centre of the line.

The contributions of the people of God to His rescue plan are like dominoes in the domino effect, always moving us towards either Christ’s first or second coming. In that sense mission becomes the link between the perfect origins and the perfect destination of history.

Only God can re-create a perfectly restored world, but in mission He invites us to do what we can in his strength to move his rescue project forward. What we do in mission is about taking responsibility for the parts God continues to invite us to share with Him – relating, ruling and restoring.

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING WHAT GOD IS CALLING US TO DO IN MISSION

As we consider the story of what God is calling us to do it will be helpful to consider the ways in which we can seek to participate in his work of restoring people’s relationship with him and bringing his rule to the lives of individuals and our communities.

- Give everyone a photocopyable domino. Ask them to write one answer to the following questions in the space provided on the domino.

How can we help others to come into a personal relationship with God in Christ?

How can we help our community to experience something of the benefits of living under God’s rule in Christ?

How can we help to restore lives and communities broken by the harmful effects of sin from which Christ came to redeem them?

Display and discuss the answers as possible ways forward in mission for the congregation.

FINAL ILLUSTRATION

- Collapse the line of dominoes while reinforcing the truth that God wants us to work with Him in His work of moving our fallen world towards restoration of relationship with him and his rule.

2. Guided discussion

From “Great Commission” to “Great Permission”

The mission planning process so far has raised awareness of the Bible’s story of mission which we need to tap into. It has also drawn attention to the stories of the local community and the life and witness of the congregation. The diagram on the right represents these outcomes and suggests overlaps that should already be starting to become clearer.

The arena in which all three stories overlap is an indication of the opportunities to which God may be leading your congregation to be involved in local mission in the future. You should consider this to be your congregation’s ‘Great Permission’ to begin to explore specific responses to the many facets of the ‘Great Commission’. In this way your vision for mission begins to take on a distinctively local shape.



In small groups

Ask participants to discuss the following questions:

1. Which themes from the Bible’s story of mission have most come to life for you in the process so far?
2. What strengths in the congregation’s readiness for mission have emerged?
3. What needs in the community have become apparent?
4. Are there any obviously discernible links between the three?

In the feedback session

Use different coloured post-its to display the groups’ answers to questions 1-4. Align them horizontally to maximise the visual impact of discernable links. Look for strongest overall pointers towards specific areas of action God may be calling the congregation to pursue. This is your ‘Great Permission’ to answer that ‘What’ question with the story of what God is calling you to do.

Follow up with a prayerful reflection

Silently, in groups or led prayer, ask for a sense of confirmation of having discerned God’s voice. The following pointers for prayer may be helpful.

- Pray for a sense of something from Scripture having ‘come alive’ in the life of the congregation.
- Pray for a sense of peace and encouragement from God.
- Pray for an increasing faith, hope and love around a unifying vision.
- Pray that God, rather than the congregation, may be glorified.
- Pray for increasing clarity of vision and wisdom.

- Pray that God would enable you to count the cost of beginning and carrying through on your new sense of purpose in mission.

3. Guided discussion

Rolling out the mission of God

Introduce the participants to the following diagram which illustrates the ongoing, dynamic, circular movement of the Church rolling outward in mission.

Explain the various aspects of rolling out a strategy for a missional congregation as follows:

- Point of contact – establishing personal links with those outside the congregation.
- Building relationships – creating spaces and places in which people encounter the face and grace of God in the community of his people in the church.
- Appropriate challenge to faith – the provision of opportunities for people to hear and consider the good news of the gospel message in ways most appropriate to their background.
- Nurture – teaching and example of how to follow Jesus.
- Service – a mechanism to encourage and provide appropriate opportunities for disciples to play their part in God’s mission to the world.

In groups

Give out the following postcard images and ask the participants to identify which best represents each of the five aspects of the missional life of the Church.

Ask participants to reflect on what each picture causes them to think about - in terms of what each aspect of being a missional congregation might look like in practice.

Ask participants to group present congregational activities under each of the five aspects.

Discuss in which areas the congregation is most and least active and which sorts of activities need to be introduced to fill the gaps.

4. Guided discussion

Remodelling our “spiritual house”

Having discerned what God is calling the congregation to do it is necessary to return to present realities and ask what sort of changes to existing structures will be required to achieve future plans. The following exercise centres upon Peter’s description of the people of God as ‘living stones being built into a spiritual house’ (1 Peter 2v.5).

Picture your congregation as a ‘spiritual house’ of God with the members as the ‘living stones’.

Using the accompanying visuals and explanations, discuss which of the following method(s) - of remodelling the living and working conditions of your congregation for new mission - will be required?

1. Refurbishment – sharpen the focus on mission of existing organisations and programmes.
2. Extension – add new programmes or projects for mission.
3. Rebuild – undertake a complete overhaul of congregational approaches and activities to reconnect with the community in mission.
4. Studio – retain existing structures and programmes for mission but create space for a separate new approach alongside the old.

5. Lodgers – open buildings and programmes to other users as a service meeting community needs and increasing connections.
6. Move house – find other venues in the community outside congregational premises to pursue mission.
7. Create through room – knock down walls between the congregation and other churches and/or service providers to form partnerships for mission.

The various forms of 'remodelling for mission' suggested above will require different actions to progress and various levels of adaptability to change as detailed.

1. Refurbishment – engaging those who run and participate in existing organisations and programmes in a discussion about the steps needed to increase the missional edge of their work.
2. Extension – considering the implications for resourcing any new activities.
3. Rebuild – re-envisioning the congregation to think differently about church life and witness.
4. Studio – gaining permission to attempt a new venture in mission which may be completely different in approach than anything presently being done.
5. Lodgers – considering the implications of offering use of your buildings to others and approach potential users.
6. Move house – exploring the potential for mission of other venues in the community.
7. Create through room – approaching potential partners in mission.

Discuss both the congregation's need and readiness to embrace change.

