Vital Signs of a Healthy Church

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Health Produces Growth

Our objective ought to be church health, not church growth. A vital or healthy church is marked by spiritual vitality, functional effectiveness, and statistical growth in its life and ministry. Acts 6:1-7 provides a paradigm for this principle. Therefore, we will seek to be a healthy church and expect to grow as a result.

The Vital Signs of a Healthy Church:¹

Gospel-Driven

The gospel of salvation by grace is the foundation, the formation, and the stimulation for a healthy church. It is the glorious message that God’s grace has overcome our sin through the life, death, burial, and resurrection of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Vision Motivated

Our vision is what we’re going to be by God’s grace. Our mission is what we’re going to do by God’s grace. Since “being precedes doing” it is important that we have a grasp of our vision, that is, what we seek to be, before discussing what we do.

The vision of CBC is to be a healthy community of faith.

Mission (or purpose) describes what we do as a result of what we are.

The mission of Community Baptist Church is to help people learn about God, love Him and others, and live for His purpose.

¹ The following is adapted from Embers to a Flame: A Conference on Church Revitalization. For information, see www.emberstoafame.org.
Authentic Worship

Principles of worship:

• Worship must be God-centered.
• Worship is Word-centered.
• Worship must be regulated.
• Worship is sacred.
• Worship is corporate.
• Worship must be holistic.

Practices of worship:

• We will seek to extol and emulate the character of God in Word and deed.
• We will seek to accurately communicate and apply the Word of God.
• We will utilize the ‘regulative principle’ in developing the components of worship.
• We will seek to be “Guest Sensitive”.
• We will seek to engage the whole person in worship.

Effective Preaching

A sermon without application is simply a lecture. People may applaud our delivery, diligent study, erudition, etc., but if they fail to appropriate the truth in their daily living then we’ve failed in our objective. Our purpose is to communicate the Truth.

The famous passage in the Bible regarding Scripture itself is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Note that the purpose of Scripture is NOT doctrine! Rather, doctrine serves the purposes of Scripture namely, so that [purpose clause] the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Servant Leadership

Perhaps the clearest job description for a pastor is found in Ephesians 4:11-12:

...he (Christ)...gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...
The word translated *prepare* in verse 12 is used three ways in the NT:

- **Restore** from brokenness and sin (Galatians 6:1)
- **Provide** what is needed in faith (1 Thessalonians 3:10) and obedience (Hebrews 13:21)
- **Train** (Luke 6:40) by example and teaching (2 Timothy 3:17)

Note: While certainly not involving less than preaching, pastoral leadership involves more than preaching. To be better preachers we must concentrate on being better pastors. (cf. Paul’s example in Thessalonica and Ephesus in 1 Thessalonians 2:6-9 and Acts 20:17-21, 34-38 respectively)

*Dynamic Discipleship*

An effective discipleship strategy is based on the assumption that all believers are disciples and therefore must be engaged in the discipleship process. It will provide a comprehensive curriculum as well as a relational environment in which to learn. The curriculum should include both foundational knowledge (evangelism, baptism, bible study, prayer, service) and systematic learning permeated by a biblical worldview.

The relational context by which the principles of the Christian walk are modeled and mentored is best provided, I believe, in community group settings.

*Intercessory Prayer*

Why has God chosen prayer as the means by which to accomplish His will? It is because prayer is perfectly suited to maximizing God’s glory. When we express our dependence on God we glorify Him. When we acknowledge that answered prayer in our lives and ministry is only due to His gracious hand, we glorify Him. One author has said that to glorify God means to “intentionally show Him off.”

In John 15:7-8 we see the direct connection of all this to our mission:

*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

Literally, verse 8 says “by this is my father glorified.” It connects back to verse 7 and forward to verse 8. That is, God is glorified in that 1) we ask and 2) He supplies because thereby we are shown to be needy and He all sufficient. And the thing for which we ask is “fruit.” It is the Father’s will that we bear fruit!²

The mission of CBC is to help people learn about God, love Him and others, and live for His purpose.