

Assess Your Church: Mission or Membership?

The following chart outlines some of the characteristics of two recent models compared with the biblical (or Apostolic) model. Notice that the emerging Mission paradigm is functional because it is a return to the Apostolic model, replacing a counterproductive (and largely counterfeit) intervening model. The check column will allow you to do a simple diagnostic of your congregation on each item—whether it is more like the Member paradigm or the Mission paradigm.

Issue	Apostolic Paradigm 1st-3rd Centuries	Member Benefit Paradigm to Mid-20th Century	The Most Like Us	The Emerging Mission Paradigm (New Apostolic) Late 20th-21st Centuries
			PLACE ✓ or ✓	
Driving force	Mission; vision; core beliefs and values	Tradition; human loyalties; personal will and expectations of members		Mission; vision; core beliefs and values
Mission	External; to reach the world	Internal; to serve the members		External; to reach the unchurched
Structure	Organic; Simple; functional; local; rational	Organization: Complex; bureaucratic; democratic; legislative		Organic; simple; functional; local; rational
Relationship to God	Personal; passionate; gets lived-out in community	Impersonal; institutional; social; corporate; vague		Personal; passionate; experiential; gets lived out in community
Role of "clergy"	Teacher; leader; equipper; overseer	Professional; chaplain to the members; or pontifical		Teacher; leader; equipper; overseer; coach
Role of members	Active; committed; engaged in mission; equipped "ministers" in service to Jesus	Passive; customers to be served; patrons to be pleased; stake holders in the "democracy"		Spirit-gifted ministers deployed in the mission; team members; soldiers/slaves in service to Jesus
Communication	Narrative; story; oral; visual; personal; life-oriented	Print; proclamation; rational argument		Narrative; story; visual; multi-media; personal; life-oriented
Paradigm of "church"	Mission-the Kingdom is launched and spreading across the world; reaching the lost	Membership-providing benefits to members		Mission-spreading the Kingdom reaching the unreached
Origin of the paradigm	Holy Spirit; Word of God	Once-effective innovations that became ineffective traditions. American philosophies and culture up to the 1950s. Natural processes		Holy Spirit; Word of God through leaders who are biblically sound and culturally relevant. A vision for becoming a church that is a fully-functional, authentic biblical community
Present status of churches in the paradigms	Historical example that serves as the model	Stagnation; decline; or plateau. A declining majority on the way out. (See following section on status)		Healthy; flourishing. A minority but growing. Account for nearly all the evangelism that occurs.
Improvement comes by:	Exhortation or correction by God-appointed representatives	Reformation of the existing state of affairs		Restoration to original biblical intentions for both faith and practice.
Purpose	Make disciples	Serve the members; maintain the institution		Make disciples
Character of "members"	Fully devoted disciples; filled with the Holy Spirit; transformed into Jesus likeness; hunger for righteousness	Personal benefit-seeking; dues-paying member of the "fraternal lodge;" "mere men;" secular mentality and life habits; "selective obedience"		Fully devoted disciples; filled with the Holy Spirit; transformed into Jesus likeness; hunger for righteousness

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Basis for selecting officers	Character, Competence, Commitment	Politics; adequate score on traditional check-list of personal characteristics; availability		Character, Competence, Commitment
Role of elders	Overseeing the mission; casting vision; setting direction, policies; guarding doctrine; leading; teaching; prescribing; disciplining	Institution-tenders; proxy for members (senate); micro-managers		Overseeing the mission; casting vision; setting direction, policies; guarding doctrine; leading; teaching; prescribing; disciplining
Role of "diakonos"	Servants who administer areas of ministry; a function more than an office	Office holders; proxy for members (house of representatives); legislative board; checks-and-balances		Servants who administer areas of ministry; a function more than an office
Inter-church collaboration	High degree; missional; informal	Formal; bureaucratic; agency administered		High degree; missional; informal; short-term; specific; networks
Dynamics	Holy Spirit led and empowered	Organizational; programmed; formal; bureaucratic; human wisdom and energy		Holy Spirit led and empowered
Guiding principle	Obedience to God's intentions	Tradition; members' preferences, opinions, expectations		Obedient, serving, pleasing God
Corporate culture, ethos, tone, atmosphere	Heaven-like; fruit of the Spirit; personal sacrifice; high expectation; excellence; joy	Like the world; human-nature driven; fruit of the flesh; often corrosive, destructive, smothering		High standards; biblical norms for attitudes, behavior, relationships; Heaven-like; joyful; sacrificial; discipline by leaders
Worship events	Assembly of Jesus' slaves for celebration, praise, instruction, equipping, deploying	Passive; routine, mindless; obligatory; performance oriented; unfocused		Enthusiastic; anticipatory; participatory; sensory; passionate; excellent; life-changing
Focus of strategy	Effectiveness in reaching the unreached	Avoiding members' displeasure		Mission-driven; sanctified pragmatism; rational; daring; visionary
Source of authority	The risen, exalted Christ as Lord; Word of God; Holy Spirit; consensus in the Spirit	"I like;" "I want;" "I think;" "It seems to me"		Lordship of the risen, exalted, and returning Christ; Scripture; consensus in the Holy Spirit
Tasks of leaders	To FOUND the church Discern and communicate the will of God; set direction; oversee the faith, mission, and life of the church; equip and mobilize the people in ministry	To REFORM the church Maintain the institution; respond to members' wishes; Serve the members		To RESTORE the church Discern and communicate the will of God; set direction; oversee the faith, mission, and life of the church; equip and mobilize the people in ministry