

Breaking the Missional Code

PART ONE

This exercise will help you discover that which is unique in the mission field the Lord has called you to. You will need to put on your walking shoes as you identify the gaps in service within your community and seek God's wisdom in bringing the Great Commission and Great Commandment to the needs of your community.

As you discover the missional code for your mission field you will gain a greater appreciation for the cultural context of your calling. What you learn will become the foundation of your vision statement. You will establish an outward focused missional DNA that will ultimately create a mission planting movement into the next generations.

The missional code is not a magic bullet or a slick program. Pastors and church leaders have been looking for these for years. Wishing you could duplicate, in your own community, the ministry of Rick Warren or Bill Hybels has been the dream of the modern age. In the churched era it was believed the right program or sales pitch would grow the church. The attractional model worked when the church was the cultural insider. Today the church is the cultural outsider and just as Jesus surprised his world with who God was, so we are called to surprise our communities with who Jesus is.

The unchurched in our communities believe they know all about Christians! Unfortunately most of what they know is from the mass media which, too often, focuses on the negative actions and behaviors of Christians. Coupled with that is the fact that the unchurched (which are a different category from the dechurched) do not even know the popular Bible stories we learned in Sunday school. They are 2nd and 3rd generations removed from any religious experience. Today only 17.1% of the population is in a Christian worship service on a weekend (it was 69% in 1959). There is not one county within the United States today that has more people in worship on a weekend than 20 years ago. The unchurched do not have the church or its message on their radar. When facing difficulties in their lives, the idea that the Christian Church may be a place to seek help and guidance doesn't enter their mind.

At the same time post moderns are seeking authentic relationships through social networks. They are also seeking to make a difference in this world through their global footprint. Add up everything I have said so far and it all points to the fact that North America is, now, a ripe foreign mission field!

Ed Stetzer and David Putman in their book "Breaking the missional Code" write,

Breaking the missional code requires a belief that there is a code to be broken. Breaking the code means that we have to recognize that there are cultural barriers (in addition to spiritual ones) that blind people from understanding the gospel. Our task is to find the right way to break through those cultural barriers while addressing the spiritual and theological ones as well.

That is what missionaries have always done. Today is no different. North America is a missions context, not because people are less Christian than they once were (although that is true), but because God "sent" us to North America. It is the mission field because God sent us here as missionaries.

However, we are missing a clear reality if we do not recognize that this is a harder mission field than it once was. Historically, the Christian church was the first choice of spiritually minded North Americans - today, it often does not make the top 10 list. Years ago when people looked for spiritual answers, they looked to the church. Now, many look to anybody and anything but us.

Breaking the code is the recognition that there are visible and invisible characteristics within a community that will make its people resistant to or responsive to the church and its gospel message. Discerning Christians discover those relevant issues and break through resistance - so that the name of the reality of Jesus Christ can be more widely known.

One of the biggest cultural barriers we face is the emerging "glocal" context. We use this term to refer to the convergence of the **global** reality with our **local** reality. North America has become a "glocal community" requiring new strategies for effective ministry.

Breaking the missional Code by Ed Stetzer and David Putnam pages 4-5.

Will Mancini in his book writes, "We believe that 'the future movement' for the local church is intrinsically tied to two assumptions. First, a unique vision must "ooze" from the leader's life as well as the church's leadership community. Second, this vision must create a stunningly unique culture inside the church that is inclined and motivated to penetrate the culture outside the church. In other words, reaching the surrounding community should be innate, driven by churches DNA rather than programming. Therefore I write with one purpose: to challenge you to find your Church Unique-that is, to live a vision that creates a stunningly unique, movement-oriented church."

Church Unique by Will Mancini, Introduction page xxii.

Table I.I. Strategic planning vs. Vision pathway

Classic Strategic Planning

Vision as content
Mission as statement
Values as statement
Strategy as plan
Measurement as goals

Church Unique Vision Pathway

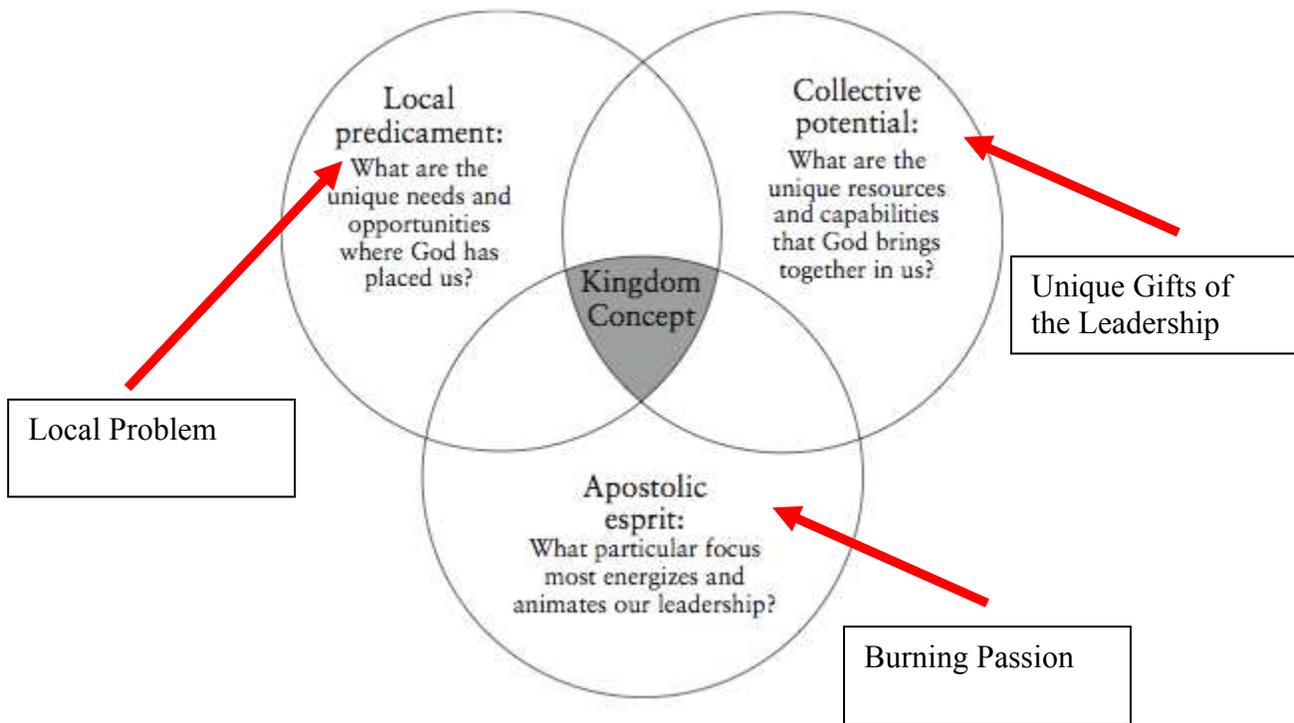
Vision as lifestyle
Mission as missional mandate
Values as missional motives
Strategy as missional map
Measurement as missional life marks

Church Unique by Will Mancini, Introduction page xxv.

Attractional vs. Incarnational

Mancini continues, "Attractional means that the church's basic strategy for reaching the lost revolves around getting "seekers" or the "unchurched" into the church building. Once inside, the opportunity to present the gospel defines the primary opportunity for evangelism. This paradigm reflects the common assumption for most popular church growth expressions. In contrast, the incarnational emphasis of the missional mindset focuses on living and sharing the gospel "where life happens." (Just as for Jesus, who "walked across the street" between heaven and earth by putting on "flesh"-to incarnate.) The importance is placed on the church "disassembling" itself for the primary work of evangelism in the nooks and crannies of everyday life. In the attractional mode, big church buildings are important, and the church gathered is the consummation of evangelism. In the incarnational mode, fluid and flexible communities of faith are important; the church scattered is consummation of evangelism. The rallying cry against the attractional model is that the church should be measured by its sending capacity, not seating capacity."

Church Unique by Will Mancini, pages 34-35.

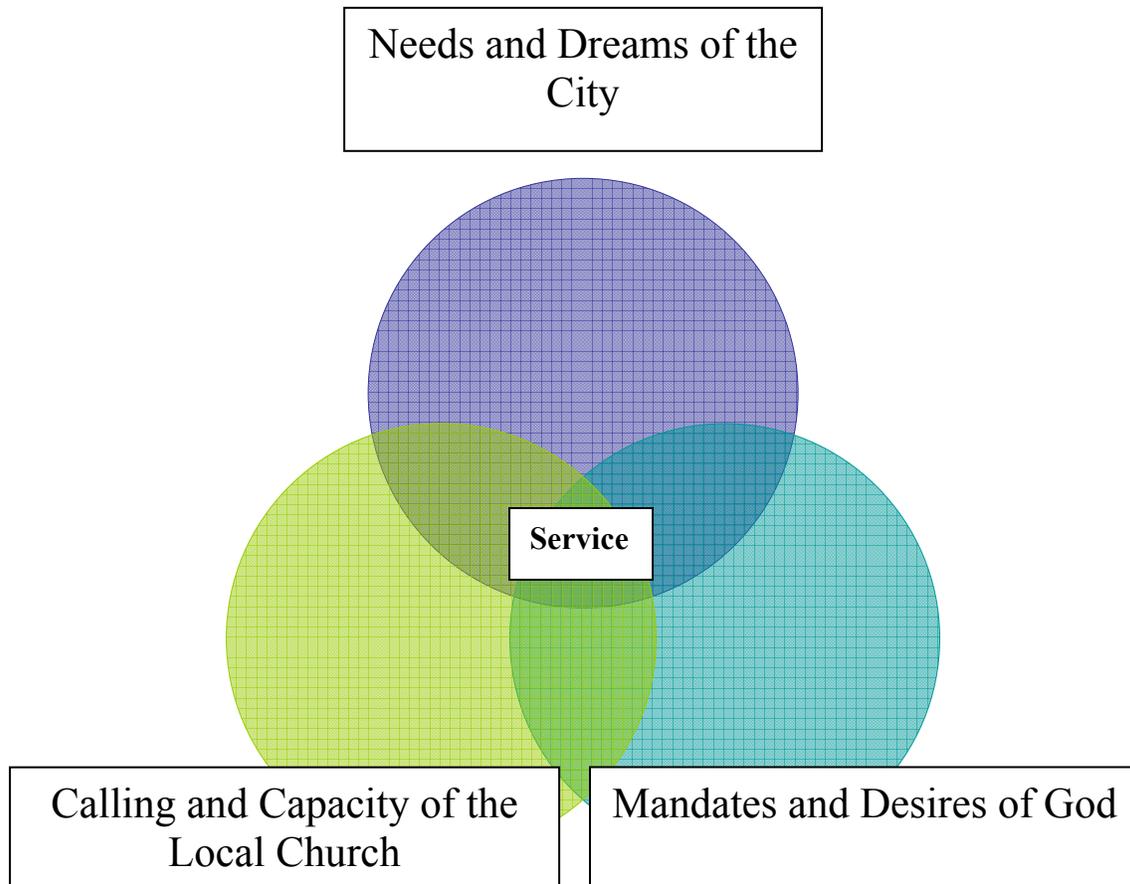


Your Kingdom Concept

Mancini explains the above diagram: "The first step in ascertaining a unique vision is to discover your Kingdom Concept. The Kingdom Concept is the simple, clear, "big idea" that defines how your church will glorify God and make disciples. Please note the important point of the last sentence: your Kingdom Concept is not to "glorify God" or to "make disciples" in and of itself. These ideas reflect the biblical mandate for every church. Rather, your Kingdom concept is what differentiates you from every other church

in how you develop followers for Christ for God's ultimate honor. The Kingdom Concept answers important questions such as "what is our greatest opportunity to have an impact on the Kingdom?" And "what can we do better than 10,000 other churches?" Think of it as your organizational sweet spot. It is the place where your church's unique experiences flow as a body of Christ. With a clear understanding of a Kingdom Concept, your leadership can capture and release amazing energy toward a better future."

Church Unique by Will Mancini, pages 84-85.



Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson in their book, "The Externally Focused Church" describe **service** as the sweet spot for Kingdom impact. They describe the above diagram saying, "Service is the only location that encompasses the needs and dreams of the city, the mandates and desires of God, and the calling and capacity of the church. Service is the "sweet spot" where all three distinct interests come together. Service is something the community needs, God desires, and the church has the capacity to do. The community

may not care much about salvation, but it does have needs. It is in meeting those needs through service that meaningful relationships develop, and out of relationships come endless opportunities to share the love of Christ and the Gospel of salvation. The early church grew because its people loved and served. We believe servants can go anywhere. Service gives us the access not only to places that need but also to places of influence. “The Externally Focused Church” Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson Page 60

From the above quotes and illustrations what are three thoughts and or questions you are pondering?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

PART TWO

A congregation in Michigan in 2000 was visited by Magdalena and her 4 children. This family had immigrated as refugees from Sudan two weeks prior to their visit. They were so welcomed by this congregation that the next week they brought 4 more who were newcomers to the US. Within a month more than 50 new people from Africa were worshipping at this congregation.

The pastor, who was not familiar with the immigration process, visited with the resettlement agency in his community, school officials, police officers, and social agencies. He also visited with the refugee families in their homes and learned their stories. He was surprised when Magdalena talked about having to watch her husband being killed in their former country. He was amazed as she told of the opportunity she had to provide her children with food and clothing. All she had to do was deny her faith in Jesus. She and her children went hungry. The night she told him that story he became agitated by the poverty like conditions she was living in as she was building a new life in Michigan. Roaches had infested the home she was living in.

Driving to the church the next morning he knew something had to be done. Something had to change so that Magdalena and people like her would not have to live in poverty. The pastor emailed 200 people asking each of them to send \$1000 to start a learning center for new refugees. 18 months later he had raised \$150,000 and the center opened. The center provides English classes, computer training, driving training, job training, homework help for children and much more. The center sees people from all over the world on a daily basis.

The congregation today is a place that looks like what heaven will look like some day. U.S. born people and people from countries around the world are all worshipping together. The congregation discovered their sweet spot of service and their Kingdom concept. It is our prayer that the Lord will do the same for you through the activities below.

Local Predicament or Needs and Dreams of the City

Interview at least 10 people of influence within your mission field. Do not do this by your self divide assignments among leaders and members. If people are hesitant take some one with you so they can learn from the experience. People of influence are: the mayor and or other government officials, police and fire chiefs, school principals, the Chamber of Commerce, significant business leaders, realtors, hospital CEO's, neighborhood organizations, social agencies, etc.

Ask them these three questions:

1. What would you say are the gaps of service within our community?
2. What do you think a church could do to fill those gaps?
3. If you have a dream for our community what would be different 3 years from now?

List the top 3 gaps in service repeated by the people you and your team interviewed:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List the top 3 ways these people thought a church could fill those gaps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What do you consider to be the top 3 dreams these people have for your community?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Collective Potential or Calling and Capacity of the Local Congregation

Have each member of your leadership team and or core group answer these three questions.

1. If I knew I would not fail, how would I live my life?
2. If someone would mention your name to your friends or a group of people who know You, what would those people say you were interested in or passionate about?
3. What are your primary spiritual gifts?

Create a composite of the collective potential of your leadership team/core group.

What relationships do you see between your collective potential and your community's local predicament and dreams?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Burning Passion and mandates and desires of God

Taking the information you have learned about your mission field gather your core group (or a group of prayer warriors from local congregations if you do not have a core group) to prayer walk around places of significance. Schedule a time when the entire group can gather together. Plan to spend an hour in prayer in the community. Organize people in groups of two or three who will pray for a changed community:

- Asking the Holy Spirit to bring down the walls of Satan's grip upon the hearts and lives of the people caught behind the gates of hell.
- Asking for the Lord to fill you with a passion to serve your community.
- Asking for the Lord to purify your heart to build caring and authentic relationships with the people you serve.

Come together as a group to share the things each group may have heard from God. Did they have any interaction with people from the community? Did any one ask them to pray for any specific needs? What filled the group with excitement and passion? What strong sense of calling are you receiving from the Lord?

“What is a vision? Where do they come from? Visions are born in the soul of a man or woman who is **consumed with the tension between what is and what could be**. Anyone who is emotionally involved-frustrated, brokenhearted, maybe even angry-about the way things are in light of the way they believe things could be, is a candidate for a vision. **Visions form in the hearts** of those who are dissatisfied with the status quo... Vision carries with it **a sense of conviction**. Anyone with a vision will tell you this is not merely something that could be done. **This is something that should be done.**”
(From Visioneering by Andy Stanley)

Write out the burning passion you have developed for your mission field.

The work you have done in this exercise will become the foundation for the creation of your vision statement.