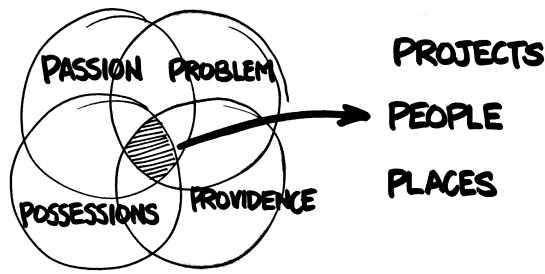


THE 7 P'S OF FINDING/DEFINING/REFINING YOUR MISSIONAL FOCUS



This is a simple tool to help your small group, missional household, or missional community find / define / refine its missional purpose

Premise

- Every group of believers who are trying to live out the life of God together will need to grapple with the 3 dimensions of church life. We normally use a triangle to represent this with the up, in and out dimensions
- The out dimension is the missional one. It is usually the hardest to find and the easiest to lose!
- Most small groups are defined by their mutual support, and prayer or bible study. They rarely explore the possibility of a missional dimension. As such they also have an inbuilt tendency to default back to the in (towards each other) and the up (towards God) dimensions. In trying to become missional in their focus and practice, they are like a rocket trying to escape the gravity of the earth. It takes tremendous effort to do so. As such it should not be underestimated how much intention it takes to create a functioning mature and sustainable missional focus.
- This tool is designed to help discover that dimension. But it is only in putting in regular rhythms for mission, and creating accountability for maintaining it, that it will be successful.

The 7 Ps

This tool provokes 4 questions that the group needs to ask itself and God in order to find the mission focus that will be explored. It also defines the 3 likely outcomes of that focus.

1. **Passion.** People usually have a passion for something. It might be their neighbourhood, people who work in the arts, or social justice issues like trafficking or asylum seekers. It could be students or the elderly, businesses or the work place. It could be hobbies like walking or cycling. There is no end of passions that people have. You just need to ask the question, 'What are you passionate about?' For Jesus it was preaching and disciple-making. He said in Luke 4:18 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach..' He went on to spend the next 3 years making disciples.

2. **Problem.** What is the problem that you want to fix, the injustice you want to right, the situation in your local community you want to address. For example it might be loneliness, single mums struggling to cope with their kids, litter in your park, or ill health in your neighbourhood. For Jesus, he went on to say that His good news was for the poor, the blind, the captives, and the downtrodden (Luke 4:18)
3. **Providence.** What doors is God opening for you, where is he giving you contacts or favour? Where does he seem to be leading you, or what have you been fruitful in before? You may have particular favour at work, or have opportunities in your children's school. For Jesus there was no open door in Luke 4 in Nazareth when he was in the synagogue. In fact they try to kill him there, but when he gets to Capernaum later in the chapter there is a wide open door for his ministry (Luke 4:31-44). He was able to heal the sick, preach freely, and cast out demons.
4. **Possessions.** What resources has God put in your hand? This could be physical resources like material possessions and money, or it could be skills, gifts and experience, or key relationships. For Jesus it was his knowledge of the scriptures and his anointing of the Holy Spirit.

These 4 questions will all overlap to some extent and some will lead to similar answers, that's fine. The aim of asking them is to look for where the overlap is and what it points to. Do they seem to be directing your group in a particular direction?

The 3Ps that follow may help you further refine the mission focus. You may be looking at a project, like helping at a homeless hostel, or with a Foodbank. It may be a people group like those involved in the performing arts, or the elderly. It may be a place like your local neighbourhood, or a local school. Sometimes it is a combination of more than one thing. However beware of spreading your mission focus too thinly. The more defined, the more effective and fruitful you will be.

A word of advice to those who want a more permanent mission focus that will last for years. The best kind for this is a geographical one where there are permanent homes in the area. These kinds of groups generally have greater longevity and lasting fruit. They are also better for building authentic community because people can get to hang out together more easily. If you have to get in a car to get to be with your group that is a significant (but not insurmountable) obstacle.