

Healthy Church

To be a healthy church, its people must be properly equipped. Such equipping must keep a balance in its offerings. That balance is between the equipping of biblical and theological truth (teaching) and the equipping needed for missional effectiveness (making disciples). Both are equally important. To become imbalanced in either direction imposes great danger to the health of a church.

It appears obvious that large numbers of our churches in the PCA are imbalanced to the side of “teaching”. This is not in any way suggesting the unimportance of teaching. None of us would want that! But as you read this, stop and evaluate the percentage of offerings in your church’s weekly calendar that is devoted to missional equipping. Compare that to the time devoted to instructional teaching for Christian sermons, classes, Bible studies, podcasts, etc. It is likely that doing such will make my point. (I am not suggesting that the hours given to each should be equal, but that this comparison merely spotlight the vast difference between the common focus on the two.) However, priority and passion for the two should be the same. The time necessary for keeping each of these in equal priority will certainly be different.

As PCA churches, we are known for our zeal for learning, embracing and protecting our biblical truth. This is certainly a necessary strength! Yet this single strength cannot stand alone. Our PCA’s annual, statistical data indicates that most of our churches see very little, if any, adult conversions. And this is year after year. And even the low number of adult professions of faith recorded are probably misleading in that many of those joining these churches came to Christ because of the labors of those outside that church. Regardless, I think it is fair to say that the PCA is strong in its teaching, but comparatively weak in its making of disciples.

Most would certainly agree that Jesus commissioned His followers to make disciples of lost people. Jesus Himself said, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.” He made the importance of winning the lost all the clearer when He said, “I came to seek and to save the lost.”

Missional living is the exercise that must accompany a healthy diet of God’s word. And using the food and exercise analogy, healthy exercise creates the hunger for food, not vice versa.

In the absence of a church’s missional obedience, a dangerous consequence is common. Teaching and defending the truth easily become the sole, consuming priority. This may well describe quite a large number of our churches.

It is time for our PCA churches and denominational leaders to renew our focus on the balance between the two offerings described. It is time to move our churches to the front lines of kingdom warfare—fighting the Evil One for the souls of lost people, rather than unhealthily focused on our internal differences with one another. This begins with us repenting for our neglect of obeying Jesus’ commission and then embracing and equipping our people with the necessary tools to reach the secular culture in which we live.

Without doing so, the PCA will continue to drift further and further into irrelevance in the kingdom battle taking place in the world in which we live. I pray for God to bring a renewed heart and passion for being an effective disciple making denomination.