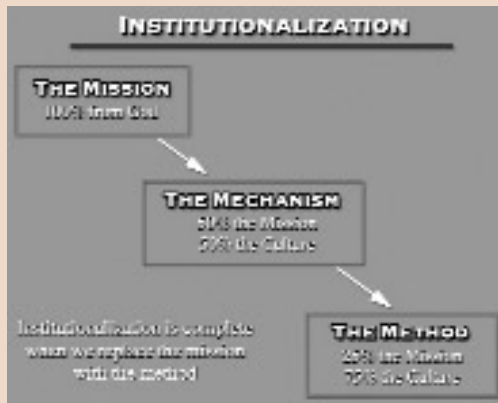




▶ Reaching the Goal

by Dan Schaffer

In our last two newsletters, we looked at the goal or the primary calling of the church, a man, and a woman: to use the power of Christ to bring His people to maturity, unity, and Christ-likeness. Yet while we identified the goal, we would be remiss if we did not address a persistent question that accompanies establishing the goal: Why is it so easy to miss?



A clear example of this from history comes from the Sunday evening church service. In the 1880s, there were no Sunday evening services due to the lack of light after sunset. With the advent of gas lighting, though,

you could turn on the lights and immediately attract a crowd. Churches recognized this innovation as an opportunity to draw an audience and carry out the Great Commission.

By the 1950s (nearly seventy years later) churches were judging one another's spirituality on the basis of having this service. The mission to share the gospel was from God, but the method was quickly institutionalized into the church, and it became a tradition rather than an opportunity for outreach. What other examples can you think of?

There is another principle that we have observed. Focusing on the mission unifies while focusing on the method divides. It seems that most of our disagreements and arguments come from conflict over the method we are using. Could it be that our difficulty with maintaining unity is that we are trying to build unity around our methods rather than God's mission?

Have you experienced the negative progression of institutionalization? What is God's mission for you as a man? *Will you be a man who understands God's mission and calls others to it?*

There is a necessary pattern of development that must take place when working towards the goal. When I look back at the churches and Christian organizations that I have been involved in, each started with a clear mission and message. That message could only go forward if there was a mechanism or structure to carry out the mission. So, appropriate effort went into developing and organizing a structure to carry out the mission. From that mission/message and mechanism came a method to get the mission accomplished. Let me reiterate that this pattern must develop in order to reach any goal.

Each element of the pattern is important to carry out the mission; however, over time a strong yet subtle tendency can avert our attention. Almost from the day we are given the mission, which comes from God, we begin to move towards replacing it with the method that we have developed to accomplish it.

If we are not careful, the people who join us in the mission will perceive the method to be the mission. When this shift in focus occurs, we lose our ability to fully accomplish the mission. We then move to protect the structure and the method so that they continue. This is called institutionalization. Have you experienced the process of institutionalization in your life?

Germany Update from Dan

We drove directly to southern Germany, near Stuttgart, and for the next few days, we held a number of men's seminars and meetings in churches. We then spent the rest of the week with a young couple who are spiritual children of ours.

As the week came to a close, we drove to the northern part of Germany, where I was to be the primary teacher at a men's conference for leaders. I met up with a Christian brother named Patrick who has become a close friend and has served and ministered with me as an interpreter. This particular time he brought a young Portuguese man with him who was not yet a Christian. Even though the messages were not at all evangelistic, God began to move in his heart.

Over the next two days the young man peppered me with questions: What is prayer? Have you read the Koran? What about Buddhism? Without our knowing it, his view of Germans and his experience

with this group of German-Christians was putting him on a collision course with God, and his heart was beginning to soften. He was drawn to the warmth and love that he saw among us and was experiencing from this group. He shared with us before he left for Frankfurt how wrong his preconceptions of Germans and Christians had been; and after a five-hour ride, he began the process of becoming a Christian.

The following weekend there was another conference where a number of leaders spent time together. For some it was the first time that they had experienced honesty and freedom with other Christian men. One man stayed awake until three in the morning telling his wife of the experience.

Starting in March of 2005, I will be making four trips to Germany to help pioneer the model in northern and southern Germany.

Ministry Prayer & Praise:

- Praise for the Facilitator Training in July. We ended up with nine of us for these three intensive days. Unfortunately, we had 15 men who had made verbal commitments back out of the last month. This was an important time as we deeply connected with two leaders within the United Methodist Church in California. Continue to pray for God's hand to significantly provide an opportunity to share our message within this large denomination.
- Continued prayer for completing the Building Brothers book and for finding a donor to financially back this imperative project.
- Prayer that God will connect us with those churches and pastors that He is creating a hunger to build spiritual fathers and mothers.

Personal Prayer & Praise:

- For Dan and Jan as they host the group from Germany and for strength during a ministry-filled fall.
- For Dan'l and Carla as she has had an extremely difficult summer with her health. The latest episode had her rushed to the hospital thinking it was a stroke, but it ended up being Bell's palsy.
- Direction for Ken and Bonnie for future additions to their family and for Bonnie's occupation.
- For the whole Ellsmore family as they continue to settle into their new church and community. There is continued praise for their new home!

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► Ministry Update

► *Denver, Colorado*

September 4, the Building Brothers team will be presenting Phase III Training at the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Denver. We continue to journey with this diverse leadership team as they process through the training and dig into each other's lives in their small groups.

► *Germany Leaders U.S. Trip*

October 2-16, nine pastors and leaders from Germany and Hungary will be in the Denver area. This will be an important time for us to pour into their lives and for them to deeper understand the Building Brothers message. Pray with us that God will continue to light their hearts on fire for the men of their country.

► *Denver, Colorado*

October 16, the team will be presenting Phase III Training at Grace Chapel in Denver. There are 12 Building Brothers groups—including eight pastors and four elders. We continue to get strong feedback of God using this material to personally challenge and heal wounds in the lives of these men.

► *Church of God 7th Day National Church Leaders Retreat*

October 16, the team will be presenting Phase III Training at the Church of God 7th Day National Church Leaders Retreat outside of Seattle, Wa. We have been invited by Whaid Rose, president of the denomination, to be a primary focus of the retreat. There will be over 200 pastors and leaders including the directors of worldwide ministry and a large contingent of Spanish-speaking leaders. Pray with us that this will be a significant time of opening the door to allow Building Brothers to serve this denomination.

► *Pikes Peak, Colorado*

November 5-7, Dan will be the main speaker at the men's retreat for the Epiphany Episcopal Church in Denver. The leadership is hoping this weekend will be a springboard to launch the Building Brothers process for about 20 leaders in this church.

► *Facilitator Training*

On February 22-24, the Building Brothers team will host an in-depth training of the four-phase process in Denver. We are encouraging pastors and church leaders to attend this three-day, extensive interaction time so that they can facilitate the process in their churches and communities. We have seen this training deeply impact the lives of the leaders who have attended!



Dan and Jan with CMT German leaders

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