

## **A Radical Church! Building Church Life on New Testament Principles**

There is no perfectly mature church or perfectly perfect leaders this side of heaven. However this is not an excuse to build local church life lightly or loosely. The New Testament reveals principles and patterns of church life that we can follow. Over the past 30 plus years as a family of churches in New Frontiers we have made a diligent attempt to build according to these principles. This workshop explores what we have found some of the key values and principles of healthy local church life to be.

**Mike Betts** leads Relational Mission, a network of churches which is part of the global Newfrontiers family. He is the author of *From the Inside Out, Relational Mission: A Way of Life*, and a soon to be published book on corporate prayer. Mike is passionate about the church enjoying her inheritance in Christ, involving church planting, gospel expansion, corporate prayer, and seeing the next generation grow into all that God has for them. Mike is married to Sue, and they live in Lowestoft, Suffolk, UK. He is part of the eldership team at Lowestoft Community Church, which he, Sue, and a number of others planted over 30 years ago. At that time Mike and Sue sought help and advice from Terry Virgo, who had begun to serve emerging churches. Terry's work and relationships with churches became the start of Newfrontiers. In 2011, Terry handed over responsibility for Newfrontiers to a number of his spiritual sons, and Mike began to lead the network that is now Relational Mission. Relational Mission works predominantly in the UK and mainland Europe but with growing connections across the world. Its network includes some 70 churches of which 30 are church plant and pioneering situations.

### I. A Biblical Perspective on Being a Radical Church (Ephesians 4:11-16)

#### A. Keeping the end in mind! – Maturity, Stature, Equipped, Unity, Growing Up, The Whole Church

1. Until Christ returns we can make a 'diligent attempt' (Arthur Wallis)
2. Humility and honour of one another's grace
3. Attentiveness to Scripture, sensitivity to the Spirit
4. Inheritance not preference

### II. Personal Reflection on Being a Radical Church

- A. Archaic and Outdated Church
- B. Biblical principles not being worked out in church life
- C. Legalism and learned behaviours / patterns vs Holy Spirit freedom
- D. Restoration to radical church comes at a cost!

III. A journey of biblical discovery and Holy Spirit leading rather than a methodology or technique

A. Family / Mission / Word / Spirit

B. Newfrontiers – 17 values now distilled into 9 values common across Newfrontiers Spheres.

1. Doctrinal Values

**Word Based**

We believe in the absolute truthfulness, sufficiency and final authority of Scripture. This value is expressed through the Bible having the central place in governing doctrine, practice, ethos, and patterns of church life.

Colossians 1:25, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Timothy 4:1-5

**Grace Filled**

The message of grace and the gospel is central to the Christian life and local church. Grace ought to be expressed in relation to salvation, church life, relationships, and leadership style. We see our salvation as a work of God from start to finish.

Ephesians 2:8-10, Acts 11:23, Colossians 1:6b

**Spirit Empowered**

We believe that all the gifts in Scripture are available and desirable today for building the local church and extending the Kingdom of God. We believe every believer should be filled with the Spirit as part of God's desire to empower us for Christian life and witness.

Ephesians 5:18, Acts 1:7-8, Galatians 3:1-5, 1 Corinthians 12:1,4-7

2. Leadership Values

**Elders in each Local Church**

The Holy Spirit appoints elders confirmed by the church and apostolic ministry. Church government is not a democracy nor an autocracy but rather a theocracy. Elders' main functions involve leading, feeding, guarding and guiding the church. We see eldership as the calling of qualified men who lead as a team in their shared endeavour.

Acts 20:28, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, 1 Timothy 3:1-7

**Ephesians 4 ministries**

All Ephesians 4:11 gifts are valid today and help bring churches to maturity and to equip men and women to fulfil their God-given ministry. Eldership teams are encouraged to invite Ephesians 4 ministries to help bring their local church to maturity. Local elders are the final human governing authority in a local church. However,

the local elders are encouraged to invite and then to receive clear apostolic input and authority.

Acts 14:21-23, 20:28, Titus 1:5, James 5:14, Ephesians 4:7-16, Romans 16:1-16

### **Servant Hearted**

Christian leadership, in its essence, is a call to be an example not an exception. Following the example of Jesus, Christian leaders are meant to serve others not be served. Christian leadership should be godly, transparent, and accessible. Christian leadership exists to multiply ministry, not monopolise it. Christian leadership ought to seek partnership and collaboration with other gospel-shaped leaders, rather than to demonstrate isolation and individualism.

Mark 10:42-45, 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Titus 1:5-9

### 3. Missional Values

#### **Local Church Focused**

We regard the local church as central to the mission and purposes of God. The local church should be the primary focus for Ephesians 4 ministries. Ephesians 4 ministries exist to serve the local church, not the other way round.

Ephesians 3:10-11, Matthew 16:18

#### **Expressed Locally, Globally and Holistically**

We desire to see local churches effectively and fruitfully engaged in local Kingdom mission. We desire to see local churches caught up on a global apostolic Kingdom mission. We desire to see local churches involved in holistic mission, engaging with all sectors of society, particularly the poor and the marginalised. Normally local fruitfulness and effectiveness leads to a wider sphere of ministry, rather than the other way round.

Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:18-20, Galatians 2:10

#### **Contextual Freedom in Application**

We recognise that our core values will need to be contextualised and applied differently in different contexts. Sound contextualisation means translating and applying our core values without compromising the essence of the values themselves.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

### C. 7 Aspirations for Relational Mission

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|-------------------------------|----------|
| 1. A Real Family              | #family  |
| 2. Raising Sons and Daughters | #nurture |
| 3. Everyone A Witness         | #witness |
| 4. Prayers of Many            | #pray    |
| 5. Church for a Broken World  | #empower |
| 6. Starting New Families      | #pioneer |
| 7. A Compass but No Map       | #listen  |

#### **Suggested Readings:**

*Relational Mission: A Way of Life*, Betts Mike (2016) Relational Mission

*The Spirit-Filled Church*, Virgo, Terry (2011) Monarch Books, Oxford