

Summary & Thoughts: Beyond the Local Church by Sam Metcalf

Beyond the Local Church. By Sam Metcalf. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015.

In scripture and church history we see not one but two structures for making disciples.

Local Churches (Modalities)

- The local church. Structured primarily for nurture and care. Conserves new ground. Led by ministry generalists. Is inclusive. Pastors and teachers thrive here. Occasionally multiplies. Often has a 5 generation life cycle.
- Composed of “first decision” Christians who are committed to Christ as Lord.
- Strength is sowing the gospel DEEPLY in a particular place and people
- Primarily effective with “near-neighbor” evangelism – E-0 and E-1. (*See Evangelism Scale below*)

Mission Structures / Specialized Ministries (Sodalities)

- The mobile church. Church in it’s missionary / apostolic form. Task-oriented, mobile, flexible, lean. Focused on taking new ground with the gospel, crossing cultural barriers. Led by ministry specialists. Has a narrow focus. Membership is more exclusive. Apostolically gifted leaders thrive. Creates modalities and new sodalities. Can be trans-denominational or cooperative between many churches. Extended life cycle.
- Composed of “second decision” Christians who are committed a greater level of sacrifice and cooperation to further the Great Commission.
- Cross culturally capable in evangelism – E-1, E-2, E-3. (*See Evangelism Scale below*)
- Strength is sowing the gospel BROADLY beyond the capacities of any single local church.
- This structure is less studied but has been key to the expansion of the church since the Apostles gathered missionary bands to teach, train, evangelize, and multiply gospel witness.

Evangelism Scale

Missiologist, Ralph Winter identifies four different kinds of evangelism, distinguished by the cultural distance that the evangelist spans in communicating effectively with intended hearers. The E Scale has been a widely used reference tool for describing and comparing evangelistic difficulties and needs.

- **E-0** Evangelism of people who are part of Christian families and peoples. It is basically catechism and renewal. No real cultural barriers are crossed.
- **E-1** Evangelism of people outside the church but within one’s culture. Only one barrier is crossed: the “stained-glass” membership boundaries of the church. This kind of evangelism is the “most powerful” because people are far more likely to understand what is being communicated in ways that they can pass on to others like themselves. This might even include working with cultural Christians. This is “near neighbor” evangelism - same culture evangelism with someone from the same Language and idioms as you. These people could integrate into your local church.
- **E-2** Evangelism of people of different but similar cultures. Two barriers are crossed: The “stained-glass” barrier and an additional cultural distance sufficient to likely require separate church fellowships. This might include people who speak the same language but have a very different cultural background, religious background or worldview. Could include generational differences or pronounced social differences.
- **E-3** Evangelism of people of radically different cultures. To emphasize the greater cultural distance of an evangelist attempting to communicate to a radically different and potentially hostile environment, it is supposed that evangelists attempt to cross at least three barriers in E-3 efforts. This would include cross-cultural missions to Muslims, Hindus, etc.

The 5 ministry functions / leadership callings in Ephesians 4:11

Ephesians 4:11-13 - NIV

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

- **Apostolic** – Being “sent” to take Christ to the lost. Forge new ground for God’s kingdom. Task focused. Building systems and structures. Entrepreneur, Pioneer, Strategist, Innovator, Visionary.
- **Prophetic** – Boldly proclaiming God’s truth to the culture and to the church. Truth focused. Questioner, Disturber, Agitator.
- **Evangelistic** – Rallying people to Christ and to the mission. Focused on reaching many people. Recruiter, Passionate Communicator of Organizational Message, Recruits to the Cause.
- **Shepherding** – Caring for people through life’s situations and leading them to grow spiritually. Humanizer, Carer, Social cement or glue.
- **Teaching** – Ongoing teaching and instructing in God’s word. Training people to walk in obedience and minister. Systematizer, Philosopher, Translator.

All five must be present for a healthy Christian movement to development. Although, all 5 are necessary in both sodalities and modalities, those listed earlier are sometimes best utilized in sodalities while those listed later are frequently best utilized in modalities.

