
COMMUNITY IN MISSION IN PRACTICE (THE TOBLERONE!)

IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLESHIP & GATHERED VS SCATTERED

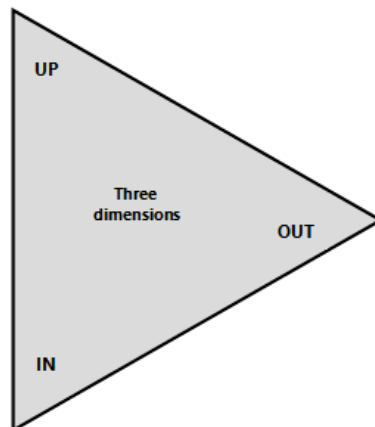
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Jesus said "I will build my church", you "go and make disciples"

If you make disciples, you will always get the church. But if you try to build the church, you will rarely get disciples. (Mike Breen).

Discuss: *Imagine an enthusiastic new Christian comes to you and asks, "What's the one most important thing I should do in order to grow as a Christian?" What would you say?*

Effective disciples will have 3 dimensions of relationships in balance....



• **UP: The God Dimension:** *Our loving relationship with God, often seen in prayer, scripture, study and worship. This is the dimension of communication with God. He reveals Himself to us. We offer ourselves to Him.*

• **IN: The Church Dimension:** *Our loving relationship with one another in the Body of Christ. This is the dimension of fellowship and the source of our support to one another.*

• **OUT: The World Dimension:** *Our loving relationship with the world. This is the dimension of relevant outreach to, and witness in, the world.*

In Acts 2 the apostles were faced with 3000 new believers in one day!

How would they disciple those new believers and encourage the church to grow? What would be the key priorities and foundation stones on which the church would be built?

Read Acts 2:42-47

This passage gives insight into what a church shaped by the Holy Spirit will look like.

Which verses in the passage relate to which dimension of relationship?

Up

In

Out

Balanced relationships

...in your own life.

Are these 3 dimensions in balance?

If not, which area do you need to give greater priority to?

What practical steps can you take in order to change?

...in the groups you are part of.

There may be situations when one of these dimensions takes a higher place than others (e.g. Sunday services have a strong "up" dimension; network missional communities have a strong "out" dimension; home groups have a strong "in" dimension) but all should be evident.

What if our triangles are imbalanced?

- 1. If we are strong at Up and In, but not Out – we will be a holy huddle, making no discernible difference in God's world. And we'll rarely be pushed out of our comfort zones, so we won't be maturing as disciples.*
- 2. If we are strong at In and Out, but not Up – we will burn out, because we won't be filled with God's compassion for the lost or serving in his strength. And our lack of prayer and engagement with God will mean we're not growing as disciples*
- 3. If we are strong at Up and Out, but not In – we will wear out, because we won't have the support, encouragement and insight of other Christians. And without a sense of community, our discipleship will be severely stunted*

If we are strong in all three areas of discipleship, our faith will have deep roots able to withstand stormy gales (Eph 4.14)

Every part of our church life (gathered and scattered) should reflect something of these three sets of relationships, although it's right that some areas of church life will focus on one more than the others.

Are these 3 dimensions in the right proportions?

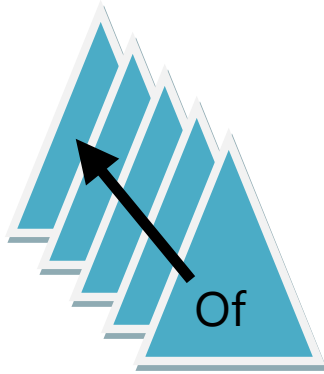
If not, which area do you need to give greater priority to?

What practical steps can you take in order to change?

How do the gathered and scattered church intersect?

The Toblerone!

It is helpful to think of another dimension in church life – 'Of' – because we are part of the bigger body of Christ.



Shared values

Toblerone theology is helpful when thinking about where our particular 'bit' of ministry fits in to the rest of the church. Each slice of the Toblerone (eg the seniors ministry, or youth ministry, or students, or a small group) should have elements of Up, In and Out in their rhythm. The values of any community should be shared with the whole church but the way these are worked out should be different for every community because their mission field is different. Each community is an integral part of the whole Toblerone – there are just lots of other slices!

Serving in a variety of areas

As you realise your community/ ministry area is connected to the wider church family there will be a willingness to serve/ be part of multiple areas. Will there ever be a community for those involved with gathered church ministries such as stacking chairs, Sunday service welcome, Street Pastors, catering or CAP befriending? Probably not as they are providing a service! But these are important roles in the church hence why we need to be committed to scattered church AND gathered church. Now some people spread themselves so thinly in many areas of ministry that they don't have deep relationships with anyone. These are in danger of burn out, loneliness and ineffective mission as they have no community to invite people in to.

Blessing the wider church

This is also helpful when thinking about our wider relationships – some churches are part of a national network/ denomination and local partnership e.g. Churches Together or Southampton Christian Network – as well as the worldwide church! Together, we are all seeking to build the Kingdom of God. Our discipleship is deepened as we learn from and relate to our Christian brothers and sisters from other churches, cultures and eras.