

Mission Enhancement by Mike Ruhl

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There is quite a bit of *buzz* these days about *enhancement*.

Dietary supplements, we are told, can *enhance* the health and vitality of our bodies. Exercise regimens can *enhance* strength, endurance, appearance, and self-esteem. Learning disciplines can *enhance* expertise, creativity and productivity. Providing people with *enhancement tools* has become nothing less than a *big business*.

And in the church, the Body of Christ, it is no secret that it is all too easy for *mission* to be displaced by *maintenance*—for the making of more and better disciples of Jesus Christ to yield to issues of organizational survival. Hence the perpetual search for *mission enhancement* prescriptions and tools. Yet changing structure and adding copied programs seldom, if ever, result in *mission renewal and enhancement*.

So what is the problem? Mission is not carnal or organizational. Mission is spiritual.

Both historical and contemporary evidence supports the following thesis: *A greater evangelistic emphasis and higher evangelistic priority will enhance ALL the missions and ministries of the church.*

One study documented that when well-known evangelists held to a priority of winning people to faith in Jesus Christ, they were also instrumental in initiating massive social reforms. And another major study in the 1960's concluded that when the modern evangelical movement held a priority of evangelism, at the same time it maintained a strong social conscience.

As we head into the 21st century, the identical dynamic is evident: *Churches that emphasize evangelism tend to have a greater awareness of and effectiveness in both discipleship and social needs.*

With the Pentecost Sunday Scripture lessons still ringing in our ears, can we recapture the key to the health and growth of the Body of Christ? To put it simply: the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God to ignite human hearts with a burning passion to embrace community and world with the good news of the Crucified and Risen Christ.

That spiritual passion is what *enhances the mission* ...keeping the congregation ever vibrant, renewed and relevant in the mission field. ■