

BALANCE AND INTEGRATION

by Bob Moffitt

Many churches are concerned with either fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) or the Great Concerns (Matthew 25:35-40).

Conservative churches have a tendency to emphasize the Great Commission. Liberal churches have a tendency to emphasize the Great Concerns. Both are wrong if they divide man into "parts" and then minister to one part without concern for the others. God has created—and is concerned for—the entire person.

Jesus gives us the Great Commandment (Mark 12:28-31), which commands us to love God and our neighbor. We know from earlier studies that it is impossible to love God without showing love for each other. The implication of the Great Commandment is that genuine love causes us to be concerned about the needs of the whole person. This is consistent with Jesus' development, described in Luke 2:52. Luke describes that Jesus grew as a whole person. He grew in wisdom, He grew physically, He grew spiritually, and He grew socially.

In an attempt to minister to the whole person, some churches and Christian organizations develop outreach programs that minister to various aspects of people's needs. For example, they may develop an evangelistic outreach and a social outreach. This strategy may reflect their desire to have a balanced ministry, but it may not have the effect of demonstrating God's concern for the whole person.

For example, let's say that a church targets one community or group of people for an evangelistic outreach. The church then uses the people in their church who are gifted in evangelism, and they carry out the project. Then they might select another community or group of people with great physical needs. Church members who have gifts, skills, and interests in this type of ministry carry out a project that meets the physical needs of the people who live there. If the people in both communities don't know much about God or His concerns for them, the first group could perceive that Christians are only concerned about "saving their souls." Similarly, the second community might understand that Christians are helping them with physical needs, but be unaware of their need for spiritual salvation.

The problem is clear. A church with this approach to balance is ministering to more than one need of the people within their reach, but these ministries are not integrated. The people the church desires to reach are still not being ministered to as whole people.

There is a better way to minister—and show love—to people:

- See them as whole persons who need God's touch in all areas of their lives
- Plan outreach ministries that show God's concern for all of their needs, rather than just their spiritual or social needs.

This kind of ministry is called balanced and integrated ministry.

Balanced ministry means outreach that ministers to all areas of man's needs. We use the four categories of Jesus' development, which are described in Luke 2:52, as a way to think of balanced ministry. (There are other helpful ways to think about areas of people's needs, but we will use these four categories for our studies.)

Integrated ministry means outreach to two or more categories of need —for the same people. Ministry to their several needs may occur simultaneously or on separate occasions.

Balanced and integrated ministry should be intentional. In other words, it should be planned. Otherwise, it probably will not happen. A primary reason for this is that each Christian has different gifts and skills. For example, some have gifts and skills in evangelism. Others have gifts and skills in ministering to physical or social needs. When we are pressured by insufficient time or resources in an outreach ministry (which usually happens), we tend to revert to our own strengths.

For example: Juan is a person with evangelistic skills. He attended the Harvest training and believes he should show people that God is also concerned about their physical needs. He decides to go and help Carlos, a very poor unbeliever whom he knows. Carlos has a leaky roof on his little house. Juan offers to help Carlos work on his roof. Carlos gladly accepts. As they begin, they discover they don't have the right materials and tools, but they try to use what they have. Not much progress is made. Then, Juan begins to feel pressured to make sure that Carlos knows the Gospel of salvation. He decides that it would be better to spend time sharing with Carlos about spiritual matters, instead. He talks to Carlos for several hours. By the time Juan leaves, very little has been done to fix the leaky roof. What impression do you think Carlos might have of Juan's intentions? Did Juan's outreach communicate God's concerns for all of Carlos' needs?

There are several ways to design programs to ensure that they will be not only balanced, but integrated:

- Planning: As we plan an outreach, we should consider what needs we plan to address, what kinds of ministry activities will serve those needs, and who will help to carry them out. There is a better chance that the outreach will be balanced and integrated when a plan is developed that intentionally provides for ministry that reflects God's concern for the whole person.
- Teams: Because each person has ministry gifts in different areas, it is best to minister as a team, utilizing the members' gifts in their own areas of specialty. In some cases, however, it is necessary for one person to carry out balanced and integrated ministry alone.

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