

ENSEMBLING

CHURCH ACCOUNTABILITY

INSIDE & OUT

We have explored the four-fold mission of the Church which begins with *worship* (enthroning) then to *fellowship* within the community of the church (encouraging) then to being taught and trained so that our spiritual gifts are honed (empowering) then to be a *witness* to the world so that others can be reconciled to God (engaging).

Some churches manage to do these things very well and grow rapidly as a result. Some are able to sustain this growth throughout a generation and a few have been able to sustain it into a second generation. But sadly, many churches do not even sustain their growth within their own generation. If each of the four aspects of a church's mission are in place and a church is struggling to sustain it's growth, then the challenge is nearly always about how it *ensembles*. Ensembling is how people work together - how they cooperate, lead, submit, correct, and care. This might also be summed up by the word: *accountability*. The foundation of the Church is narrated in Acts 2:42-46.

1. Match the principle of an Acts 2 church with the correct verse from the Acts 2:42-46 passage-

Acts 2: __	Generosity
Acts 2: __	Committed to fellowship
Acts 2: __	Commitment to corporate and house meetings
Acts 2: __	Study of the Apostles' teaching
Acts 2: __	Devotion to prayer

As we consider the mission of the Church, we commenced by defining the Church simply as *the ordered community of those Christ has redeemed*. As we've highlighted each aspect of the Church's Mission, we can refine our definition of the Church as

The Church is the ordered congregation of redeemed people each gifted by God with certain abilities vitally connected to Christ and each other by the Holy Spirit and apostolically accountable as a prophetic witness to the world.

The expression "apostolically accountable" describes *internal* and *external* accountability. Accountability requires *transparency*, *submission*, and *wisdom*. It's goal is the *welfare* of those involved. *Internal* accountability happens within a church where each member is submitted to someone within the church who they report to and have allowed to correct, guide and advise them. *External* accountability involves an authority from *outside* of a church being given permission to correct, guide, and advise.

2. Read Philippians 1:1 and note who are the internal and who are the external authorities mentioned -

3. Note Revelation 1:11. In what way does this verse reveal the external/internal accountability structures of the Early Church?

4. Compare Hebrews 13:7 with Hebrews 13:17 and discuss the implications for accountability within a local church and the ultimate accountability of those keeping others to account -

5. Noting the two Hebrews references in the above question, how can those within a local church feel more willing to be held accountable by local church leaders?

Those in local church leadership are called to ‘shepherd’ those within the church. The most Biblical form of this shepherding involves *discipleship*. Being a disciple means being a *follower*. To follow Christ involves being led in some measure by those shepherds that Christ places in oversight over our lives. As a pastor I find this a daunting - and at times an overwhelming - responsibility. I am a timid person by nature. The idea that as a shepherd I have to intervene, confront, examine the spiritual walk of others in our church frightens me.

6. Perhaps my hesitation to hold those in our church to account is not as rare or new as I might think. How does Hebrews 13:17 address this issue?

But there is a type of accountability that we might each transact with those we connect with within our church.

7. Read Galatians 6:1-5 and discuss the type of accountability mentioned in this passage. What does this every-believer accountability look like?

8. Consider James 5:19-20. Have you ever seen this done well (or not well)? What was it about what you may have seen that made an impression on you?

Submission

Ensembling, as we are calling it, is about working together in harmony. We also call it *Partnership*. But it requires a certain attitude.

9. Does Ephesians 5:21 guarantee that there won't be any disagreements within a church?

Submission is only ever required where there is *disagreement*. In a church, just as in any organisation, there will be decisions made that you don't like or agree with.

10. Describe what you feel would be an attitude of submission at a time when you didn't agree with a decision that the church leadership was considering-

A wise leader does not appeal to the need for submission from those they are leading. Instead, wisdom instructs a leader, whether it be the Senior Pastor, assistant pastors, department leaders, or small group leaders, to earn the trust of those they are leading.

11. What can a leader do to best earn the trust of those they are leading?

Another word for ensembling is *cooperation*. Without cooperation within a church it simply cannot fulfil its Mission!

12. Describe the challenges to ensembling addressed in First Corinthians 12:14-27.

For any church to be a "Missional" church it must be committed to Enthroning God in worship, Encouraging one another through fellowship and community, Empowering through the teaching and training of the Word of God and its principles; Engaging others with claims and invitation of Christ, as they Ensemble by working in submissive cooperation. May God grant that we can be such a church so that might see Acts 2:47 in our day!

Amen.