

Starting the Because Approach.

Who is it for?

The Because Approach is for anyone involved in a local church in whatever capacity who has a passion to develop clear biblical, contextual and intentional plans for their church. The suggested strategic planning process can help formulate church start up strategies or refresh existing church strategies and the principles can equally be applied to a small or large church. The approach doesn't assume any particular church setting but is designed to help you analyse your specific situation wherever and wherever that is.

The Because Approach is a tool you can use to discern God's solutions for your church. Whether you are planting a brand new church, developing a fresh expression of church, establishing a new congregation, 'rebooting' an existing church with a new strategy for growth or simply wanting to clarify what you could be doing better, the Because Approach will help you articulate a strategy.

How does it work?

This book is designed to excite, inform, remind, provoke and thoroughly ignite your imagination of what your church could be.

To help navigation of the material, the book into two parts:

- Part 1 outlines a process for preparing Biblical Strategy and has three steps: Mandate, motive, Movement
- Part 2: outlines a process for preparing Mission Strategy and has four steps: Relationship, Respect, Relevance, Response

Each of the seven steps is split into sections.

- Scripture: Biblical principles
- Setting: Contextual issues
- Solution: Potential actions

- If you prefer to start with all the biblical backing you could begin by reading the 'scripture' sections at the start of each step.
- If you like to set up the issue first you could start with the six 'setting' sections.
- If you want to cut to the action you could work back from the six 'solutions' sections.

To help ease of use, the layout focuses on multi page spreads (normally 2 pages identified by a Because logo in top left corner). Each of these spreads is an inherent piece of writing.

- You could simply read one spread per day.
- You could dip in and out of it when you are looking for a bit of inspiration.

Whichever way you use the book, it is well worth reading in short spurts with plenty of time to think through the implications.

To help group study, each step ends with an action guide which outlines implementation tasks.

In addition there are implementation worksheets available online:

- Pdf worksheets with active boxes for participants to fill in their responses to various worksheet tasks.
- Hyperlinks to extracts from the book which assist participants in answering worksheet tasks.
- Leaders guide to using the worksheets and running the Because Approach process as a church.

- Some churches may use some or all of the seven steps in specific leadership teams or more widely across their network of small groups.
- The seven part process could be studied over a number of weeks or in a day away format. Steps 1 to 3 and 4 to 7 are distinct and could be studied in separate days away or as separate series of weekly workshops.
- Each participant prepares for the group meeting by reading the chapter under consideration or reading the hyperlinks throughout the worksheet, fills in as much of the worksheet as they are able to and then joins with a group to discuss the material generated by the worksheets.

Other hints

Some chapters include suggestions for research in your particular context that will help you through this process. To ease the workload for study groups, some of this legwork can be done in advance.

In the future, the website (www.becauseapproach.com) will have case studies from churches that have run the Because Approach process, updates on further solutions and links to more resources which will help you develop solutions appropriate in your setting. Your contributions will be gratefully received.

Introduction to Biblical Strategy.

In the film Jerry Maguire¹, the title character is a sports agent who wakes up in the middle of the night to the realization that in all the rush of life he's lost sight of the simple pleasures of the job and why he chose the line of work in the first place. He says: 'With so many clients, we had forgotten what was important.' We can be a bit like that – we can become frenetically busy without necessarily knowing why we're doing all the things we're doing. The Because Approach restores the 'why' so that every person involved in every activity can fill in the sentence 'I'm doing this because...' and 'I'm not doing that because...'

The Because Approach keeps asking three 'why' questions:

Why do this at all?	Because Scripture	
Why do this here and now?	Because Setting	
Why do this way not that way?	Because Solution	

The principles of Scripture are clearly at the foundation of any strategy but rather than jump straight from Scripture to solutions the Because Approach develops solutions that best fit a particular setting. If not, out of all the solutions Scripture might instruct, the one chosen will more often be based on personal preference, or on ambition to build something that makes me look good or on pragmatism which does what be easiest and gain the quickest or most financially stable 'results'. But will those decisions be wise and are they the calling Christ has for you as a church serving his will?

The Because Approach starts with three convictions about the local church:

1. Each local church carries out its divine commission to a lost world backed by the personal guarantee of Christ that his church will prevail. (*Mat. 16:18*)
2. Each local church carries out the same commission in Scripture but does that within a unique situation. (*1 Pet. 2:12*)
3. The local church is called to develop strategies that will be the hope for a world lost in mistranslation. (*Mat. 5:14*)

The Because Approach aims to help each local church:

1. Be a scriptural church that has prevailing confidence in God founded on the Bible's timeless first principles.
2. Be a situation specific church that knows which activities are their focus of attention, which aren't and why.
3. Be a strategic church that is presenting the unchanging truth of Christ crucified in a language our lost world can understand.

In the Disney film *Frozen* the world is turned to ice – like Narnia it is always winter but never Christmas. As a result people experience life in a very different way – no longer the abundant kingdom they had grown up in but a strange cold world where there is a struggle to survive and rulers who seem heartless or powerless to help. People's experience of life has become a shadow of what it used to be and as a result so has their expectation from life.

Biblical strategy is about forming churches on a mission to unfreeze people's experience and expectations from life and connect them with God's mission to form a people as his treasured possession. Churches that are on this mission from God know their God given mandate, act with gospel shaped motives and create a vision filled movement of personal salvation and cultural renewal:

Strategic question:	Why is God CALLING us to do this?	Why is God calling US to do this?	Why is God calling us to do THIS?
	Mission statement	Values	Vision

The Because Approach enables local churches to look at these three elements that form the basis of all strategic plans and discern the Because of Scripture, Setting and Solution for each:

	Step 1. Mission mandate.	Step 2. Mission motive.	Step 3. Mission movement.
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The Because Approach transforms an activity into a God-given ministry: – begins with a motive of glorifying God rather than self driven motives – widens our focus beyond the immediate demands of vocal church members towards the needs of potential members, unbelievers, the local community and the wider church. – identifies the strategic kingdom building benefit each ministry will gain and therefore invests in ministry initiatives strategically. Therefore a sound biblical 'because' will inspire people to say, 'I will give my time and energy to this ministry because it's of great value to my Lord.'

Biblical strategy is about building wise churches that understand their context of locality and the daily mission field of every member as an ministry opportunity to proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus and see hearts unfrozen by his ultimate act of sacrificial love.

Introduction to Mission Strategy.

What we learn from the ministry of Jesus and from experience is that blindness is often lifted by a gradual process as different blocks to sight are removed. For example at the start of Mark 8 despite the disciples having seen so much of Jesus, he says to them 'do you still not see'. But then the blindness is finally lifted and Peter sees who Jesus really is and declares him as the Christ. That's often the experience of people coming to faith today - rather than people hearing everything in one sitting and believing there and then faith is often a gradual dawning as people's sight of Christ's grace and truth is restored.

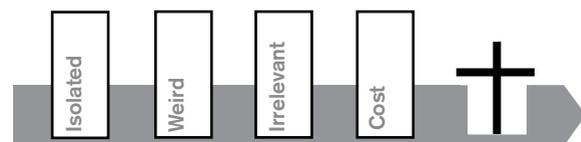
Mark Mittleberg ⁴¹ uses the illustration of what is known as "the bridge diagram" which explains our spiritual predicament of being on the edge of a chasm. In the diagram people are staring at the problem of sin which leads to death, separated from God with no prospect of being able to bridge the gap by our good works as we can never be good enough for God.



But Mittleberg points out that the diagram assumes that people are staring at the problem of sin and crying out for a bridge back to life in restored relationship with God. But actually people aren't staring at the chasm - or even aware it exists most of the time. They live life for the moment and make out that the future isn't their concern.



The reality is that many people live life thinking there's nothing to worry about - I'm not that bad, God and I will get along just fine when we meet. But it's a fatal blindness. And what's worse is that there are some barriers that have been put up in the way of people seeing the truth.



Jesus said to them, 'Do you still not understand?' Mk. 8:17-21

Barrier one. The isolated barrier.

People live increasingly fluid and busy lives and are becoming increasingly isolated and lonely. In particular many do not have meaningful relationships with Christians and therefore have little idea what Christianity is about.

Barrier two. The weird barrier.

People often have false impressions of Christians shaped by various media. The perception can be that Christians are weird extremists or sad individuals who need a spiritual crutch.

Barrier three. The irrelevant barrier.

Many reject Christianity saying 'it's lovely you have you faith but I don't need it / it's not my thing.' The point isn't making Christ relevant but helping people see his relevance in action.

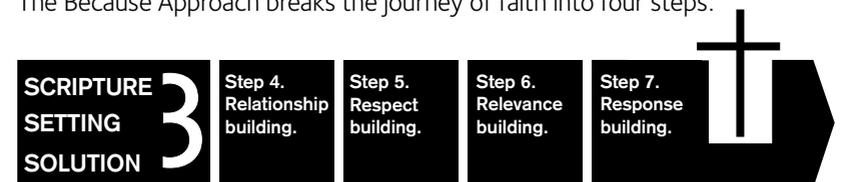
Barrier four. The cost barrier.

Some people hear the message of Jesus but then, like the rich man (Matt. 19:16-22) walk away when realise cost.

Jesus himself found that people often didn't respond immediately to his message. Jesus therefore broke down the journey of faith into steps, each of which breaks down one of the barriers to faith. For example, in Mark 8, we see Jesus restoring spiritual sight step by step:

- Contact: The blind man meets Jesus as friends bring him. (Mk. 8:22)
- Observation: Jesus leads him by the hand while still blind. (Mk. 8:23)
- First Sight: Regains partial sight. (Mk. 8:23-24)
- Insight: Regains full sight. (Mk. 8:25)

The Because Approach breaks the journey of faith into four steps:



Relationship. Our great commission is to go and make disciples. That begins with going to them therefore.

Respect. Jesus didn't just give a gospel outline to people and run off. He got to know them, asked questions and shared life.

Relevance. Jesus found that even his close disciples took time to understand his teaching and see who he is as the Saviour.

Response. Jesus spoke in parables and 'relevance building' terms until his disciples got it. Then started teaching plainly about the cross, resurrection and response of taking up our cross.

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