

Ecclesial Minimum

Called for Purpose

Church means gathering, but it's a gathering of "called out ones"... those called out for a purpose to bless the wider community. Our purpose can never be for ourselves. We can't exist without a purpose that looks towards the edges of the kingdom. This is our calling and we should release the people of God to BE the church of Christ in accordance with their calling.

In Acts 19, "ecclesia" is a town council: a civil body in Ephesus. The Greek word "ecclesia" is correctly defined as: "The called-out (ones)" [ECC = out; KALEO = call]. Thus, you can see how this word was used to indicate a civil body of select (called, elected) people.

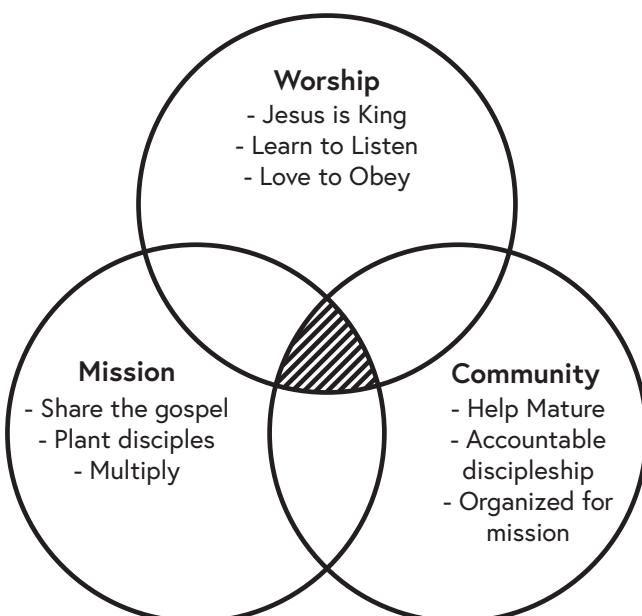
To release people into their calling to be the church of Jesus, we need an irreducible minimum for what the church must be. A beginning, not a box.

Our Definition: Microchurch

The New Testament Church is simple, small, fluid...and powerful.

Where we see **worship**, **community** and **mission** overlap, we are seeing the church of Jesus. Simply put, a microchurch is a small community of believers, who love Jesus as Lord and Savior and engage in his mission.

Jesus people love him as king with their lives, are in relationships with maturing believers, while seeking to expand the rule and reign of Jesus. God is drawing



people to himself and has sent the church to find the lost, invite them to follow Jesus, and then send them out to do the same. The dual effect of discipleship (calling them to follow, then sending them to go) rest at the heart of God's mission in the world.

To whom are you sent? Any one microchurch can't reach "everyone". So every microchurch must define a people, or a place, but ultimately the calling comes from God. As the microchurch walks towards their calling they must clarify and contextualize how to manifest worship, community and mission. This implies missional creativity and diverse methodology for microchurches. For example, your methods for reaching middle-school black girls and stripclub bouncers will be vastly different, and therefore the ecclesial minimum needs to be contextualized around those missional concerns.

Take a minute as a microchurch to identify how you manifest Worship, Community and Mission in ways that align with the calling Jesus has given you.

Microchurch Assessment

By Brian Sanders

Take a few minutes as a microchurch to evaluate your ecclesial minimum, marking how accurately each statement describes your microchurch on a scale of 1 to 5 (most accurate). Everyone has good and bad seasons so don't worry, this is just a way for you to discern next season's steps towards being the church Jesus is calling you to be.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. People who come to your group would describe it as an experience with God.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. You have someone new engaging your group at least once a month.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. When you look at scripture together people are often amazed.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. Your people know and celebrate each other's birthdays.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. Jesus is always explicitly honored whenever you gather.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. Prayer never seems forced or difficult in your group.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. There are people who would say they have come to faith in Jesus because of your group	<input type="radio"/>				
8. There is a strong sense of family in your group.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. If a non-believer interacted with your group three times they would have heard the gospel.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. Most everyone in your group would say that they have learned to be more intimate with Jesus because of being involved with you.	<input type="radio"/>				

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
11. Most of the group knows each other's middle name.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. It is not uncommon for people to cry and be embraced in your group.	<input type="radio"/>				
13. When your group is talking about scripture or in prayer people often lose track of time.	<input type="radio"/>				
14. Everyone in your group is a part of recruiting and including outsiders to the group.	<input type="radio"/>				
15. If a couple in your group was going to get married, everyone in the group would be invited.	<input type="radio"/>				
16. You often talk about your call to reach people, love others or do ministry outside of the gathering together.	<input type="radio"/>				
17. If someone in your group had a crisis they would bring it to you.	<input type="radio"/>				
18. You have seen people not only grow in your group but grow into leaders themselves.	<input type="radio"/>				
19. If someone in your group was having an affair it would be obvious.	<input type="radio"/>				
20. When you look at scripture as a group it is not just an intellectual exercise, it engages everyone's hearts.	<input type="radio"/>				
21. Someone who was once a part of the group as a non-believer has since come to lead someone else to Jesus.	<input type="radio"/>				

CATEGORY SCORE

Add scores for statements 1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 13, 20 to get your WORSHIP score.

$$\square + \square + \square + \square + \square + \square + \square = \boxed{\quad}$$

Add scores for statements 4, 8, 11, 12, 15, 17, 19 to get your COMMUNITY score.

$$\square + \square + \square + \square + \square + \square + \square = \boxed{\quad}$$

Add scores for statements 2, 7, 9, 14, 16, 18, 21 to get your MISSION score.

$$\square + \square + \square + \square + \square + \square + \square = \boxed{\quad}$$

LIMITING CHURCH

As you evaluate your microchurch take time to discern these dangers of limiting the church to our favorite component.

Only Worship: Hypocrisy

If our spiritual life is confined to a privatized worship that is sincere but does not lead us into mission or into deep relationships with others we face the threat of hypocrisy. As we are offering ourselves to God but then not putting into practice what his presence and his word would naturally require.

Only Community: Idolatry

If we pursue deep relationship but fail to live those relationships in the light of the mission of God or submit those relationships to the headship of Jesus then we risk idolatry. Deep relationships that are unmediated by a concern for the kingdom and mission of God will take over our hearts taking a place that should only belong to God. These unbalanced relationships will quickly become unhealthy and detrimental to our spiritual life.

Only Mission: Pride

If our spiritual life is confined to independently pursuing mission but not open, accountable friendships or dependence on God then we risk becoming our own God. Taking the mission on ourselves without realizing our need for God or the people of God will certainly lead to error and egomania.

