

# *An Introduction To The Five Star Church Strategy*

**Helping Churches Rediscover the Basics of  
Effective Sunday School and Discipleship Ministry**



**Sunday School/Discipleship Team  
Church and Family Equipping Team  
Missouri Baptist Convention**



IN PURSUIT OF  
**EXCELLENCE**  
*Becoming a Five Star Church*

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Sunday School/Discipleship Team  
Church and Family Equipping Team  
Missouri Baptist Convention  
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*A Cooperative Program Ministry*

# INTRODUCTION

Missouri Baptists have a rich heritage to look back on. The Missouri Baptist Convention had its origins back in the mid 1800's and, from the very beginning; the desire to grow vibrant healthy churches was in the forefront. Missouri Baptist pastors and leaders knew that healthy churches would be required to fulfill the Great Commission. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Sunday School was recognized as a key force in the life of the church. In 1902 Dr. E. Y. Mullins said: "The Sunday School must, more and more prove a factor of power in the pastor's work. Already in many churches the Sunday School is the chief and almost only hope for church growth. But whether in the family church, or the church among the masses of the great city, or the country church, the Sunday School will remain the most hopeful field of evangelistic endeavor." (Barnette, 1937– Page17). The Sunday School/Discipleship (SSD) Team believes that the Sunday School and Spiritual Development (Discipleship) ministries of the local church are even more crucial today as we strive to fulfill the Great Commission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Sunday School and Spiritual Development (Discipleship) ministries are two of the essential elements in healthy and growing Churches. These elements are considered "hinge pins" in the Five Star Church. Strong and vibrant Sunday School and Spiritual Development (Discipleship) ministries will "drive" a church to Five Star status. What is a Five Star Church? You may know the Five Star Church by two other names; the Great Commission Church or the Kingdom Focused Church. The Five Star Church is a church that is fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (John 13:34-35) by effectively living out the five functions of the church as found in Acts 2:42–47. The Five Star Church fulfills the directive in Acts 1:8 by taking ministry and the Gospel message to those in our community, our state, our country, and ultimately around the world.

The Five Star Church Strategy was developed to help Missouri Baptists see the connections and interactions between the elements of the church as a whole. The focus on the SSD Team is the Sunday School and the Spiritual Development (Discipleship) ministries. We believe that if a church will commit to moving their Sunday School ministry towards being active in the five functions of the church (Acts 2:42-47) *in appropriate balance*, it will become a catalyst to move the church as a whole towards becoming a Five Star Church.

We have referred to the five functions of the church as found in Acts 2:42-47. You know these functions as Evangelism, Spiritual Development (Discipleship), Fellowship, Ministry, and Worship. You will find all five of these functions, in an appropriate balance, at work in a Five Star Sunday School. Three of the functions (Evangelism, Fellowship, and Ministry) are found in full strength while Spiritual Development (Discipleship) and Worship are found working at a lesser intensity in the Sunday School. For an in-depth discussion of these five functions, read Chapter Three of Gene Mims' book *Kingdom Principles for Church Growth* (LifeWay Press, 2001, Revised Edition) or Chapter Seven of Gene Mims' book *The Kingdom Focused Church* (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003).

The following diagrams graphically portray the Five Star Church. The first is entitled *Five Functions of the Church*. Each function is one of the five stars and the diagram shows the relationship each element has within the overall church. The second diagram is entitled *Major Elements of the Five Star Church* and it describes the elements found within the church. Each element has a connection with the other and a weakness in one element affects all of the other elements. The third diagram (*Accomplish All Five Functions In Sunday School*) identifies the connection between the five functions and the Sunday School.

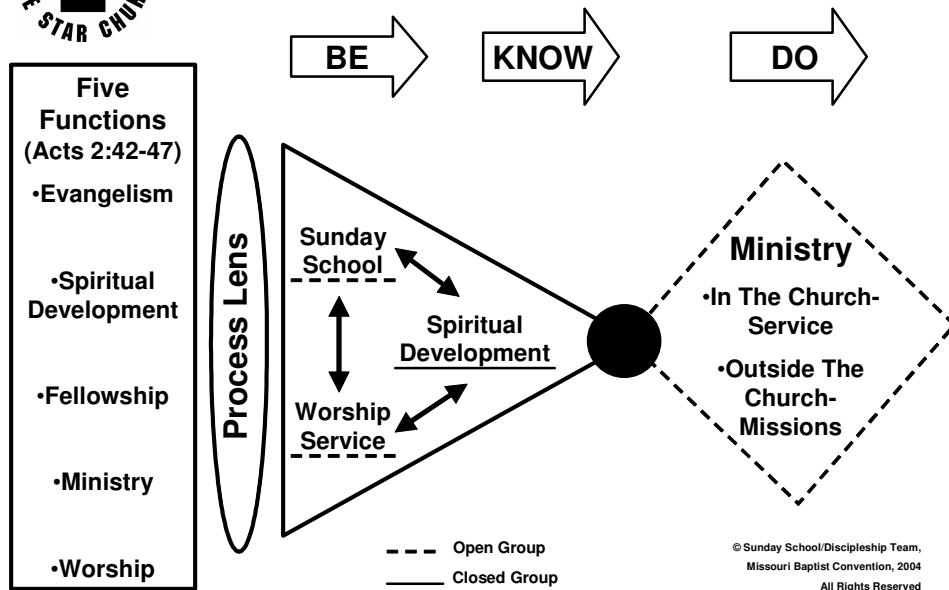
You will notice in each diagram that there are three phases outlined. The "Be-Know Triangle" includes the first two phases. The "Be" phase is where the initial making of disciples is started. The "Know" phase is where growing disciples are trained for leadership and service and where the disciple's personal spiritual development is continued. These phases are driven by Matthew 28:18-20 and John 13:34-35. The "Do Diamond" is where the third phase is found. This phase, driven by Acts 1:8, is where ministries are multiplied through service (ministry within the church) and missions (ministry outside the church).

This introduction is not designed to be all inclusive. Its main purpose is to introduce you to the Five Star Church Strategy and allow you to make an informed decision about to pursuing this strategy further with the Sunday School/Discipleship Team.

Barnette, J. N., *A Church Using Its Sunday School*, The Sunday School Board, Nashville, TN, 1937.



# The Five Star Church



## The Five Functions of the Church



**EVANGELISM:** Evangelism is a 24-7 function that permeates the entire church. Every member has a scriptural mandate to share the Gospel with the lost (Matt. 28:18-20). The primary place this happens is in the “Be” phase of the “Be – Know Triangle”. **Sunday School is, by design, the outreach arm of the church.** The most effective outreach ministry in the local church can and should occur through the Sunday School.



**SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT (Discipleship):** Spiritual Development ministry has two main purposes; to train and equip Kingdom leaders, and to prepare the Saints for ministry. The primary place this happens is in the “Know” phase of the “Be – Know Triangle”. **Spiritual Development does occur in the Sunday School at a lesser intensity.**



**FELLOWSHIP:** Fellowship is found in all activities of the church. **Sunday School is the primary connecting point in the church. Intentional assimilation should direct both new members and prospects to the appropriate Sunday School class.** All members of the church should be assigned to a Sunday School class for spiritual development and ministry.



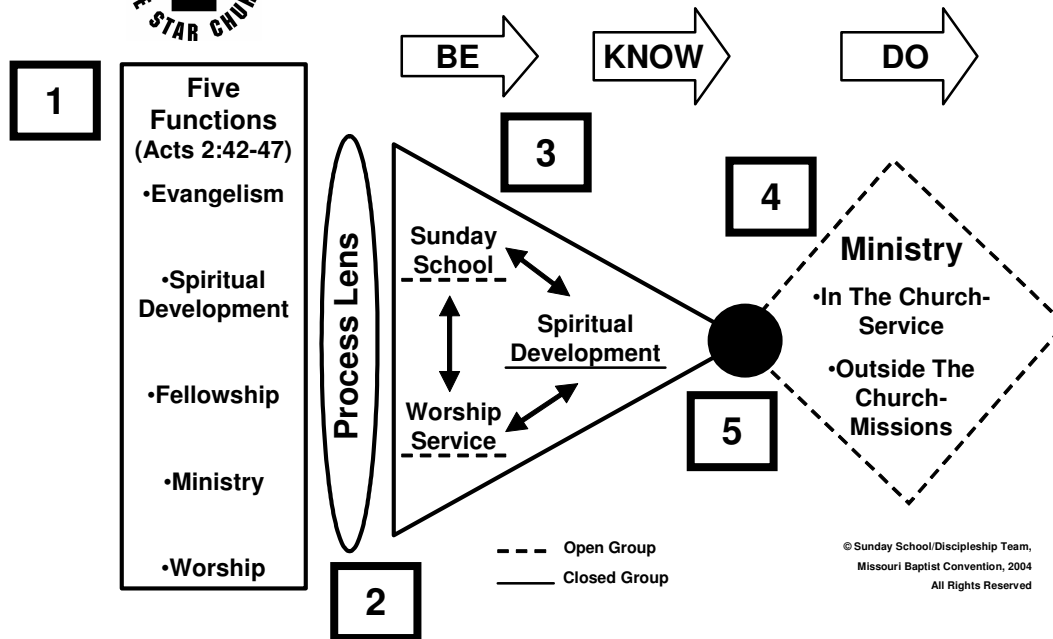
**MINISTRY:** Ministry is both Service (within the church) and Missions (outside the church). The primary place where Ministry occurs is in the “Do Diamond”. **Ministry also occurs in and through the Sunday School class.** Each class ministers to their members (Service), prospects (Missions), and should participate, as a unit, in an annual Missions project outside the church.



**WORSHIP:** Worship is giving honor and praise to God. Worship occurs at a lesser intensity in the Sunday School. The primary place worship occurs is in the Worship Service but **true worship can, and does occur throughout the church, including Sunday School.**



# The Five Star Church

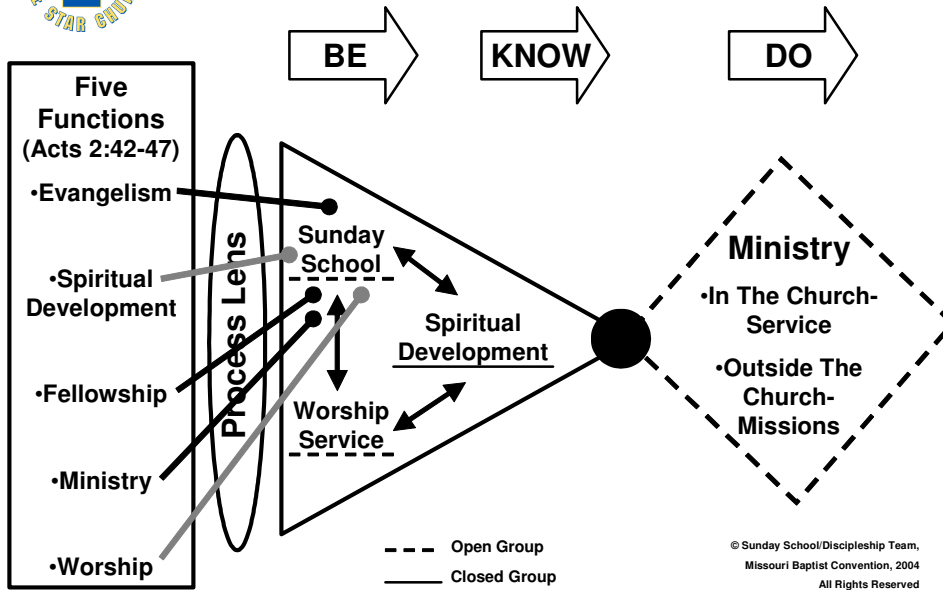


## Major Elements of the Five Star Church

- 1** Sunday School actively involves members in all five functions of the church - **Evangelism, Spiritual Development (Discipleship), Fellowship, Ministry, and Worship**, in appropriate balance. Evangelism, Fellowship, and Ministry occur at full intensity. Spiritual Development (Discipleship) and Worship occur at a lesser intensity.
- 2** The Process Lens is “How you do church”. Your traditions, policies, and procedures all impact the total ministries of the church.
- 3** The “Be – Know Triangle” contains two major teaching ministries and the primary worship ministry in the local church. Sunday School and Worship are “open group” ministries. Spiritual Development (Discipleship) is a “closed group” ministry. All three are interdependent on each other to fulfill the five functions of the church. Weakness in one or more impacts the others.
- 4** The “Do Diamond” is where ministry **within the church (Service)** and ministry **outside the church (Missions)** occurs. Preparation to accomplish this ministry occurs in the “Be – Know Triangle”. You will notice three of the points of the diamond point outward (Missions) and one points back into the church (Service). This indicates the importance of being externally focused with the ministry efforts of the church.
- 5** The black dot identifies a crucial connection point between the “Be – Know Triangle” and the “Do Diamond”. This connection must be intentional, planned, and resourced to insure church members move from the “learning mode” to “doing mode”.



# The Five Star Sunday School



## Accomplish All Five Functions In Sunday School

**EVANGELISM:** The Sunday School class must have a designated Outreach Leader or a F.A.I.T.H. Team in place to coordinate the evangelism efforts of the class. Current, up-to-date prospect files must be available and used by the class to reach out into the community to the lost and unchurched. Accountability for assignments should be ongoing (Sunday morning). The teacher must lead out in visitation for the class and must lead class members to participate in the evangelism efforts of the class.

**SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT (Discipleship):** The process of Spiritual Development in the Sunday School class occurs at a lesser intensity (light gray line), and primarily includes the first step in the discipleship process – Salvation. Basic discipleship also occurs when the Bible is studied. The primary source of discipleship should occur in the Spiritual Development (Discipleship) classes which are closed groups.

**FELLOWSHIP:** The fellowship process is based on building a “trust relationship” in the class between members and prospects. Sunday School is the “connection point” in the life of the church and the process of building community is an important component that must reach much farther than just a get together for social reasons. This is where the class “hooks” prospects and helps them connect in a positive way. Sunday School class fellowships is where the primary social interaction for class members and prospects occurs. A minimum of two fellowship activities should be scheduled each Quarter. One fellowship activity a month is optimum.

**MINISTRY:** Ministry is defined as Service inside the church and Missions outside the church. A Sunday School class should be involved in both types of ministry. At least once a year, the class, as a unit, should participate in a Missions activity (outside the church, in the community or beyond). The Sunday School class is the organization that is the “first responder” to the needs of their members and prospects, and others as deemed appropriate.

**WORSHIP:** Worship is the second function that occurs in a lesser intensity in the Sunday School class (lighter gray line). There are elements of worship that occur in the class (i.e. personal testimonies, singing, responsive readings, etc.) but the primary action to be accomplished in the class is to prepare the heart of the class member for corporate worship. One effective way to accomplish this is to read the Scripture the Pastor will preach on in the morning service and ask the members to meditate on what God is saying to them in that passage as they prepare to worship.