



# Depth Perception™

Commentary from Design For Ministry™  
Milwaukee – Philadelphia – Tampa

## Defining The Terms 15 March 2004

Terminology takes on a life of its own. Because of this households, congregations, ministry organizations or non-profits, even work, can drift from a sense of purpose. Without an occasional visit to the original definitions, the words used to describe chief priorities can grow beyond their original intent.

For instance, we talk much about *mission*. But what do you mean when you say the word?

- A statement that calls you into being?
- A statement that describes what you intend to do in the future?
- A statement a leadership group gathered to write, but you don't know what it says?
- A place where Jesuits established churches alongside the advance of the Spanish Empire?
- Planting churches in faraway places?
- Any act of Christian mercy?
- Any evangelistic effort?

Are there other definitions of mission than those listed here? Can you see how over time the many nuances can leave people saying the same word but

meaning entirely different things? Can you see how differing definitions lead to differences of opinions or conflicts? What biblical definition would you assign to the word? Does a biblical definition matter?

The best method for re-establishing terminology is to revisit the terms and invite people to speak aloud the definitions they assign. This increases understanding and builds appreciation for others.

Here are some additional words. Boards and leadership groups would benefit from forming common definitions for them once more. The questions in this article provide a good structure for your conversation.

- Gospel
- Evangelical
- Stewardship
- Church
- Community
- Leadership
- Christian

Establish the definitions and you improve your ability to communicate.

– mark I. vincent