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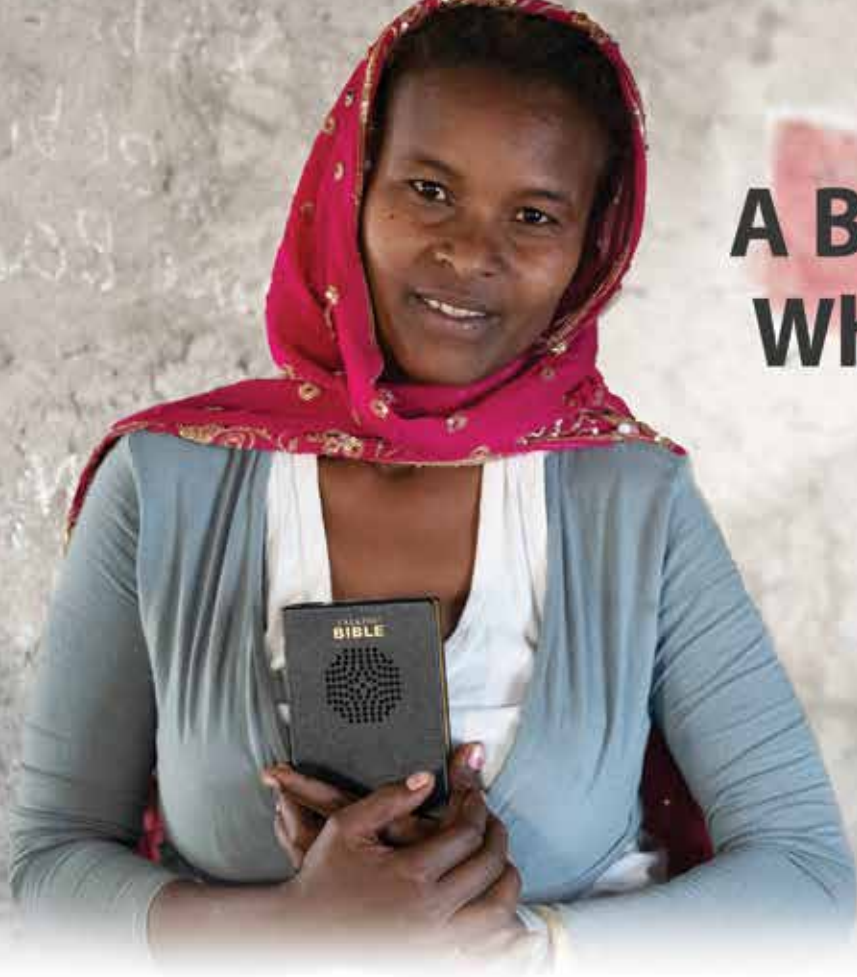
**What Happens
When
Everything
is Missions?**
Clarifying the
Missionary Task

ISSUE 41:6 NOV / DEC 2019

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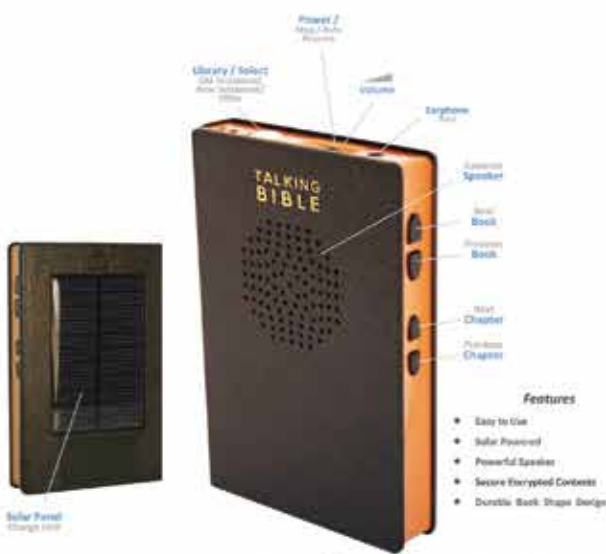
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HOW TO KEEP THE UNREACHED PEOPLES...UNREACHED?

BY RICK WOOD

EDITOR OF *MF*
rickwood@frontierventures.org

I want to thank Rebecca Lewis for her marvelous work on the Sept.-Oct. 2019 issue of *MF* dealing with the “Death Industries.” She did a great job of research that will give fuel to evangelical efforts to rescue those perishing at the hands of these malevolent global forces.

This topic is very personal to me because I am one whose life has been deeply impacted by these “Death Industries.” Like many families around the world, alcohol and tobacco have done incalculable damage to my family and my wife’s family. My mother died prematurely from smoking and my twin brother and I have suffered with eyesight problems all our lives because my mother smoked while pregnant with us. My wife suffered verbal and physical abuse and neglect while growing up with a single, alcoholic mother.

The carnage wrought by the “Death Industries” needs to stop. We as followers of Jesus must do whatever we can to stop the suffering and death of millions of precious individuals as we work to bring the gospel to the lost, both locally and globally. Again, many thanks to Rebecca Lewis for her landmark work in this area.

The Greatest Threat to the Mission of the Church

The most critical issue facing the mission of the Church today is the lack of clarity and understanding of what Jesus has asked us to do in Matt.

28:18-20, often referred to as the Great Commission. Answering the critical question of what is the central missionary task will determine what progress can be made.

According to George Barna’s research, (see pages 14–15 for a summary of his research) a whopping **51% of all church goers have never heard of the Great Commission and only 17% can correctly identify the passage and its meaning.** This is appalling! Even more troubling is that this ignorance is growing with each successive generation of believers. Only 10% of millennial believers have heard of the Great Commission.

This massive ignorance is crippling the mission of the Church. Every pastor should start teaching the Matt. 28, “Great Commission” passage, and not stop, until the majority of believers understand what Jesus has called us to do. **Our central identity as followers of Jesus is inextricably tied to what Jesus has asked us to do.** As Jesus followers, our true identity is as bearers of Christ’s mission to disciple all the peoples of the earth. Of course, there is a catch; this assumes that the pastors themselves understand what this passage means. Unfortunately, many do not, and that is what this issue of *MF* is all about.

This ignorance along with the continually shifting definitions of what “missions” means, have resulted in many church leaders

saying that, “Everything is missions and every believer is a missionary.” I am sure that these leaders mean well and are sincerely trying to get their congregants to take seriously the need to reach out to the lost in their midst, but a lack of clarity about the mission Jesus gave us is killing the Church’s ability to clearly focus its efforts and resources upon the critical task of fostering Kingdom Movements of discipleship and church planting within all peoples. When these leaders say that “everything is missions,” then any clear definition of the remaining missionary task becomes impossible, because everyone has their own definition centered upon that particular ministry they care about, not what Jesus has called us to do in Matt. 28. **If everything is missions, then nothing is missions.** If any destination will do, then any road and any vehicle will get you there.

In our lead article renowned author/pastor David Platt talks about what happens when pastors equate missions with their own local outreach or evangelism. “An emphasis on ‘your mission field’ can cause unhelpful tunnel vision such that you focus on the people/place right around you to the exclusion of people/places far beyond you. If we all just focus on ‘our mission field’ right around ‘our churches,’ then over 2 billion people will continue to be born, to live and to die without ever hearing the gospel. We need to see the world as our mission field.”

In order to put local ministry into its proper context we need to understand what that larger context is. In Matt. 28:18-20 Jesus calls *all* of us to go and make disciples. All of us have been called to obey the Great Commission and be disciple makers—teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded, including the command to make disciples. Multigenerational discipleship is inherent in the Great Commission. All of us are to live “on mission” with God to make disciples wherever God places us. **But that does not make us all missionaries.** In Acts 13 the Holy Spirit called out Paul and Barnabas in Antioch for the specific purpose of going cross-culturally to Gentiles. The Holy Spirit sent them, not to their own people or culture, but cross culturally to peoples that were not Jewish.

Likewise, today the Holy Spirit is calling people to leave their language and culture to become disciple-makers and church-planters in people groups near and far. As they go and the rest of us faithfully support them in their efforts, we are all faithfully fulfilling what Jesus has asked us to do to in Matt. 28. But if the majority of believers have no idea what Matt. 28:18–20 means, then they will have no idea that missionaries going out to foster movements in the unreached peoples should be fully supported with their prayers and finances. They can become involved in local needs and neglect God’s highest priority, that He would be worshipped and given glory by all peoples. If we have a proper understanding of what Matt. 28:18–20 means, then we can put what we do locally into its proper context and it will provide the motivation to do both local evangelism cross-cultural outreach to the unreached peoples.

David Platt provides some helpful clarity to the task Jesus gave us.

He [Jesus] has clearly commanded us not just to make disciples among as many people as possible, but to make disciples of all the nations, among all the peoples (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:47). This, after all, is the ultimate purpose of God in history: to save men and women from every nation, tribe, and tongue for His glory (Rev. 5; 7:9ff.). Therefore, every follower of Jesus and every leader in the church should live to see every nation reached with the gospel. **If we’re not focused on reaching those not yet reached, then we are either disregarding or disobeying the Great Commission.**

The best way to keep the unreached peoples unreached, is to keep calling all that the church does “mission,” and every believer a missionary and thereby keep people from understanding what the true missionary task is that Jesus has called us to obey.


We Need Your Ongoing Support as Vision Casters

Mission Frontiers exists to cast the vision and provide the resources to foster Kingdom Movements in every people and place so that every person may have access to the life-saving gospel of Jesus Christ as soon as possible. But we cannot do this without the partnership of you, our readers. Producing *Mission Frontiers* six times a year is not inexpensive. There are fixed costs that must be met regardless of how many subscribers we have. Subscriptions and advertising do not cover our expenses. We need people who believe in what we are doing and are willing to come alongside us in the following ways.

Prayer: We need people to pray for the success of our mission to mobilize the global church to focus on fostering Kingdom Movements in all peoples and places. I need your prayers for strength, wisdom and godly insights for each issue of *MF*. The enemy of our souls would like to silence us because our message is a direct threat to his territory among the unreached peoples.

Donate: We need your donations—both large and small—if we are to cover our costs and then go on to expand this ministry into other languages. We need committed regular support from the many readers who believe in this work. Just recently we received a donation of \$10,000 from an individual who said, “You are changing the world.” Indeed, we are working on doing just that. A church who believes in what we are doing also sent in \$10,000. We need many more churches and individuals like this. But even if you can only afford \$25 or \$30, every little bit helps. To give, please go to www.frontierventures.org, click on the Donate button and put MA 030 in the dialog box.

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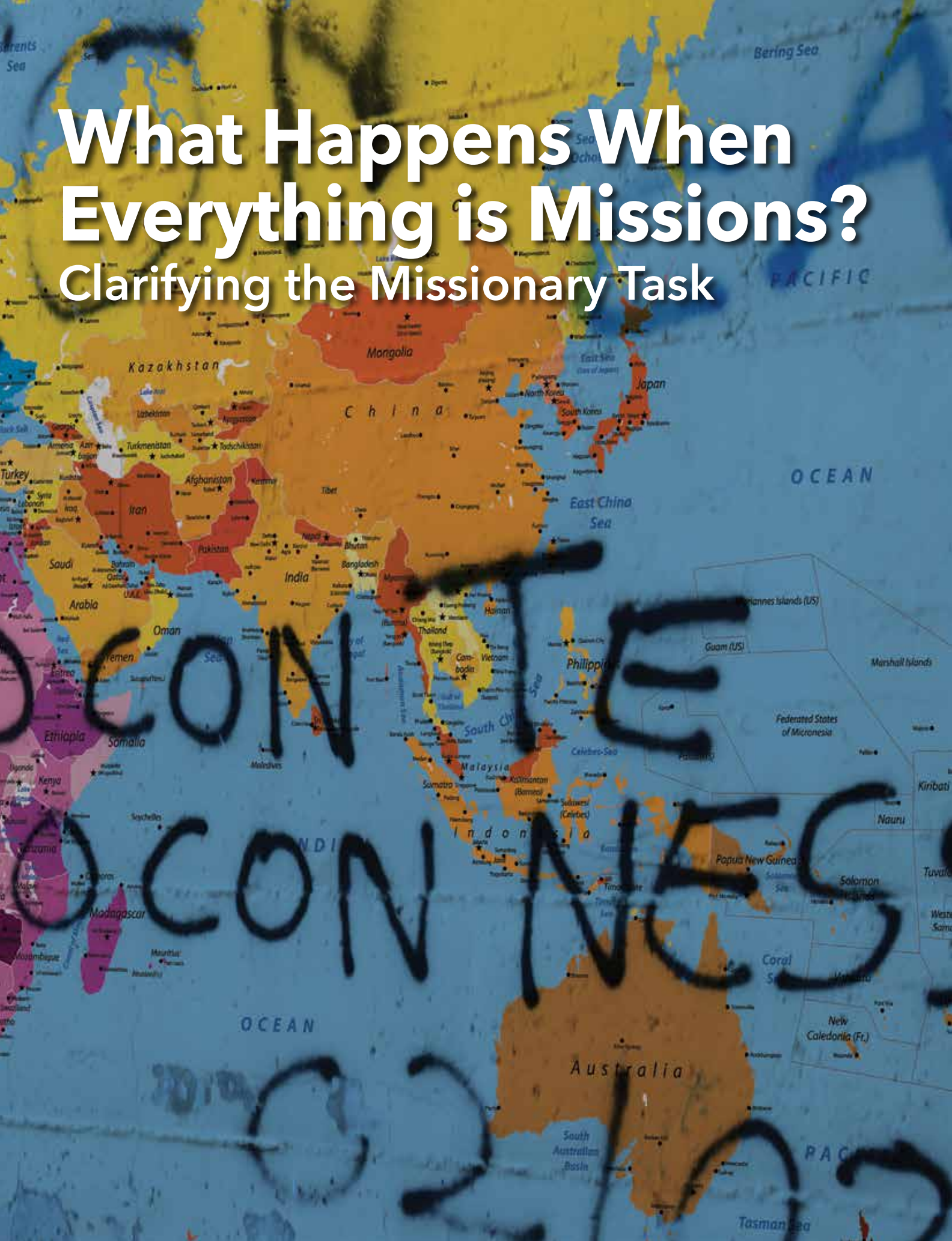
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23/05/2015



What Happens When Everything is Missions?

Clarifying the Missionary Task



We Are Not All Missionaries, But We Are All on Mission!

An Interview with Dr. David Platt

DR. DAVID PLATT

Dr. David Platt is the Pastor-Teacher at McLean Bible Church in McLean, Virginia. He is also the author of the New York Times Best Seller *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*. Platt released a follow-up book, *Radical Together: Unleashing the People of God for the Purpose of God* in 2011.

Over years of ministry you regularly speak and declare the centrality of missions to unreached and unengaged peoples as the primary missions focus of local churches. What is the foundation of your prophetic challenge to the local church?

Jesus' words. He has clearly commanded us not just to make disciples among as many people as possible, but to make disciples of all the nations, among all the peoples (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47). This, after all, is the ultimate purpose of God in history: to save men and women from every nation, tribe, and tongue for His glory (Rev. 5 7-9ff.). Therefore, every follower of Jesus and every leader in the church should live to see every nation reached with the gospel. If we're not focused on reaching those not yet reached, then we are either disregarding or disobeying the Great Commission.

For the past 50 years or more many believers have exited church doors and parking lots to a sign saying "You are now entering your mission field." Can you give us the good, the bad and the ugly of that phrase?

The good: we are indeed commissioned by Christ to live on mission wherever we go, and that starts wherever we live, work and play.

The bad: An emphasis on "your mission field" can cause unhelpful tunnel vision such that you focus on the people/place right around you to the exclusion of people/places far beyond you.

The ugly: If we all just focus on "our mission field" right around "our churches," then over two billion people will continue to be born, to live, and to die without ever hearing the gospel. We need to see the world as our mission field.

« Therefore, every follower of Jesus and every leader in the church should live to see every nation reached with the gospel. »

○ How has the identification of every sincere viable ministry of the church as “missions” and calling every disciple a “missionary” been unhelpful to global missions efforts? How might you describe or illustrate the difference between one’s daily witness as His disciple to those of a missionary? Since we are all “sent” (John 20:21) isn’t every believer a missionary?

Absolutely, every follower of Jesus has been sent, commanded, and empowered to make disciples of Jesus. In this sense, we should see every facet of our lives in the context of mission. We see this all over the New Testament (arguably all over the Bible!). We are all disciple-makers on mission in the world, regardless of where we live. And even local ministry should ultimately be aimed at global mission (seeing disciples made among all the nations).

At the same time, we also see a clear picture in a place like Acts 13 where the Holy Spirit sets apart some (not all...actually only a couple of people in the church at that time) to go where the gospel had not yet gone. Paul and Barnabas are sent out by the church specifically to proclaim the gospel and plant the church where the gospel hadn’t gone and the church didn’t exist. While the word “missionary” isn’t specifically used in the Bible, I believe it’s wise to call such people “missionaries.” Specifically, based primarily on Acts 13:1-4, I would define a missionary as a disciple of Jesus set apart by the Holy Spirit and sent out from the church to cross geographic, cultural and/or linguistic barriers as part of a missionary team focused on making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached peoples and places.

« As much as I want to encourage every Christian to be on mission right where they live, if that’s all we do, then thousands of people groups and billions of people will continue without even hearing the gospel. »

For this reason, I would not say, “Every Christian is a missionary.” Actually, to be completely frank, I have said that before! But I wouldn’t now, and here’s why. I appreciate the impulse behind this statement, wanting to emphasize how every Christian is on mission to make disciples. But that’s also the problem. As much as I want to encourage every Christian to be on mission right where they live, if that’s all we do, then thousands of people groups and billions of people will continue without even hearing the gospel. At some point, someone has to leave where they live to proclaim the gospel and plant the church where the gospel hasn’t gone and the church doesn’t exist.

So let’s not call everybody a missionary. Yes, let’s be on mission, making disciples in the power of the Spirit right where we live.

At the same time, let’s worship and fast and pray and ask God who He is setting apart from among us to spread the gospel among the unreached.

And let’s call them missionaries as we send them to the nations.

○ **What should the priority of cross-cultural missions to unreached and unengaged peoples look like in local churches? Can every church be engaged—or does size matter?**

By God's design, every local church not only *can* be engaged, but *must* be engaged in spreading the gospel to the unreached. This just isn't an option for any church that wants to obey the Great Commission.

The question, then, is what does this look like. Certainly this will vary among different churches of different sizes with different factors at play. But here are a few key things every single church should do:

- Preach God's Word, continually show God's zeal for His glory among all nations and continually point to how God's passion for His global glory should shape the purpose of our lives, our families and His Church.
- Pray for the world. This, after all, is a command from Jesus (Matt. 9:35-38) — to pray for laborers to go into the harvest field. Every church should pray for unreached people groups to be reached with the gospel and for laborers to do that work.
- Make disciples who make disciples of the nations. Biblical discipleship must always be accomplished in a global context (not disconnected from it) with a global goal (seeing disciples made among the nations). And the core competencies of disciple-making are consistent whether someone lives in the same town where they were born or among a global city where the gospel hasn't gone. As a pastor, I am working to equip every member of the church I pastor to make disciples in such a way that God could pick them up and put them anywhere in the world, and they would know how to make disciples and gather as a church in a way that more disciples could be made and more churches could be multiplied. This is a high goal, but I just don't think I as a pastor should aim for anything less.
- Send laborers. Every church, no matter what size, can ask who God is sending out for the spread of the gospel to the unreached and respond accordingly. In the church I pastor, we have an Acts 13-type weekend periodically, where we fast and pray and worship, and we all lay our lives down before the Lord and we ask who He is sending out from among us. Then when I preach that Sunday, I ask people who believe the Lord

may be leading them to stand. I've never been in a gathering where someone didn't stand.

- Participate in short-term mission trips. Much could be said about the unhealthy pictures of short-term mission trips, but there are healthy ways to utilize short-term missions for long-term impact, both around the world and in our churches. Short-term missions will often lead to long-term missionaries (and missions engagement on exponential levels).
- Give resources toward the global purpose of God. Where our treasure is, there our heart will be also (Matt. 6:21). If we want our heart to be with God's heart for the nations, then we need to put treasure here. Every church should give financial resources for the spread of God's glory among the nations.
- I could go on and on...but hopefully this is a helpful start!

○ **We all realize the significant role and influence that pastors and key leaders, elders, etc. have in leading churches in missions vision. Why do they seem reluctant to do so?**

I think many pastors and key leaders aren't leading churches with missions vision (i.e., with a vision for how their local church can play a significant part in spreading the gospel to those who have never heard it) because those pastors and key leaders don't have a missions vision themselves. Many (maybe most) pastors and key leaders think Jesus just told us to make disciples right around us yet don't have a vision for how Jesus has commanded (yes, commanded) us to work to see disciples made far from us.

Then, when pastors or key leaders do get a missions vision, they will most certainly receive pushback in the church to that vision. You look through Scripture, and you see that the people of God have always pushed against the global mission of God. So it won't be easy. It will be costly. That means any pastor or church leader must have not only the vision of Jesus, but His courage, as well.

○ **We often observe pastors and leaders who are confused and disconnected about the mission of the church and her central role in global missions efforts. If "knowing comes before doing and shapes and informs the doing"— how**

might you encourage these pastors and leaders in their missiology and learning so they might rightly influence and lead their local fellowships?

There are many things pastors and church leaders can do to grow in this area; here are some good places to start:

- Read. Pick up a copy of John Piper's *Let the Nations Be Glad*. Read a missionary biography like *To the Golden Shore* about Adoniram Judson. Study through "God's Heart for the Nations" (a resource by Jeff Lewis available at radical.net). As you read, pray for your heart to be conformed to God's heart.
- Go. Spend time spreading the gospel where it hasn't yet gone. Lead the way in missions by being involved in missions. The key is: don't go where the gospel has gone. Go and spread the gospel where it hasn't yet gone.
- Come. We are about to start hosting Radical Intensives where we bring pastors and church leaders together to help one another think through how to shepherd, serve and lead the local church for global mission. Stay tuned for more information at radical.net.
- See. Look for the relationship between local ministry and global missions. For example, when I preached last week on marriage and divorce encouraging our members when it comes to all the challenges they're facing in marriage, I showed them the relationship between our marriages and mission. Our marriages are designed by God to display the gospel in the world. Marriage is not an end in itself. Marriage is designed by God, yes, for our good, but ultimately for His glory in the world. So let's see this tie not just in marriage, but across every facet of the Christian life. Pastoral ministry is about shepherding disciple-makers among the nations.

○ **How does having a robust missions sending culture to unreached peoples impact the health of a church? Can a church be healthy and NOT engage in "go and make disciples of all nations?"**

No. Simply put, a church will not be healthy (or biblically faithful) if it is disregarding or disobeying the Great Commission. And the converse is true. We can trust that when we are obeying and giving ourselves to the Great Commission (working to make disciples of all

the nations), we will be a healthy church. We need not worry that obeying the Great Commission will make us an unhealthy church.

« **Simply put, a church will not be healthy (or biblically faithful) if it is disregarding or disobeying the Great Commission.** »

○ **During the first 300 years of church history it seems that its structures were very nimble and organized for mission rather than being structures of command and control. How can our churches including pastors and leaders reclaim, simplify and return to a missions-centered paradigm? What needs to change?**

I'm a bit hesitant to assume a "golden age" of sorts in the early Church, particularly when it seems from the New Testament that they had a lot of struggles from the start, and I assume those struggles continued in subsequent centuries. I'm also hesitant to say that the most significant problems in the Church today are structural and organizational. I think more significant challenges include consumerism, materialism, unbiblical views of the Church's mission, a lack of conviction about the gospel and a lack of zeal for God's glory.

Consequently, I would say that the challenge for any church leader in any age is to serve and lead the church with zeal for God's glory among the nations, deep conviction about the gospel (including the need for Christ to be proclaimed among all peoples) and radical surrender to be and do all that Jesus calls us to be and do in this world. As we do this, we then prayerfully ask God for wisdom to know how best to organize structures to support making disciples and multiplying churches among the nations. And as God grants wisdom, we pray for courage to do all that He is calling us to do. MF

The Great Confusion

BY **MATTHEW ELLISON
& DENNY SPITTERS**

Matthew Ellison, President of Sixteen:Fifteen and **Denny Spitters**, Vice President of Church Partnership at Pioneers co-authored the book, *When Everything Is Missions*. Visit www.wheneverythingismissions.com to learn more or purchase the book.

A March 2017 Barna survey revealed disturbing evidence that validates our deep concerns about the Church's Great Commission confusion: 51% of Christians in North America do not recognize or know of the Great Commission. More alarming, of the 49% who say they do (when given five Scriptures, one of which is the actual passage of Matt. 28) only 37% could actually identify it!

« A March 2017 Barna survey revealed disturbing evidence that validates our deep concerns about the Church's Great Commission confusion. »

Would it be fair to say the graphs on p. 14 expose a level of biblical illiteracy in our churches that is not only profoundly alarming, but unmask how far we have wandered off the path of gospel-centered, disciple-making *missions*? Has the pendulum swung so far that today the hole in the gospel is the *authentic message* of the gospel?

Jesus told us in Matt. 28:18-20, which we know as the Great Commission, to make disciples of *all the nations*. Now don't think nation states (like India or China), think people groups with distinct languages and cultures. The Great Commission according to Jesus is not just about doing good works in His name, it's not even about making disciples BUT it's about making disciples of *all the nations*. The priority then of our Great Commission task is not to just win as many people to Jesus as possible, it's not simply to do acts of kindness and mercy in His name—it is to plant the gospel in every nation, tribe and tongue.

Missions has historically consisted of international or cross-cultural ministry for spiritual purposes. But today in many churches, *missions* has come to include outreach ministries that are within our own community and culture and are often social or economic in nature.

This broadening definition of *missions* has inevitably led to a philosophy that says that every follower of Christ is a missionary and every good, altruistic or evangelistic work done in Jesus' name is *missions*. Though perhaps well intentioned, might calling everyone a missionary and everything *missions* have unintended and dangerous consequences? Can the mission of the church be anything we want it to be? Stephen Neill said, "If mission is everything, then mission is nothing. If everything that the Church does is to be classified as 'mission,' we shall have to find a term for the Church's particular responsibility for 'the heathen,' those who have never yet heard the name of Christ."

The Potential Promise and Danger of Calling Everyone a Missionary and Everything Missions

The West is quickly becoming post-Christian and the shift raises important questions about what it means to do domestic ministry. Europe and North America have become more and more like a mission field—but a post-Christian, rather than a pre-Christian, field. For many people today the term *evangelism* carries some baggage of Christendom's days when the general biblical worldview was prevalent enough in society that street corner confrontations and stadium crusades found more traction and produced more genuine converts. But times have changed, calling for a new missions-like engagement and evangelistic holism, thus the emergence of the term *missional* (somewhat in place of evangelistic). This fresh thinking is a good development, but with it comes a danger. "The danger is that with the discussion about being *missional* and *every Christian being a missionary*, the pursuit of all the peoples by prioritizing the unreached can be obscured..." David Matthis.¹

¹ David Matthis is the Executive Editor for desiringGod.org and a pastor at Cities Church in Minneapolis/St. Paul.

So, does the Bible provide a clear definition for *missions* given the word isn't even in the Bible? Can we expect the Bible to tell us what it means? Eckhard Schnabel is considered one of the world's leading experts on *missions* in the New Testament and author of two 1000-page volumes on early Christian mission as well as the 500-page work *Paul the Missionary*. He says decisively,

The argument that the word *mission* does not occur in the New Testament is incorrect. The Latin verb *mittere* corresponds to the Greek verb *apostellein*, which occurs 136 times in the New Testament (97 times in the Gospels, used both for Jesus having been 'sent' by God and for the Twelve being 'sent' by Jesus).²

« A March 2017 Barna survey revealed disturbing evidence that validates our deep concerns about the Church's Great Commission confusion. »

Keeping Schnabel's observations in mind, let's take a closer look.

1. *Missio Dei* translates as "mission of God" and is used to signify all that God does in the world and all that He is doing to accomplish His objective, the complete exaltation of the fame of His name: "I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Ps. 46:10).
2. *Mission* has a secular meaning; it often refers to either an underlying purpose (as in the term "mission statement") or a specific campaign or objective (as in a military or diplomatic mission). But it is also used to define the scope of all that God has given His Church to accomplish within the *missio Dei*; it may include all that God has called the Church to do in the world.
3. *Missional*, the most modern of the four terms, is an adjective used primarily to distinguish the ministry of the Church that happens beyond its four walls (as opposed to caring for its own). Some now use the term *missional* where they may have previously used *mission* or *missions*. This term has also been co-opted to describe a specific, progressive style of church which is intentionally outreach-oriented (a missional church or a missional community).

4. *Missions* may be used as a synonym, perhaps a clunky or outdated one, for any of the terms above, and our British brothers and sisters are among those who prefer the more graceful term "mission" without necessarily a switch in meaning between the two. But *missions* also has a narrower meaning. It is used to refer to the work of the Church in reaching across cultural, religious, ethnic and geographic barriers to advance the work of making disciples of all nations.

Missiologist Gary Corwin, in his article *MissionS: Why the 'S' Is Still Important*, compares these four terms and one more: "In addition, establishing churches among those people groups and communities where Christ is least known has been distinguished over the last several decades as what *frontier missions* is all about."³ Despite the overlapping meanings, says Corwin, each has an important, particular emphasis, and when they are properly understood each serves a useful purpose. The problem arises when the terms are used interchangeably and these unique emphases are lost: "To say, for example, that either the *missio Dei* and the mission of the church is synonymous, or that the mission of the church is all that one needs to focus on or be concerned about, runs the very real risk of simply defining everything as mission."⁴

We are unapologetic and ardent activists for a narrow, Great-Commission-focused definition of *missions* that will keep the Church on the path of making disciples of all nations. Maintaining a narrow definition of *missions* will be a more useful tool for the Church in fulfilling her mission, and the overall thrust of Scripture readily supports this emphasis.

To cross the barriers that *missions* requires, we must bring significant focus and special emphasis in the Church to making disciples resulting in churches. Without this regular and specific emphasis on "making disciples of the nations," the needs and outreach of the local church will always, quite naturally, receive the greatest attention of our efforts, while the voices of those with no access become a distant memory until next year's "Missions Sunday."

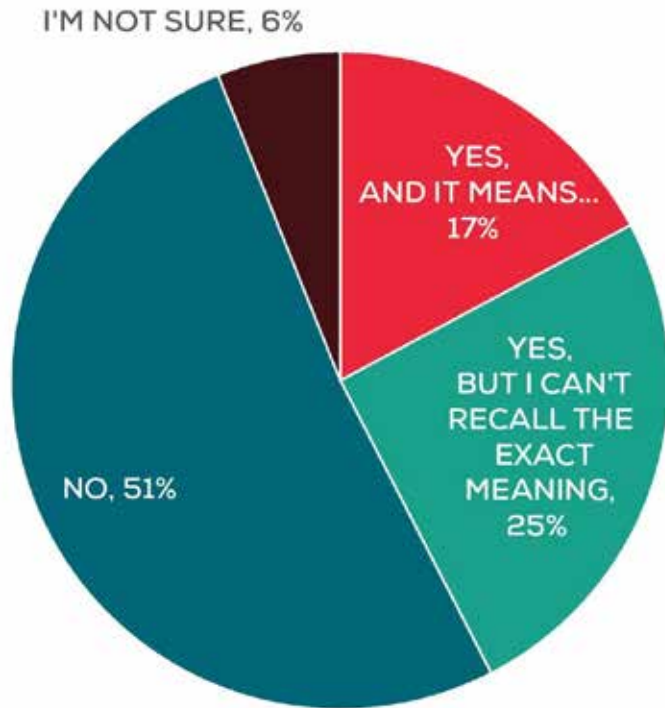
³ Gary Corwin, "MissionS: Why the 'S' Is Still Important," *EMQ* 53:2 (April 2017), <https://emqonline.com/node/3643>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

² Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 27-28.

CHURCHGOERS: HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE GREAT COMMISSION?

Barna



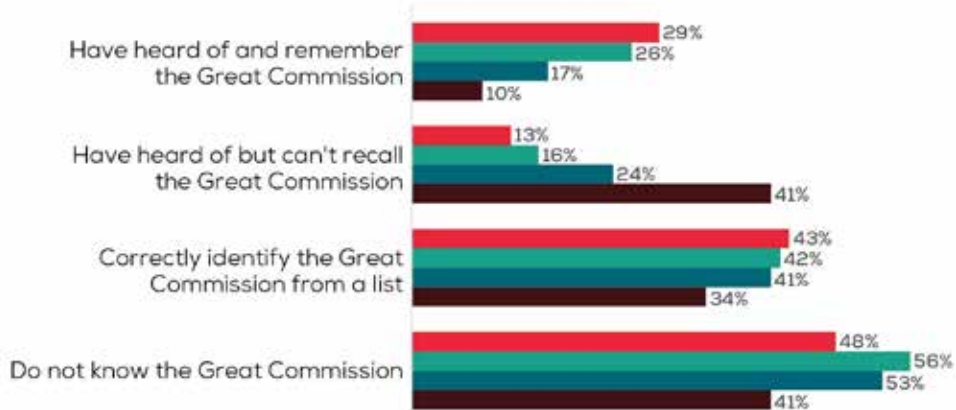
October 2017, n=1,004 U.S. churchgoers.

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KNOWLEDGE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION, BY GENERATION

Barna

● Elders ● Boomers ● Generation X ● Millennials



Totals do not equal 100% as these responses cover more than one metric and question.

October 2017, n=1,004 U.S. churchgoers.

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Is It Just Semantics?


Just how much confusion is there in the Church about the meaning of the Great Commission? Our combined experiences in working with hundreds of churches aligns with the evidence from the BARNAs report and points to massive confusion—and not just among churchgoers and members but church and *missions* leaders as well. If you were to do a quick survey of church leaders and mission-minded, missions-active people in your church, asking them just a couple of basic questions about the Great Commission, we are convinced that you would get many different and often conflicting answers. Sometimes the differences would just be semantic, but in most cases they would be fundamental.

In our missions coaching and consulting work we repeatedly encounter serious confusion and stifling disagreement among church and missions leaders about the purpose and goal of the Great Commission. Following are some questions that we have asked and are continuing to ask:

- What is the Great Commission purpose Christ gave to His Church?
- What exactly are we supposed to be doing?
- What has He called us to accomplish?

- What is the goal of the Great Commission?
- What is it that we work toward?
- What does the fulfillment of the Great Commission require of us?

Responses often reflect a seriously hazy understanding of the Great Commission. And if Christ's followers are unable to state clearly and concisely their Great Commission purpose, we believe it will be nearly impossible for them to serve that purpose well.

A sound, biblical *missions* definition is crucial to the future of the evangelical Church. Defining *missions* in our relativistic, pluralistic era requires that we are committed to walk the path of God's redemptive mission, culminating in the collective worship of the Lamb by all nations, peoples, tribes and tongues. That is the bedrock path of *missions* to which we, His Bride, are called. No matter what process we use to define and carry out *missions activity*, this is the path our boots must travel if we hope to clear the fog of great confusion about *missions* and obey Jesus' Great Commission imperative. 

Do churchgoers recognize the *Great Commission* among other verses?

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV)	37%
³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'[a] ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'[b] ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40, NIV)	16%
Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6, NIV)	8%
Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. (Mark 8:34, NIV)	5%
Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." (Mark 12:17, NIV)	2%
Not sure if <i>any</i> of these passages are the Great Commission.	33%

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What's the Harm in Calling Everything *Missions*?

BY **JEFF JACKSON**

Jeff Jackson is the founder of Shepherd's Staff Missions Facilitators, where he currently serves as the Director of Church Relations and Missionary Care.

About fifteen years ago, I noticed that an increasing number of church leaders were intentionally propagating a redefinition and broadening of what *missions* is and who the word *missionary* should be applied to.

10 CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEW VIEW

Though well-intentioned, the view that everything is missions and every follower of Christ is a missionary comes with significant and unintended mission-impacting consequences. Here are just a few of them:

1. It causes people to gloss over the pivotal, bigger-picture facts that are clearly described in the sweep of the New Testament, diminishing the attention and weight they deserve:
 - Jesus commissioned His church by way of the apostles to go and make disciples among every ethnic group, *where those groups reside* (Matt. 28:18-20).
 - The book of Acts is a record of the church's diverse but unified efforts to take Christ's commission seriously.
 - The book of Revelation unveils that the commission Jesus gave will ultimately be accomplished and that He will receive worship from representatives of every ethnic and linguistic group God created. This is His endgame plan for humanity.

Because these realities provide the overarching framework in which God unfolds His ultimate plan, the understanding and motivation for every Christian to contribute to its completion is missing.

« Though well intentioned, the view that everything is missions and every follower of Christ is a missionary comes with significant and unintended mission-impacting consequences. »

2. It provokes Christians to either ignore or reinterpret some of the key terminology that is plainly used in the New Testament:
 - Jesus is referred to as an *apostle*/missionary (Heb. 3:1).
 - He gave the title *apostle*/missionary to a small and select group of His disciples that He called to do something that would require a unique level of sacrifice and self-denial (Luke 6:13).
 - All of those called to be *apostles*/missionaries were disciples, but not all of His disciples were given the calling and title of *apostle*/missionary.
 - The title *apostle*/missionary is applied to people other than the original twelve in the book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament, but not to all believers. The common denominator was their apparent willingness to be sent, crossing various boundaries for the sake of the gospel and the expansion of the kingdom.
 - When explaining the gifts given by the Holy Spirit, Paul lists *apostle*/missionary as one of them, and then uses rhetorical questions to make the point that not every Christian is given every gift and the title that expresses it (1 Cor. 12:27-31).

It's noble and well-meaning to find creative ways to encourage Christians to live out their faith and share the gospel. However, if God designed diversity and distinctions and the language used to communicate them is blurred, then language used to describe other diverse and distinct areas that God designed will be more susceptible to also being blurred to accomplish other apparently noble purposes.

3. It diminishes the desire to know and thus measure how much progress has been made toward the completion of the mission He gave to His people. And with that desire extinguished, the importance of becoming educated about the incredible ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity with which He created humanity and how it reflects His glory will be neglected.
4. It quenches the passion of God's people to pray for the remaining unengaged and unreached people groups, and the need to plead with Him to move churches and ministries to send missionaries to live among them and share the gospel.
5. It minimizes the value and significance of advocacy within the Church on behalf of those who are still unreached and the missionaries and ministries that are engaged in trying to reach them.
6. It diverts financial resources away from the small group of His people that God is still calling to relocate to places around the world that require that person to be funded from a source outside of the country where they live and serve.
7. It nullifies and neutralizes the opportunities for people to participate sacrificially and financially in completing the ultimate task the church has been given.
8. It dilutes the need and thus the passion for each member to discover what they can do to partner and participate in meaningful ways with God and the missionaries He sends to complete the task.
9. It dismantles the hard-wiring that God has placed within us to bestow gratitude, respect and honor upon those whose obedience to His calling requires an extraordinary level of self-denial, sacrifice and humility.
10. It deprives people of one of the simplest methods God has established for making the mundane meaningful—that whatever we're doing with cross-cultural missions is actually making a significant contribution towards the accomplishment of a

mission that matters, especially for those who have little to no access to the Good News.

PROVOKING A RE-EXAMINATION


Although it may seem like the consequences I've listed are possible, but not likely to become a reality, I've actually encountered each and every one of them within the sphere of the churches and their members with whom I interact as part of my job.

Because I'm convinced that this new view of missions and missionaries is harmful to the successful completion of the mission God has given to His people, I point out some of the consequences listed above to those who have bought in to it.

If that doesn't seem to get any traction or notice, I add these points:

- We don't say that every Christian is a pastor even though they do a few of the things that pastors do.
- We don't say that because every person is able to render some level of medical care to others that they should be given the title of doctor.
- We don't say that because every person in the Coast Guard knows how to swim, all of them should be called Rescue Swimmers.

« It is very important that we understand the biblical context and proper motivation to encourage people to share their faith. »

It is very important that we understand the biblical context and proper motivation to encourage people to share their faith. Our reasoning is easily influenced by our hyper-individualistic extreme egalitarian culture. There is a dangerous tendency to ignore the implications of redefining words like "mission" and "missionary." We must be very careful not to bend the meaning of words and manipulate them into what we want them to mean. Descriptive titles have meaning! Pastors, doctors, and Rescue Swimmers identify specific people with unique roles. If we manipulate words to mean something else then we lose the power of their descriptive nature. Words have meaning. 

Acts 1:8 Sequentialism

BY DR. PAM ARLUND

Pam Arlund, PhD, is the Global Training and Research Leader and a member of the International Leadership Team of All Nations. She previously served as a field missionary and Bible translator among an unreached people and helped ignite a movement among them. She now trains and shepherds disciples who make disciples among neglected peoples of the earth.

AS SHOCKING AS IT MAY SEEM (at least it's shocking to me), many, many Christians are bored. They wonder at the wonderful and beautiful ways and yet, they are bored. How can this be? How can followers of Jesus who appear to be doing "all the right things" be bored?

I believe at least part of the problem is that they don't understand who they are. They know that they belong to Jesus, but they don't understand what that means. It's true that believers are meant to attend church, build good families and serve their communities. The problem is that, although they were made for all of those things, they were also made for MORE than those things.

One of the core identities of a follower of Jesus is to be a world changer. This can be seen from the earliest days of our father Abraham when he was told that all the nations on earth would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:3). When people begin to follow Jesus, they are then joined into this family of Abraham (Gal. 3:7-9, 14). This dream of all the nations of the earth being blessed is the foundation of our faith and also the ultimate culmination of our faith (cf. Rev. 5:9). The glory of the nations of the earth is a key building block of God's own city (Rev. 21:24-26). From these passages, it seems that ALL believers are made to be a part of God's global purposes.

« One of the core identities of a follower of Jesus is to be a world changer. »

Acts 1:8 helps spell out the scope of God's global glory. For many, a misunderstanding of this passage has led to a misunderstanding of who they are. In Acts 1:8 Jesus tells us that we will need the power of the Holy Spirit to be able to be witnesses of the Good News of Jesus. Then Jesus says that the gospel will go to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth as His people serve as witnesses. Some have taken this verse to mean that the gospel will progressively move from Jerusalem then Judea and Samaria and then the ends of the earth. Although the

conjunction in this verse is far more often interpreted as "and" than "then" in the Bible, grammatical arguments are not the strongest ones to look at.

The strongest argument that this verse was NEVER understood by the early Church as being sequential is the behavior of the early Church itself. If the early Church had taken this verse to mean that they would FIRST reach Jerusalem and then move on, then the Church would likely still be in Jerusalem today. It doesn't take much of a walk around modern day Jerusalem to realize that there are many people there who are not following Jesus to this day. And, yet the early Church did finally send out a missionary team in Acts 13. There is no reason to believe that either Jerusalem or Antioch had 100% followers of Jesus at the time that the early Church sent Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey.

So, how did they know when to send out their first missionary teams? When the Holy Spirit told them to do so. They prayed, He spoke, they obeyed. It would have been ridiculous to argue with the Holy Spirit that Antioch had not yet been reached and therefore they could not move on to another place.

So, how is it that many believers today say, "We have so many lost here. We can't move on until we reach all the people here." It seems to me that this statement is a fundamental misunderstanding of two things: how the kingdom grows (or doesn't) and of who we are as children of Abraham and receivers of the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

Jesus taught in the parable of the sower of the seed (Matt. 3:1-23, 18-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15) that only one of four kinds of soil bore any long-lasting fruit at all. This oft quoted idea that "there are still many people here that have not been saved and so we should not move on" is the same as staying to till the poor soil. People who have heard but have not responded positively are poor soil. We are still called to love them, but the parable also calls us to move on to other soil. Jesus never implies that believers should stay and till poor soil. In fact, it seems to be a truth of the operation of the kingdom that not all will respond to the sowing of the gospel seed.

It seems that there is a deeper theological issue with saying that a particular local church is called to ONLY local work. The rub is in the different gifts given to the local church. Often churches are led by someone who is a shepherd as listed in Ephesians 4. Shepherds are called to tend the flock and are usually called to a primarily local ministry. However, all of the ministries in Ephesians 4 are called to equip the saints for works of service (cf. Eph. 4:12).

To say that a particular local body has no global calling is to decide that NO ONE in that church will ever be called as an apostle. This is surely not what any local shepherd would want to imply. Local pastors understand that it is their job to “fan into flames” the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to the members of the congregation (cf. 2 Tim. 1:6). No one should condemn some gifts as not welcome within their church. To do so is poor shepherding and crushing to the hearts of those who are given an apostolic gift from Holy Spirit.

For example, I have friends that are the first believers in a people group that has .01% believers. But when they prayed, they felt strongly that Jesus asked them to go to another people group that was not their own. Logically, it might not make sense. But it's God who gifted them for global purposes and sent them out. They simply obeyed. Their own Jerusalem has almost no believers in it at all and yet they moved to “the ends of the earth” where there are also almost no believers. How did they know it was time for them to go? The same way they knew in Acts 13: the body prayed, the Holy Spirit spoke, and so they obeyed. To hold them to their own Jerusalem might have seemed logical but I am convinced that it would not have been obedience to Jesus.

I do not mean to imply that being involved in God's global glory is only for those with an apostolic gifting. For some, they will be involved by sending as the Scriptures say, “How can they go unless they are sent?” (Rom. 10:15) Declaring that a local body will only reach locally denies the calling on both Goers and Senders. Often what happens is that men and women with such a gift on their lives are in an environment that does not shepherd them in that global calling and leaves them feeling a lot of angst.

Globally called believers will feel torn as they try to be obedient to their local shepherd who only believes in local ministry because they are not doing what they were gifted to do. And, so they serve in many, many ways but they begin to slowly die inside and wonder what they are missing. In addition, they are often told that they do not properly understand Acts 1:8 which only makes them feel


worse. They wonder why they can't just settle down and do local outreach like everyone else. It's obvious that local outreach is important and something their church (like all churches) is called to do. Calling everything missions can actually destroy the uniqueness of the apostolic calling. Often such people feel torn between the Spirit in them and their local shepherd they long to obey.

As a part of this global family of God, we have joy when we are connected globally. Local bodies that are praying for those who do not know Jesus, giving finances, personnel and resources to the other side of the world and establishing friendships globally do not die and do not lack local outreach. Quite the contrary.

« Some will serve more locally while others serve almost exclusively globally. »

If a local church is not reaching out locally, denying global outreach is not the way to get people to reach locally. In fact, beginning to call people to global purposes and awakening them to the purpose of the family of Abraham will also awaken people to local outreach. For the restoration of the global purpose is a repairing of the heart, even a healing of the soul of something that has been robbed of them. Not all of our local church members will be goers (missionaries) but all will use their gifts in one way or another for God's global purposes and glory. Some will use their gifts of helps, intercession, babysitting, carpentry, etc. to achieve God's aims on a global level. Some will go. Some will serve more locally while others serve almost exclusively globally.

Let's not tell our congregants that they are too insignificant and too unimportant to be connected to the global body. This is not the message of Jesus. Every congregation, no matter how lost the world outside its own doors, is made for both local and global impact. Denying one or the other is a denial of who the family of Abraham was made to be.

A people awakened to their identity in Christ will be awakened to this global identity and global belonging. To then limit their sphere of influence locally is simply not good shepherding or kingdom building. Let's call the local church to its global purpose. Let's call it to live again, to have significance, to live for more than itself, to transform communities and neighborhoods and to transform the whole world for Jesus. 

ReforMission: Churches that Changed Their Minds

Adapted from the When Everything Is Missions Podcast, Season 2, Episode 1.

To listen to this conversation in its entirety visit www.wheneverythingismissions.com or subscribe on iTunes.

BY **MATTHEW ELLISON**
& **DENNY SPITTERS**

Matthew Ellison, President of Sixteen:Fifteen and **Denny Spitters**, Vice President of Church Partnership at Pioneers co-authored the book, *When Everything Is Missions*. Visit www.wheneverythingismissions.com to learn more or purchase the book.

During the Reformation, the medieval church discovered that the gospel did not need to be redefined—it needed to be rediscovered. In the same way, our idea of missions need not be redefined, it merely needs to be rediscovered. Let's hear from three churches that went through a process to rediscover missions. We interviewed:

Larry Hansen, Missions Pastor,
Calvary Murrieta, Murrieta, CA

Andrew LaCasse, Assistant Pastor,
Calvary Murrieta, Murrieta, CA

Michelle Thompson, Global Team Leader,
Northview Christian Church, Danville, IN

Trent Hunter, Pastor for Preaching/Teaching,
Heritage Bible Church, Greer, SC

MATTHEW ELLISON: Charles Spurgeon said: "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter." Michelle, I wonder if teaching that everyone is a missionary has ever been communicated at your church?

Michelle: I would say as much as even 10 or 15 years ago I did hear that. And I really think a lot of it is because people don't understand the difference between a missionary and an evangelist. Somebody who is supposed to be crossing cultural barriers or a language barrier is a missionary. An evangelist isn't necessarily crossing any cultural/language barriers.

MATTHEW: What do you think the motivation is for calling everyone a missionary? What's behind the idea from your perspective?

Michelle: Well, we're supposed to spread the Good News. I think it elevates that sense of responsibility in people's minds. If they think of themselves as a missionary, they will maybe actually take the initiative and try to share with their friends and neighbors.

DENNY SPITTERS: Trent, has this been an issue at all at Heritage?

Trent: I think if you go person to person and you asked them about what missions is, they would start talking about the ends of the earth and the globe. I think if you were to look at our budget and answer the question, it might be answered this way: "It's everything in terms of gospel advance outside the walls and the property of this church."



A fuzzy definition yields a fuzzy execution.



We had all kinds of missions partners: a local child evangelist, a motorcycle ministry, a state side church planting. All that was under the rubric of missions. A fuzzy definition yields a fuzzy execution. Over time, if you don't have a shared agreement congregationally it has consequences.

DENNY: Larry, how about at Calvary?

Larry: Maybe 20 years ago that philosophy was here. Currently, the majority of the folks here would not be thinking that everyone is a missionary. But it took several years for us to undo that kind of teaching and thinking. We really tried to help the folks understand that the value of being evangelistic and sharing Christ with your neighbor *is* the work of the Church and it *is* what we should be about. It's different than being sent cross-culturally. We should also be about showing the love of Christ to our friends, family and neighbors.

« The value of being evangelistic and sharing Christ with your neighbor *is* the work of the Church. »

MATTHEW: Another factor here is that we've lowered our standards for what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Feeding bellies, taking care of orphans, evangelism, are the work of every disciple at all levels in your own culture. Since that wasn't happening, we said, "Well, let's call everyone a missionary because they'll take the job more seriously."

Larry: And thank you folks who are out there actively doing that. We appreciate you. They're motivated *and* showing Christ's love in their own culture.

MATTHEW: That's a great comment and something we should emphasize. It's not either or. It's both and. It's neighbors and nations. But when you lump it all together, inevitably the nations get the short end of the stick.

DENNY: Let's talk a little bit more about forces, decisions, or circumstances that brought your church to a place where you recognized a need to reevaluate your understanding and definition of missions.

Michelle: When I looked at budgets before I was involved, it was a lot of domestic campuses, Christian colleges, maybe one or two foreign ministries that were in Mexico or Europe. Most of our budget decisions were being made on what people's pet projects were. Our short-term mission trips were anything that made us feel good about *ourselves*. We wanted to change that.

Trent: We kind of backed up into the question of definition. There were a number of things in our church that were working for us and also working against us. Our church was founded by a group of really mission minded saints who had an aggressive, risk-taking aim of 50% of the general budget going to global missions. It never quite got there, but there was always this culture of watching that percentage. It also led to some "creativity" in order to increase the mission budget percentage. We found we had a hard time explaining why we're making one decision and not another. Our difficulty was our definition of missions.

DENNY: What is God's Spirit leading us to do? What do we focus on? Churches often don't wrestle with this and assume everybody is on the same missions page. What was the missions process like at Calvary?

Andrew: I grew up at Calvary and I'm now on our missions board. I get to see things from a leadership perspective. I have seen the missions culture change. Missions was really a part of our church heritage; however, we gradually became more about the unreached and the nations. We had heritage and legacy, but our focus was lacking. We started asking some tough questions and had to kind of deal with the answers. The answers weren't always what they should be, so we moved forward with a missions vision process and then a defining process.

« We had heritage and legacy, but our focus was lacking. »

DENNY: What were the pain points?

Larry: As we pulled our mission team together, there was confusion on definitions with just five leaders in the room. We recognized that if there was some confusion among us, there was confusion in the church body. What people heard first was that everything we had done for the last 30 years was wrong. We had to re-communicate our message to help people. We weren't saying what we had done was wrong, but that we realized that we were working in areas that were 95% reached. There was a little pushback and confusion. Once we honed the message with coaching from 1615 and brought it to the church it was received very well.

MATTHEW: What I've realized is when you challenge the idea that not everyone's a missionary, those are fighting words and people are thrown off balance. It's a prayerful process that requires patience by saying, "Let's let our mission definitions be shaped by the Bible, not by cultural trends, preferences, or prejudices, but by the God of all the nations."

« We have to be open to where the Holy Spirit is leading us. »

Michelle: Within our team we were able to quickly come to a definition that we agreed on. That was because we had gone through some studies as a team before we ever started the coaching process with 1615. It didn't take too much to get the team all on the same page. But where we really had difficulty was with our church leadership. There were places where our team wanted to clearly articulate our vision, but our elders said, "If you make it that specific, you are going to stifle the Holy Spirit. We have to be open to where the Holy Spirit is leading us."

MATTHEW: I appreciate your transparency Michelle! I often hear folks saying "Listen, we want to be open to the Holy Spirit leading people wherever they want to go." But as they look towards the least reached, the nations that don't have the gospel, they're afraid that they will be restricted. I often ask, "Do you mean the Holy Spirit is sending nine out of ten missionaries to places where the church has already been planted?" We need our moorings in Scripture and we need to allow the Bible to shape and inform our missions decisions and actions.

Trent: We were invested in our process for about 18 months. It was prayerful. It was inclusive. We had our original missions committee plus key elders and deacons and a few others with missions vision. There was pain in the process. We found out how much alignment we had, but then we'd hear "Don't we need to be focusing on local missions before we focus on global missions?" Or "God communicates through our good works." This was a nod to humanitarian works without gospel witness. We no longer needed that conversation. Our new shared definition of missions is to proclaim Christ in order to establish reproducing indigenous churches among the world's least reached peoples. This provides shared agreement for conversation in any given room regarding global missions, and gives us energy, especially at a core leadership level.

MATTHEW: I think a lot of churches don't take the time to develop a biblical understanding and definition of missions. Their engagement in missions is not intentional, it's reactive. They either respond to needs and requests or outsource missions through proxy. There often isn't a proactive vision. Churches need to have that Acts 13 season of worshipping, fasting, praying and saying "God we want to be a church that follows in the footsteps of this audacious church in Antioch." What sacred cows were exposed in this process?

Larry: We reevaluated projects and people we supported to see how they line up with our values and our strategic vision. We began communicating with missionaries in the field. When we removed several from our financial support it actually went better than we hoped. The field worker had a better grasp of the church and the direction we were going. Some were very supportive, others were hurt (including church members), but having those conversations was the start to dealing with sacred cows.

« We were careful to differentiate between “reached” and “unreached” and began looking for like-minded partners. »

We were careful to differentiate between “reached” and “unreached” and began looking for like-minded partners. We were introduced to some very unique peoples and places where we now have an established foothold. Our pastor Brian, Andrew and I were with one of these groups. We were able to press in with a local pastor and do some physical care, life skills and evangelism and then came back and shared the experience openly with the church body. The church immediately responded prayerfully and financially.

MATTHEW: That’s really good! I think without intentional, biblical, proactive vision, you end up just responding to requests and that will not lead you to an intentional action. Trent, now that you have this biblical definition of missions that is shared, have you seen people suddenly start neglecting their neighbors and the community?

Trent: Our love for our neighbors and our desire to see the gospel grow in our immediate community is obviously where the adoption of “everyone’s a missionary” comes from. It’s the reason why some are hesitant about such an immersive refocusing of our global missions. I can offer one anecdote where global intentionality seems to be breeding local intentionality. After our global mission series, one young mom has initiated a relationship

with a manager at a local low-income housing development near our church. She’s very interested in ministering to single mothers in this complex and is now thinking, “If there is one thing I can do locally, I want to do this!” She’s now relating obedience to Christ’s missions mandate to her community as a responsible Christian. The international awareness it seems, is breeding some local awareness. As a pastor, missions intentionality and global awareness translate into muscle reflexes that also work locally.

DENNY: At Calvary, what have you seen in this regard as the nations have been lifted up intentionally to your church body?

Andrew: Globally we’ve had so many people who really want this vision. They were just waiting for us to offer them something that big and needed a channel to go through. They were so excited to be involved with that vision. A lot of people are already doing local ministry, but when we talked about the nations and focused in on unreached peoples, many people realized that there was something dire, urgent and larger in scope than just reaching out in our own community.

« There was something dire, urgent and larger in scope than just reaching out in our own community. »

MATTHEW: What do you say to the church which has an “everyone is a missionary” philosophy, but sees a need to change?

Michelle: You’ve got a long road ahead. The transition is hard. It can be painful. It’s been a long process and we’re still not all the way there. There have been times I have just been ready to throw in the towel and say, “God, I am done.” But every single time I’ve been ready to do that, God does something. I take the towel and I wipe off my brow and my tears and I say, “Okay, He is worthy. I’m not going to quit. We’re going to try again. We’re going to go back and we’re going to scale this wall. God’s got to act but we’re going to do something because He is worthy.”

DENNY: Larry, what word of encouragement would you offer to churches that are saying "everybody's a missionary?"

Larry: I would encourage them to celebrate the servants among them who are actively doing something for the gospel. We want to recognize those who are actually serving so that as you encourage them to move and change, you will build from a foundation of unity instead of a position of separation. We saw that happen and we've seen amazing and miraculous things accomplished due to that unity.

MATTHEW: That is a great word Larry. For a lot of people, change is perceived as loss and suddenly they might be realizing their understanding of missions was mistaken! They may take it personally or feel slighted. Unity is vital as is encouragement. Trent, you're a teaching pastor. Speak to other senior and teaching pastors that have a very loose understanding of missions.


Trent: The first thing is to soak in the Scriptures and let Scripture answer this question for you. In Luke 24 Jesus says, "These are My words. I spoke while I was with you, that everything written about Me in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled." And then He opened their minds and said, "It is written that the Christ should suffer, and on the third day rise from the dead. And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in all nations beginning from Jerusalem." Every nation, every people is in that redemption story. The gospel mission is embedded into the whole story of the Bible. Let the Word lead you; use the Word of God to lead your people.

DENNY: We are so encouraged to hear you say that! We often try to find our missions strategy from other churches... not the Bible. We want a quick solution, so we ape missions like "they" do it. But each church has its own unique DNA in missions. Churches don't do missions well because they don't think about missions well.



The gospel mission is embedded into the whole story of the Bible. Let the Word lead you; use the Word of God to lead your people.



MATTHEW: Here are two questions for a takeaway: "What is God's position on missions?" How does He define missions? It is critical and essential to allow your church's understanding to flow out of the answer to these two questions. Thanks to each of you for sharing - we are cheering you on! 

When Everything is Missions

A REVIEW BY
JAMES MASON

James Mason, M.Div., is the National Director for the Perspectives Study Program, USA. Perspectives is a powerful course designed to awaken believers to pursue fulfillment of God's global purpose within every people. James served as a pastor for 12 years and has been serving in mission recruiting and mobilization for the past 11 years.

“You keep using that word; I do not think it means what you think it means.” Any respectable connoisseur of American film recognizes this quote from Inigo Montoya in the 1987 romantic comedy *The Princess Bride*. Throughout the movie, the Sicilian boss and hot-air artist, Vizzini, repeatedly describes the unfolding events as “inconceivable.” Eventually Montoya, the personable swordsman, points out the obvious—when you keep using a word in so loose a fashion you eventually stop making much sense!

« When you keep using a word in so loose a fashion you eventually stop making much sense! »

Much like the intelligent Montoya in *The Princess Bride*, Denny Spitters and Matthew Ellison in their book *When Everything is Missions*, bring to the surface the state of confusion surrounding the term *missions* and its variations. They observe that a rampant embrace of “missional” language in the Body of Christ, while helpful in some regards, has led to an unfortunate or even tragic disconnect from the biblical mandate to make disciples of all peoples and plant churches cross-culturally. Words and definitions matter. Unless we are clearer about our words and definitions, we risk making the tragic mistake of missing the specificity, and by default, the priority, of God's essential purpose.

If we're going to be missional, we'd better learn what it means that God has a mission! Spitters and Ellison point out that this is an innately biblical pursuit. When we're not biblical in our broadest frame of reference, our activity boils down to personal passions rather than God's revealed purpose or direction. The many varieties of Christian activity such as personal evangelism, helping the poor and serving the local church are all biblical but are not God's *central* purpose. Rather, they are outcomes

of his purpose, of His mission. God's mission is to be known and worshiped among all peoples. This purpose is worked out through the sending of His Son who is to be declared among the nations.

While the authors do embrace Christian ministries that pursue social transformation, they see true transformation as dependent on the prior existence of Christ followers in every culture. Spitters writes:

To cross the barriers that missions requires, we must bring significant focus and special emphasis in the Church to making disciples resulting in churches. Without this regular and specific emphasis on “making disciples of the nations,” the needs and outreach of the local church will always, quite naturally, receive the greatest attention of our efforts...while the voices of those with no access become a distant memory until next year's “Mission Sunday.”

In other words, fully equipped disciples in every nation is the priority outcome.

« If we're going to be missional, we'd better learn what it means that God has a mission! »

The priority outcome! This one concept alone stands in contrast to ministry activists whose mandates for action might, if we're honest, be derived from rabid passion for quick success stories and adventurism. The pursuit of *the priority outcome* often requires a long obedience in the same direction. Unfortunately, many pastors and churches find it much easier to pursue project-based strategies, both locally and cross culturally, whose benefits are far more for the success of the church and credibility of the church leaders. If we can say “we're global,” “we're missional,” “we help people,” then we are good pastors, good churches and good Christians. This cannot be our goal. If we are passionate about transformation, our

ultimate pursuit must be the gospel within every people. Spitters and Ellison remind us that when the work of missionaries has focused on *the priority outcome*—one centered in seeing obedient, worshiping communities of Jesus followers emerge where they didn't previously exist—we see the most overall transformation. This includes economic development, health improvement, infant survival, societal justice, literacy, benefit to women, and local ownership of problem solving. Truly, “making disciples who birth the local church is the key to both evangelism and social transformation.”

While some will certainly be uncomfortable with the narrow specificity of missions defined in this book, the inflated distortions of biblical mission are potentially far more devastating. Ellison spends well-placed effort illustrating the detrimental effects when Christians with weak concepts of missions encounter organizations or leaders who peddle equally weak frameworks. In one example, we see finances directed to schemes which pay “native missionaries” who aren't even missionaries! Aside from the devastating dependency this creates, it also wallows in an ideology of “proxy” mission where comfortable Westerners exempt themselves from the biblical identity of being “the sent out ones.” Ellison provides numerous other examples of so-called mission activity, some of which are clearly unethical or deceptive, such as calling something global when it's clearly local. Other activities such as children's outreach or Christian radio can be applauded and supported, but should not be confused with the essential task of discipling the nations. Conflating all ministries into the missions bucket leaves a massive imbalance of effort and prioritization applied toward those without any access to the knowledge of Jesus.


When Everything is Missions leaves us with the exhortation and fundamental tools to pursue the critical soul searching required of thoughtful, caring and biblical Christians. This soul searching is multi-faceted. Inwardly it calls each of us to be an audience to our own motives and passions which unexamined may or may not line up with the desires and passion of God. Soul searching also includes evaluating the soul of the Church itself. We are defined by our priorities which are expressed in what we actually *do*. The church must be evaluated by its faithfulness to God's priorities and by its tenacious stand against mission drift. Spitters and Ellison leave us with practical ways to pursue and live out a well prioritized mission vision. These range from the somewhat inward disciplines of prayer, repentance and reclaiming mission but they also include practical alignments with God's mission—embracing ministries such as mobilization, giving, training and organizing.

Above all, soul searching must include the pursuit of biblical clarity and obedience. In one excellent example, the authors discuss the “deadly sin of sequentialism” or our tendency, based on a misinterpretation of Acts 1:8, to exempt ourselves from cross-cultural or “ends of the earth” efforts. We do this, because we believe we must first focus on “our Jerusalem” and miss, or disregard that “the vision for a ministry to all nations was to be a part of all discipleship and church-planting efforts from the very beginning.” In compelling fashion, Spitters and Ellison exhort us to

renewed and reinvigorated commitment to the biblical, apostolic, missionary model and vision that fueled the apostle Paul, Barnabas and Silas and that has propelled the expansion of the Church throughout the last 2,000 years – that the gospel must reach those who have never heard (Rom. 15:20).

In a world of tribal knowledge and utilitarian confusion about missions, Spitters and Ellison provide us with a conceptual and practical grounding in the beautiful essence of God's missional heart and activity. If shared with Christian leaders and passionate believers, it will be a meaningful contribution to the great cause of seeing God worshiped and followed in every place and people on earth.

These thoughtful writers and leaders also embrace the difficult conversations that still must take place in missions. Certainly, we would all benefit from more clarity on the pros and cons of church-based sending and the role of agency partnerships in a culture that some missiologists evaluate as containing excessive and culturally bound church localism. We should also study pressure of success models that Western churches and pastors experience. This may help relieve us from the trap that missions, however people like to define it, is often a password that gives us a distorted credibility. Spitters and Ellison welcome these conversations and many others. They've even created a publicly viewable platform for discussion with top mission leaders—check out *The Mission Table* at www.themissiontable.org.

When Everything is Missions is an accessible little book that, like Inigo Montoya, remind us that words should mean something—particularly the word missions. But this book does much more. It gently exposes a sensitive issue—Christians are missing a biblical paradigm to guide our motives, our understanding and our strategies. Biblical paradigms don't come through practical utilitarian plans to fix the world; they are revealed to us in the outworkings of a God who is fulfilling His mission. Our greatest need is to be formed and molded in this paradigm. We need to be disciplined. Few Christians take the time to explore in depth the idea that we have a great God, who is fulfilling a great purpose, to form a great people from among all peoples, for His ultimate glory. Maybe the Church needs to slow down its missional activism just enough to reacquaint itself with this foundational story. Once we encounter and respond to this revelation, we will be blessed and we will be a blessing. 



Currents of Change: How Did Everything become Missions?

BY **J. D. PAYNE**

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The Church has reached a point in history where *missions* means anything it does in the world.

Missions is multifaceted. There's medical missions, relief missions, short-term missions (which includes a multitude of activities), missions to the elderly, orphan care missions, church planting missions, leadership development and educational missions, evangelistic missions, disaster relief missions, and construction missions just to mention a few examples. Missionaries can be teachers, church planters, farmers, seminary professors and engineers. We now live at a time when the Church does *missions* even if the gospel is never shared.

My assigned task is to attempt to answer the question: How did the Church get to this point? Everything did not become missions overnight. Our present reality has been a long journey. There is no single source that is the cause of such diversity. Rather, just as several tributaries flow together to create a river, there are at least five currents that brought us to the present situation.

Current #1: Problem of Language

While biblical concepts have been assigned to words such as *mission*, *missions*, and *missionary*, such are extrabiblical terms. Such words are not found in Hebrew or Greek, but derive from Latin. The earliest use has been connected to the Jesuits.

André Seumois notes that Ignatius of Loyola was using variations of *missions* in 1540.¹ The language of *mission* and *missions* is used in Ignatius' *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* which was first approved by the first General Congregation in 1558 with such terminology referring to being sent into the world "for the greater glory of God and the good of souls, whether among the faithful or unbelievers."² While God's glory may have been part of the motivation behind such kingdom endeavors, a great deal of Catholic missionary activities became closely connected with European military and colonial expansion. Christianization

1 André Seumois, *Théologie Missionnaire: Délimitation de la Fonction Missionnaire de L'Eglise* (Rome: Bureau de Presse O.M.I., 1973), 9.

2 John W. Padberg, ed., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Transition of the Official Latin Texts* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 281.

and civilization were often two goals of both Church and country. The sacred and secular often had an intimate union.

Whenever the Church lacks exegetical support for its theology, then extrabiblical nomenclature can result in concepts with a variety of meanings. Church culture and context become most important as a defining factor of mission. Given this relativistic understanding, David Bosch was correct when he noted in *Transforming Mission* that “mission remains undefinable; it should never be incarcerated in the narrow confines of our own predilections. The most we can hope for is to formulate some *approximations* of what mission is all about.”³ Years later, Michael W. Stroope described *mission* as a “broad river in which there is space for many usages and meanings” and is a term “quite elastic in its meaning.”⁴ Such fluidity exists partially due to meaning and activity being socially constructed in the moment (or across an epoch).

« We now live at a time when the Church does missions even if the gospel is never shared. »

The Latin (*mitto*) origin of *mission*, *missions*, and *missionaries* is not sufficient for the development of a proper biblical understanding of the Great Commission activities of the Church. Andreas J. Köstenberger, was correct when he wrote, “Any understanding of a *biblical* theology of mission must derive its contours from the biblical material itself rather than being submerged by extrabiblical definitions.”⁵ But what if *mission* is not found in the Bible?

While such terminology is common parlance and near and dear to our hearts, it has been part of the process that has resulted in everything becoming missions. If there is no biblical word for *mission*, *missions*, or *missionary* who is to say that my definition is more accurate than yours?⁶

3 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 9.

4 Michael W. Stroope, *Transcending Mission: The Eclipse of a Modern Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2017), 4.

5 Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Place of Mission in New Testament Theology: An Attempt to Determine the Significance of Mission within the Scope of the New Testament’s Message as a Whole,” *Missiology* 27 #3 (July 1999): 357.

6 Of course, some will say there is no biblical word *Trinity* either. However, a major difference is that the Church has a definitive understanding of the Trinity. Any definition that differs from this orthodox statement is considered heterodoxy. The Church has no equivalent standard for *missions* or *missionary*.

Current #2: Theological Shifts

Theological shifts in the 18th through 20th centuries moved the Church away from historic orthodox teachings regarding inspiration, theology proper, Christology, and personal and cosmic eschatology, just to name a few areas. The Bible was subjected to critical study with an anti-supernatural bias. Ethical monotheism was viewed as the result of societal evolution. Jesus became an example to follow, while the significance of His penal-substitutionary atonement and honor/shame removal act was relegated to the dustbin. Sin, judgement and hell were seen as psychological burdens and to be discarded as quickly as possible. The academy had created some of the greatest heretics who remained cloaked in ecclesial culture and language.

During this period, pluralism—and inclusivism—was growing in influence. For some, humanity became the center of mission. The Church, Jesus and God existed for the improvement of society. Missionary activities were to improve quality of life, but should “never violate the sanctity of human personality.”⁷ Religions became equals.

The publication of William Ernest Hocking’s *Re-Thinking Missions* revealed how humanism and liberal theology influenced missionary thought and practice in certain circles:

If the conception of hell changes, if attention is drawn away from the fear of God’s punitive justice in everlasting torment of the unsaved, to happier conceptions of destiny, if there is a shift of concern from other worldly issues to the problems of sin and suffering in the present life, these changes will immediately alter that view of the perils of the soul which gave to the original motive of Protestant missions much of its poignant urgency. Generally speaking, these changes have occurred.⁸

« For some, humanity became the center of mission. »

7 R. Pierce Beaver, “North American Thought on the Fundamental Principles of Missions During the Twentieth Century,” *Church History* 21 #4 (December 1952): 352.

8 William Ernest Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen’s Inquiry After One Hundred Years* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1938), 19.

While many mission leaders spoke against liberal and neo-orthodox theologies, over time aspects of such theological systems began to trickle down from the academy and influenced local churches and mission agencies. Conversionistic missiology and the exclusivity of Christ were sometimes avoided for more palatable practices that encouraged more people to go, believing it was possible to witness through presence alone.

Current #3: Value of Instant Gratification

The western drive for quick results emerged from a value system that facilitated immediate and quantifiable accomplishments. A roof could be added to a church's building faster than a church could be planted among an unreached people. Antibiotics could be distributed much more easily than the gospel could be shared in a different language.

« A roof could be added to a church's building faster than a church could be planted among an unreached people. »

In his research on short-term missions, Edwin Zehner notes that by the early 21st century, immediate gratification was a growing value among evangelicals: "Yet overall by 2007, especially in North America, there had been a subtle shift to new rhetoric and expectations, including greater interest in practical action and more realistic notions of what short-term offerings can accomplish."⁹ If teams (short- or long-term) could do good activities in the name of Jesus and experience quick results, then why not develop and give more attention to methods and strategies to support such actions?

Current #4: Evangelism & Social Justice Debate

The evangelism and social justice debate had a long history in the 20th and 21st centuries. The tension was felt even as recent as Lasuane III in Cape Town (2010) when during a plenary session, John Piper asked, "Could Lausanne say? Could the global Church say this: 'For Christ's sake, we Christians care about all suffering, especially eternal suffering.'?"¹⁰

9 Edwin Zehner, "On the Rhetoric of Short-term Mission Appeals, with Some Practical Suggestions for Team Leaders," in Robert J. Priest, ed., *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing it Right* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 188.

10 Bible Exposition: Ephesians 3 - John Piper (Part 2) - Cape Town 2010; [on-line] accessed August 1, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1a5V1O4M4rU>.

« Our eyes and hearts are often more in tune with the immediate than the eternal. »

The world has always been filled with areas of significant physical and spiritual need. Evangelicals have always been moved with the desire to take bandages and the gospel to the world. Such is the right way of the kingdom citizen.

However, faced with such global needs, the Church in the West does not naturally gravitate toward gospel proclamation, but drifts away from it and toward care for suffering. Our eyes and hearts are often more in tune with the immediate than the eternal. The Church must work diligently to be intentional about disciple-making.

John Stott was a leader in the area of global evangelization and also championed the Church's responsibility of social justice. However, the language used in a section in his influential book, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, creates an opportunity for the Church to neglect gospel proclamation due to the ubiquitous realities of suffering and social injustices. He writes:

To see need and to possess the remedy compels love to act, and whether the action will be evangelistic or social, or indeed political, depends on what we "see" and what we "have".

This does not mean that words and works, evangelism and social action, are such inseparable partners that all of us must engage in both all the time. Situations vary, and so do Christian callings. As for situations, there will be times when a person's eternal destiny is the most urgent consideration, for we must not forget that men without Christ are perishing. But there will certainly be other times when a person's material need is so pressing that he would not be able to hear the gospel if we shared it with him... . If our enemy is hungry, our biblical mandate is not to evangelize him but to feed him (Rom. 12:20)!¹¹

« Christians are called to maximize their talents, gifts, abilities and skills for the glory of God. »

11 John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 28.

Such language communicates there are *times* when eternal matters are not ultimate. In his noble attempt to draw attention to the truth that the pain of suffering can rightly hinder one from hearing the gospel, he opens a door for missions to avoid identifying with proclamation. I cannot help but think many people have taken such words and thoughts to an unhealthy direction—one not intended by Stott. Instead of the Church expecting the “other times” as *exceptional* when urgent relief is necessary to save a life, it has come to view these times as expected, the norm and has adjusted its mission strategy and methods to support a multitude of activities at the expense of disciple-making.

Current #5: Good Intentions + Technological Advancements

Christians are called to maximize their talents, gifts, abilities and skills for the glory of God. It is natural for the Church to leverage such blessings at home. However, the world is our parish. Kingdom citizens began to recognize that any good they could do at home is something that should be done abroad. Communication developments, diminished costs and speed of international travel, and the safety of spending time in other countries resulted in large numbers of western Christians going to serve the nations.


The Church in the West recognized intercultural engagement could become the practice of the many and not something exclusively for the few. By 2005, 1.6 million U. S. adult church members were participating in international short-term mission trips.¹² While many short-term teams do participate in evangelistic and church planting endeavors, a growing number go to serve in other areas. A. Scott Moreau found that a larger percentage of short-term workers, sent by U. S. agencies from 2001–2005, chose to participate in relief/development and education/training rather than primary activities of evangelism and discipleship.¹³

The Church is able to travel faster and farther than any generation. It is able to engage in a large amount of disciple-making and service in the name of Christ. Yet, the thought remains that whatever the Church does at home is considered evangelism or ministry and whatever is done “overseas” is considered missions. The regularity and quantity of Christians going into the world to do kingdom activities helped develop the understanding that all such international work is missionary activity.

« The Church is able to travel faster and farther than any generation. »

Conclusion

Missions has come to mean a multitude of things to different people. This unclear understanding of the term (including its derivatives) and concept developed over time as several currents of thought and practice converged. Kingdom citizens should glorify God by serving the nations with differing skills and advocating for social justice issues. The Church needs more people to go! Wise stewards work with urgency and desire to know what is working to bring about kingdom results; life is a vapor (James 4:14), and the day approaches.

Clarity and distinction are needed. He gave “some” not *all* to be... (Eph. 4:11–12). An identifiable difference clearly existed in Acts 6:1–7. There is a variety of service and activities (1 Cor. 12:5, 6). Without neglecting its Holy Spirit designed diversity, the Church must articulate the uniqueness of its apostolic work in both biblical terms and understanding as it labors to make disciples of all peoples. 

¹² Robert J. Priest, “Introduction,” in Robert J. Priest, ed., *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing it Right* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), ii.

¹³ A. Scott Moreau, “Short Term Missions in the Context of Missions, Inc.,” in Robert J. Priest, ed., *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing it Right* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 16.



YEAR OF THE FRONTIER PEOPLE GROUPS

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The Great Injustice



Frontier People Groups (FPGs) are the subset of Unreached People Groups (UPGs) where:

There is not yet a sustained Jesus movement, and



< 1 in 1,000

less than 0.1%

identify with Jesus in any way.

Of everyone alive today:



1 in 4

live in a Frontier People Group

More people live in FPGs than in North America, South America, Europe and Australia—combined!

Of all those who don't identify with Jesus in any way:



1 in 3

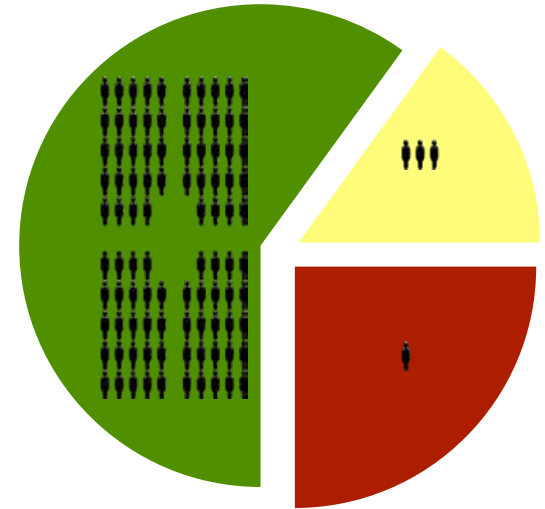
live in a Frontier People Group

Pray for an end to this Great Injustice!

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Where are the laborers going?

- **96%** go to the **60%** of world population where more than 5% identify with Jesus.
- **3%** go to the **15%** of world population where 0.1% to 5% identify with Jesus.
- **1%** goes to the **25%** of world population where less than 0.1% identify with Jesus.



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Using the M W Words

and an Update on a Completely Different Topic!

BY KEVIN HIGGINS

Kevin Higgins is General Director of Frontier Ventures (FV) and the President of William Carey International University (WCIU). He has a PhD from Fuller in Intercultural Studies with a focus on Translation Studies. He is married to Susan and is the grateful father of Rachel, Sarah, and Emma.

I am grateful for the topic of this *Mission Frontiers* edition. The language we use and the way we use it, is of course, absolutely crucial.

Frontier Ventures has, for more than forty years, sought to help keep as clear a focus as possible on the “edges” between where the gospel is in fact taking root and growing and where it isn’t, and pressing into answers for the question, “why”?

« The language we use and the way we use it, is of course, absolutely crucial. »

The M Words: *Mission* and *Missionary*

For us that “why” question is the essence of *frontier mission* (as a focus of mission action and prayer and heart), *frontier missiology* (as a whole multi-disciplinary field of study), and *frontier missionaries* (those believers, from every reached people group, who specifically follow the apostolic and Abrahamic call to participate in God’s blessing of those nations where the good news has yet to take root and grow).

The central premise of our topic, “When Everything is Missions and All Believers Are Missionaries,” is that if we blur the sharp edges of the word “mission” and “missionary” we will begin to lose the needed clarity of focus on the unreached and frontier peoples.

I agree with the effort to try to keep the word focused.

But let me for a moment take another tack. That is that there might be a problem with keeping the words at all.

Bear with me a moment, and I promise to return to the main point!

In Other Words

More and more, people are raising questions about using M Words (mission and missionary) from a different angle than our edition of *MF* is asking. Essentially, people are asking: “Can’t we find better words? Words less tied to a colonial era? Less tied to a paradigm of western dominance and style and finance and strategy?”

That is a different set of questions than, “How can we make sure we use the M Words to really just mean mission (instead of everything)?”

In the gathering of the International Society of Frontier Mission (Dallas, September 13-15) we addressed this issue from several angles, asking how to critique our vocabulary and potentially find alternatives.

Several proposed alternative English words. For example, Mike Stroope, author of the book *Transcending Mission* presented, and he has helped many readers begin to think more deeply about the issues of language and the paradigms of mission which can be carried by language even when we don't know it.

I presented a paper sharing about vocabulary that believers in emerging movements among Muslims are using for things like “mission” and “evangelism” and “church” and more. That was an intentional attempt to hear some different voices, from different contexts and different languages, as they have sought to find words—words other than the M Words.

« If we blur the sharp edges of the word “mission” and “missionary” we will begin to lose the needed clarity of focus on the unreached and frontier peoples. »

These are efforts which are tackling the problems of the M Words in a different way, from a different angle than this edition of *MF*. These are important, but I want to return to the issues others in *MF* are raising this time.

Keeping the M Words Focused

I am a realist. Even if we do find new words that do a better job of carrying more humble and incarnational missional paradigms, those new words will eventually be co-opted for many purposes.

In particular, we know by experience, that whatever new word might be selected to focus on the work of seeing the gospel take root where it is not currently flourishing, will eventually be used to refer to all sorts of other (good and vital in their own right) ministry efforts.

So, let's solve that problem for the M Words as long as we still have them (which I'm sure we will for some time to come)!

« We should fight for preserving the clarity and purpose of the words *mission* and *missionary*. »

If we begin to “fuzz” the edges of the meaning of mission so that it begins to mean everything we do, then it will mean anything we do, which ends up robbing “mission” of really any meaning at all. So we go from mission meaning everything to it meaning, essentially, nothing.

I believe, even as I am concerned for the effort to find new words, that we should fight for preserving the clarity and purpose of the words *mission* and *missionary* as used distinctly for all that is involved in seeing the gospel find soil and take root and thrive and grow as a movement within peoples and cultures least touched, least reached, by the gospel.

That is the main focus of this edition of *MF*. And as always, it is crucial that we are pairing this specific theme with the updates in every edition that share about movements that are spreading within unreached peoples.

And an Update On an Entirely Different Point!

In a prior column I shared about our efforts to recover the data from the “Last Thousand Campaign” and to begin to reach out to those who decades ago helped us launch the movement that has seen such a sea change in getting unreached peoples on the map of global mission.

Many, many people helped us, and some requested that once we had raised the funds we sought during the LTC, we would pass the amount of their gift to another ministry as they designated.

We have the records and know of the just over 200 people who made that request. We are systematically reaching out to them to communicate, thank, and make sure we know their intentions correctly.

As I write, we are making arrangements for the first such gift to be forwarded to a ministry of Frontiers!

Thank you, also, to those of you who have written to me to express your support of what we are doing, and for asking us to keep the gift you invested all those years ago.



24:14 Goal



Movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025 (74 months)

Kingdom Movements: Are you “Out of Your Mind” or “Overjoyed”?

« What if God answered our prayers in such amazing ways they seemed unbelievable? »

What if God answered our prayers in such amazing ways they seemed unbelievable? Through the ages God’s people have grappled with the mystery of (apparently) unanswered prayer. But in Acts 12 we find Spirit-filled believers grappling with the mystery of *answered* prayer! As Luke reports it: “Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.” (v. 5) Then, upon his release,

Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me...” When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!”

“You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.”

But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison (verses 11a, 12-17a).

Their prayer had been gloriously answered! Peter himself knew it “without a doubt.” But these earnest intercessors remained determined to keep on praying – while the answer to their prayer was banging on the door to get their attention! Dear Rhoda, the servant girl, went to handle the interruption, maybe so others could focus on praying. Perhaps she was considered most expendable from the prayer meeting, so she was first to hear Peter’s voice and recognize the miracle God had wrought. She left Peter outside – not from lack of faith but from great joy and eagerness to share the wonderful news.

Her wonderful news, however, was skeptically received. We don’t know precisely what the believers had been praying. We only know they were “earnestly praying to God for him.” We can reasonably hypothesize that their prayers included requests for the sparing of Peter’s life. Less certain, but quite likely, they included prayers for his release. Yet the news of his arrival inspired at least two alternative explanations:

1. Rhoda, the servant girl, had gone “out of [her] mind.”

BY **DAVE COLES** AND **STAN PARKS**

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It was easier to malign the messenger than believe the message. When that explanation failed to suffice (because “she kept insisting”), the group consensus shifted to...

2. an explanation neither you nor I would probably have considered: “It must be his angel.” Verse 15 informs us a plurality of the gathering (“they said...”) reached this interesting conclusion. This is probably in reference to a Jewish belief at that time that a person’s guardian angel took on their appearance. It probably signified that they thought Peter was dead and his guardian angel had come to deliver the news.

We have the advantage of knowing that the one at the door was Peter himself, not “his angel.” So we quickly skip past the angel hypothesis to savor this prayer meeting’s irony: the earnest prayers continued while the answer banged on the door, trying to get their attention.

How easily we smile condescendingly at our brothers and sisters described in the pages of Scripture. Yet how easy it can be to display the same doubts when our prayers are miraculously answered.

« The earnest prayers continued while the answer banged on the door, trying to get their attention. »

Mobilizing earnest prayer for unreached peoples

Forty years ago, the hard core of the unreached world remained relatively unengaged and unresponsive. There were precious few examples of large numbers of Muslims coming to faith in Christ. More than 1400 years of world history since Muhammad’s time showed quite the opposite: millions of Christians becoming Muslims; almost never the reverse. Northern India was called the graveyard of modern missions and very few Hindus were being reached with the gospel. 200 years of mission efforts in Buddhist heartlands had produced little fruit. Some unreached pockets responded but both the total number and global percentage of the unreached continued to grow. Traditional approaches have failed to make disciples in a way that exceeds population growth.

« The late twentieth century saw a significant increase in God’s people praying for the unreached peoples of the world. »

However, the late twentieth century saw a significant increase in God’s people praying for the unreached peoples of the world. All the items mentioned below fueled and informed prayer and action on behalf of the unreached. (Forgive us for not being able to list everyone in the paragraphs below.)

- Beginning their processes in Africa in the 1960s, David Barrett and the team of *The World Christian Encyclopedia* opened the eyes of many to the existence of Unreached People Groups. Their data sharing with Patrick Johnstone and the *Operation World* team mobilized specific prayer for these unreached nations and people groups.
- Ralph Winter gave a clarion call in his 1974 Lausanne address on “Hidden Peoples,” and he and many others at the US Center for World Mission became ongoing advocates for reaching them. In 1978, Winter published a pie chart entitled “Penetrating the Last Frontiers.” Among other salient data, the chart showed the minuscule number of Christian workers among Muslims and Hindus in contrast to the number of Christian workers in the US.
- In 1981, Perspectives on the World Christian Movement began promoting and popularizing a clear focus on contextual strategies for bringing the gospel to unreached groups. In the decades since then, the course and its derivatives have been completed by over 100,000 believers, inspiring them to become mobilizers, goers, senders, and intercessors for world evangelization.
- In 1982, the *Global Prayer Digest* began as a ministry of the US Center for World Mission, focusing prayer on different unreached groups in each edition.
- 1988 brought publication of David Bryant’s book *Concerts of Prayer: For Spiritual Awakening and World Evangelization*. The book’s pattern began guiding and encouraging major prayer initiatives for gospel advance among the unreached.

- Beginning in 1991, the “Praying Through the Window” initiative has since focused the prayers of over 40 million intercessors from 120 countries and facilitated prayer journeys into all 67 countries of the 10/40 Window.
- In 1993, the first edition of “30 Days Muslim World Prayer Guide” began mobilizing prayer for Muslims during the month of Ramadan each year. This guide is now used by millions of Christians worldwide and has inspired other similar guides for prayer for the unreached.
- Prayer spurred by geo-political events also played a part. The Iranian Revolution (1979), the Gulf War (1990-91) the Algerian Civil Wars (1990s), the Asian Financial Crisis (1997), 9/11 (2001) and other events inspired many prayers from Christians around the world as well as prayers of disillusioned and desperate lost people seeking another path.
- Another significant element was the growing emphasis on adopting UPGs for prayer and outreach. This was championed by the Joshua Project, the AD2000 and Beyond movement, Ethne, Adopt-a-People Clearinghouse, Call2All, Finishing the Task and others.
- Numerous regional mission networks have significant prayer and engagement strategies including COMIBAM (Ibero-America), MANI (Africa), SEALink (SEAsia), IMA (India), SEANet (Buddhist World), Central Asia Consultation and Vision 5:9 (Muslim World).
- UPG Prayer profiles, websites, and guidebooks were produced by on-the-ground teams in many countries and written and translated in many languages.
- The International Prayer Council, the Global Prayer Resource network, the ETHNE Fellowship of Prayer Strategists, and too many other prayer networks to name have mobilized prayer for the UPGs of their nation or region. A new wave of UPG-focused prayer has spread through God’s people all around the world.

« A new wave of UPG-focused prayer has spread through God’s people all around the world. »

Apparent answers to prayer

We can never claim direct cause and effect between our prayers and God’s actions on a global scale. Yet we know God works through our prayers and undoubtedly something unique began happening in the 1990s. Reports surfaced in written form when David Garrison described this phenomenon in January 2000, in a booklet entitled “Church Planting Movements.” This 60-page booklet compiled field reports by Church Planting Movement practitioners in various parts of the world. Garrison followed this in 2004 with the book *Church Planting Movements, How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*, describing in greater depth the common dynamics found among numerous Church Planting Movements.

In 2011, Steve Smith and Ying Kai described one movement that reached 1.7 million new believers in ten years in *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution: The Story Behind the World’s Fastest Growing Church Planting Movement and How it Can Happen in Your Community!* In 2012 Jerry Trousdale published reports of movements across Africa in *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims Are Falling in Love with Jesus*. Then in 2014 Garrison added fresh insights in *A Wind in the House of Islam: How God is Drawing Muslims around the World to Faith in Jesus Christ*. In the years since then, the number of reported Church Planting Movements has increased from vague and unpublished estimates of 100+ to a more confidently asserted 1006. These movements are now reported in every major religious bloc and every region of the world. Missions researcher Justin Long describes this number as “the floor, not the ceiling.” (See below.)

In recent years, numerous additional books, articles and trainings have described these Church Planting Movements (sometimes labeled “Disciple Making Movements” or “Kingdom Movements”) and have begun to quantify the numbers of disciples and churches in these movements. At the same time, other articles and some church and mission leaders have questioned the veracity and/or helpfulness of these movement reports.

Some concerns

Admittedly, a few movement reports have misrepresented or exaggerated the reality on the ground. A few others have turned out to be bogus reports fueled by a desire for money from outside wealthy donors. And some movements have collapsed or been absorbed by pre-existing churches. These cases have been acknowledged and appropriately

removed from lists of active movements. The 24:14 database, which at this writing lists 1006 movements, also lists 19 movements that have ended. Note two aspects of this statistic: (1) care is being taken to only count credibly reported and currently active movements; (2) the number of movements that have ended constitutes less than two percent of movements currently ongoing. The 24:14 leadership recognizes the significant difficulty of this research and shares this information with openness and a willingness to correct any wrong information.

Some critics, either on a local or global scale, boggle at the number and size of reported movements. 1006 CPMs with over 4.3 million churches and over 70 million disciples feels to them like wishful thinking. Neither they nor people they know personally have ever seen similar fruit, which makes these amazing reports hard to believe. Sometimes Westerners who live in or visit areas where movements have been reported say, “If this were happening I would know about it.” We could describe this attitude as closer to “Seeing is believing,” than “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29b, NIV).

« These movements are now reported in every major religious bloc and every region of the world. »

Yet most of us don't even know all that goes on inside the homes of neighbors on our own block, much less in a city of millions of people. Small churches meeting in homes, using local music and local terminology and patterns of interaction, would not be obvious. As they live in ways that minimize unnecessary persecution by those *within* their context, how much less noticeable would they be to any outsiders?

Some in the global missions world have heard or experienced cases of an exaggerated report and in response have chosen general caution (or skepticism) as the better course of wisdom. They prefer to believe only assessments done by teams of outsiders who have paid personal visits to a broad cross-section of any given movement.

This attitude overlooks a number of factors. First, the vast majority of these movements are occurring among

unreached groups where those becoming followers of Christ often face great persecution. Foreigners visiting widely to ask about people coming to faith in Christ would hinder or possibly even destroy a movement. Security for Christ-followers remaining culturally among their own people makes thorough outside assessment untenable in many cases.

Second, those wishing for thorough and wide-ranging assessments have neither the human resources nor the funds needed to go visit 4.3 million churches. Some have suggested that reports of institutional churches are easier to confirm because “you can go and see the physical churches.” However this conflates “church” with “building.” Many of those church buildings have few in attendance. The churches in many movements multiply rapidly precisely because they *don't* have a building.

Third, this attitude sometimes seems built on the assumption that established denominations' reports of numbers of churches and church members are sufficiently trustworthy (despite many examples of overstated or misleading membership numbers for individuals, churches and denominations), yet reports from new movements of the same information are inherently suspect. We would do well to ask ourselves if any hint of paternalism might be implicit in our suspicion of reports coming from brothers and sisters in these new movements.

Fourth, the claim (implicit or explicit) that very fruitful reports are fabricated (or exaggerated) in hopes of receiving Western money does not stand up to scrutiny. Most of these movements are rapidly reproducing partially *due to* the fact that they receive little or no outside money which causes dependency. Any ministry dependent on outside funds (whether for pastors' or evangelists' salaries, buildings, or other resources) could not sustain rapid reproduction and multigenerational growth. No source has enough money to supply the exponential growth God is bringing through these movements.

Fifth, we also have the testimony of a great cloud of witnesses from a vast number of *unconnected* cultural and religious contexts around the globe. While each movement is unique in certain ways, the striking similarities of hundreds of different movements testifies to something far beyond what indigenous believers could have invented as money-making tales. The similar

dynamics and growth, often reflecting the vitality and rapidity described in the book of Acts, offer reasonable corroboration, from one continent to another. As mentioned above, a few misreports have happened and been acknowledged. But our best research concludes those are a very small minority.

How do we prove movements?

A key question is, “To whom does the reality of Church Planting Movements need to be proven?” Who can claim they are entitled to have these movements proven to their satisfaction? Whose “imprimatur” do we need before we acknowledge these movements as valid works of God?

A related question is “How *can* these movements be proven?” For instance, outside assessments of the Bhojpuri movement in North India occurred in 1996, 2000, 2008, and 2016 including at different times researchers from the IMB, OM, City Team, ASSI, and Beyond. Some of these researchers admit they went thinking they would prove the movement was not happening.

All of these well-respected research teams concluded there are millions of new disciples as a result of God working through this movement. Yet some people serving in that region remain adamant that this movement is not happening. It appears impossible to verify movements to everyone’s satisfaction.

In reality, we will not know for certain until we get to heaven. So grace befits us all in discussing these matters. We invite those dubious of movements to suggest what type of movement research would be both realistic and credible. And we invite advocates of movements to be gracious in considering valid critiques, to see how our movement efforts could be improved.

At the 2010 Lausanne meeting in Capetown, one of the Bhojpuri movement leaders, Victor John, gave a report of what God has done in that movement. A former leader of the IMB stood up and essentially said, “I want to tell you that I used to reject that the Bhojpuri movement had happened and I concluded that Victor and other leaders were not being truthful. I want to say in front of this whole group that I was wrong and I ask Victor for forgiveness.”

Whose count can we trust?

Despite the disagreements, many of God’s children have a healthy and rightful interest in knowing about and rejoicing in the mighty works of God. One group having an arguably good reason for wanting to verify the presence or absence of movements is the 24:14 Coalition. Data on global movement engagement plays a key role in this coalition’s priority of finishing the task: “bringing the gospel of the kingdom fully to every unreached people and place.” By knowing where movements *are*, we can identify where *they are not*, and thus mobilize to the gaps yet to be filled.

« By knowing where movements *are*, we can identify where *they are not*, and thus mobilize to the gaps yet to be filled. »

Justin Long, Director of Research with Beyond and Research Team Leader for the 24:14 Coalition, clarifies the criteria used to accept a movement report as credible:

1. We only accept data reports from established and trusted movement practitioners, many of whom have been working for 10 to 30 years. There are approximately 30 movement families (networks of multiple movements) with significant interrelationships of trust, training and accountability inside the family and sometimes between families. Most fellowship reports are cross-referenced between at least five generations of churches and leaders within the movement.
2. The leaders from this network must be vouched for by a trusted movement practitioner or coach who is not a part of the network before they are counted in the global and regional totals.
3. For larger movements, we as the global 24:14 movement generally round to the nearest order of magnitude, and often the movements themselves will intentionally undercount or reduce by certain percentages if they feel caution is warranted. Some outside assessments conclude that the reports are significantly *undercounting* what is happening. Thus, we feel confident what we report is a “floor” not a “ceiling.”

4. Most movements report numbers on a semi-annual basis to the 24:14 research team via secure email.
5. Occasionally, as warranted, movements will invite practitioners or researchers in to do an external audit. The main goal is to analyze the health and dynamics of the movement to help them improve, but it can also help verify the numbers.

If you have information that could increase the accuracy of these global assessments, please send it to data@2414now.net.


In our day, the Lord is providing abundant and ever-increasing evidence that our prayers for gospel breakthroughs in major religious blocs are being answered. As the 24:14 Coalition reflects, this is not a time for triumphalism, but a time for pressing in with all earnestness toward completion of the Great Commission. It is amazing that people in these movements represent 1% of the world's population, but that is still just 1%. In light of the abundant evidence of Church Planting Movements reaching large numbers of people, could we move past a response of disbelief?

Such a response was evident when data about the many hundreds of known CPMs was being shared with a group of UPG-focused mission strategists at a recent meeting. Kent Parks (long-time UPG worker in the Muslim world and now CEO of Beyond) added to the presentation by sharing some of the key factors for such movements. After answering numerous skeptical responses, he said: "Many of us in this room have been championing and praying for 40 years or more for 'people movements' among UPGs. Now God is answering these prayers but you don't believe it is true or even possible?!" He later reflected, "In this moment, I was startlingly reminded of how many of God's people have joined in decades of UPG-focused prayer – and the astonishing ways God is launching movements around the world. The contrast between the great joy of movement leaders with whom I serve and the somewhat disbelieving questions in this meeting was overwhelming."

How shall we respond?

Lord, we pray in concert from Ephesians 3 and ask that you *do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to your power that is within us, and to you be all glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!*

In Paul's message to the Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, he applied Habakkuk 1:5 to the wonderful news of forgiveness and justification through Jesus. He challenged them not to miss out on the astonishing work of God in their day:

Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you." (Acts 13:40-41, NIV). How many of us are following the footsteps of those who heard Rhoda's news: earnestly praying yet refusing to believe the report that our answer is knocking at the door? While we need to be wise and careful stewards of information, may we also be among those who respond with delight to the mighty works of God in our day. May we welcome the answers to our prayers for great movements among the unreached. And may we do everything we can to invite such works of God to increase, and bring salvation to all the peoples of the earth! 

Endnotes

1. See Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* (Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament), Baker Academic, 2008, p. 171.
2. This chart has been reproduced as the first page of an article by Rebecca Lewis, entitled "Clarifying the Remaining Frontier Mission Task" in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 35:4, Winter 2018, p. 154. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/4f661fde24ac1097e013deea/t/5bcfe6b18165f5c-c5f820e58/1540351671087/IJFM_35_4-Lewis.pdf
3. The Perspectives reader and study guide were released at Urbana '81. Since 1981 the Perspectives course has been offered throughout the year at extension sites around the world. Over 80,000 people have taken this course in English, with thousands more taking it in other languages and through simplified "Perspectives Family" courses. For more details, see http://perspectives.in/?page_id=63.
4. See <https://www.win1040.org/about-win>
5. As of this (November/December 2019) issue of *Mission Frontiers*.
6. In this article, as in 24:14 Coalition usage, we use the term "Kingdom Movements" as equivalent to "Church Planting Movements." See, for example, in the article "24:14 Goal" in the September-October 2018 issue of *Mission Frontiers*, pp. 8-40: "A Church Planting Movement (CPM) is defined as the multiplication of disciples making disciples and leaders developing leaders, resulting in indigenous churches planting churches which begin to spread rapidly through a people group or population segment. These new disciples and churches begin to transform their communities as the new Body of Christ lives out kingdom values. When consistent (multiple-stream) 4th generation reproduction of churches occurs, church planting has crossed a threshold to becoming a sustainable movement."
7. 24:14 is a global coalition of movement leaders focused on seeing movements among all unreached peoples and every place. For more information, see <https://www.2414now.net>.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Referencing a term popularized by Donald McGavran.

Zealous for the Things that Matter

“I was trained by David Watson,” my friend said over lunch. “My mentor in Disciple Making Movements was so and so,” I replied. A bit later I added, “I also learned under Ying and Grace Kai.” George Patterson was another person whose name came to my mind. Was I name dropping? Or sharing my journey? I confess. Sometimes I don’t even know my own heart.

In the DMM and CPM world, there have been many important voices. These people paved the way. They pioneered and championed the cause of multiplying disciples among the unreached. We’ve all learned so much from them.

I’m so grateful for those I’ve had the privilege to learn from, either in person, or through their books. They have taken the time to write, train, and mentor others in the principles of starting multiplying movements of disciples.

It is easy to slip into a mentality that says, “I follow Watson” or any of the other early apostles in DMM/CPM thinking. Some might say, “I follow Ying Kai” or “I use Garrison’s principles.” Paul warned us against this in the book of 1 Corinthians.

For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 1 Corinthians 3:4-5 NIV.

Divided Over Secondary Things

Our world today is extremely divided. Whether politics or discussions about what type of computer you prefer, human nature wants to take sides. “I am a Mac person,” we say. Or, “I am a Democrat.” We’re more comfortable

associating with those who think and believe the same things we do. Sometimes we disparage those who follow other paths. While we may not often verbalize our contempt, we tend to think – I’m right and they are not.

« While we may not often verbalize our contempt, we tend to think—I’m right and they are not. »

This narrowness of perspective cannot be allowed a place in our lives as movement practitioners. Instead, with open hearts and minds, we must keep the cause of reaching lost at the forefront – not being right in a strategy related argument! His cause, not our favorite leader or methodology, must be what burns within our hearts. It must be the urgency of reaching the lost that stirs us to fervent action.

Other Divisive Topics

Contextualization levels also divide us. Some are comfortable with a C4 or C5 approach. Others prefer C3.¹ “Do you think it’s okay to redeem this practice? Or use this name for Jesus or God? I don’t!” we declare. Others are adamant that the only way to reach their target people will be through an insider movement.

There are likewise heated arguments about the appropriate role of women in DMMs. “Should women be allowed to baptize?” we ask. Too much time is wasted in debating these things. When we give our energy to these debates, we don’t have the same focus to give to the more important task of reaching lost people.

¹ <https://missionexus.org/the-c1-c6-spectrum-after-fifteen-years/>

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This is not helpful or healthy. It does not please God or further our cause. Our zeal is easily misplaced. Proud and disunified, we become a poor reflection of the bride of Christ to the world we are trying to reach.

As mission leaders and DMM/CPM practitioners, we need to stay focused on our why. This is where zeal and passion should be directed. Methods and strategies must be tried, evaluated, and held somewhat loosely. The cause of reaching the lost, however, we hold firmly, refusing to let go.

« As mission leaders and DMM/CPM practitioners, we need to stay focused on our why. »

What is our why?

In his best-selling book, *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, author Simon Sinek addresses a similar issue. “Great leaders and organizations are crystal clear about their why,” he writes. Throughout the book he recounts stories of innovators, of visionary leaders like Steve Jobs, Walt Disney, the Wright brothers, etc. They inspired multitudes by being clear about the *why*, not the *what* behind their companies.

He tells how alongside each of these men were managerial partners. Those working with the leaders knew *how* to get the *why* done. The *how* are our values, principles and beliefs. After *how*, comes *what*. The *what* are our methods and practices.

We build trust, he writes, by showing integrity in the consistent application of our *how* to our *why*. Specific methodologies, practices, and products, change. These are constantly evaluated in light of the overarching vision. Customers are not loyal to the *what*. They are loyal to and inspired by the *why*.

How does this apply to Disciple Making Movements (DMMs) and Church Planting Movements (CPMs)? Our great cause...our why...is not the starting of DMMs or CPMs. We must recognize this. Our great cause is not to use a particular set of questions when we run a discovery group! Nor is it what name we decide to use for Jesus when we tell His story. Those things are the *what*. We must be willing to hold our strategies loosely.

Jesus Knew His Why

In Luke 19:10, the mission of Jesus is described. It says, “the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” Christ’s passion was to do the will of the Father, to restore humanity to God. If this cost Jesus everything, He would give it. His *why* was clear. His love for God and His glory compelled Him to do whatever it took to accomplish His mission.

Like our Lord, we are called to seek and save the lost. It sounds simplistic, but this alone is where our zeal should burn. Our passion must be to see God’s glory fill the earth. Our world is broken, millions are lost and dying apart from Him. They march toward an eternal hell, and they live in a present one apart from a knowledge of God’s great love. We, who know Him, live with access to a God who loves, knows, and has redeemed us. We continually experience His ongoing healing of our broken lives.

The great injustice of millions who still wait to hear of this amazing salvation, who suffer under oppressive bondage to addictions, deceived by religious systems that offer no lasting hope...this drives us to our knees. It pushes us out the door to love, pray for, and share this message with our neighbors. It motivates us to suffer, sacrifice, face visa battles, and persecution. Our passion for Jesus, our deep longing to do His will on the earth, this is what we must be zealous about. His love for the lost and broken is our compelling why.

« Christ’s passion was to do the will of the Father, to restore humanity to God. If this cost Jesus everything, He would give it. »

When Our Why is Clear

When this cause is clearly before us, we walk in unity with others, even if their *what* is different. Our colleagues may prefer a bit different missiological approach. We can champion them in what they do. Even if it is radically different from how we prefer to do things. They share our why. We celebrate their success and cry with them over disappointments. Instead of an “I told you so,” attitude, we give glory to God for whatever He does through them.

When our why is clear, we inspire a new generation to join us. Young people like new things. They don't want to do missions (or anything else) the same way their parents did. New methods will emerge...and they must. Innovation in disciple-making will lead to greater multiplication in the future than we are seeing today. Indigenous and younger cross-cultural workers, free to experiment with new approaches, will discover better ways to multiply disciples rapidly in their own contexts. Will we champion those? Or give undeserved loyalty to our pet methods?

The new generation is notably more motivated by social injustice than by lostness. This is cause for concern. When the why begins to drift, we must take that seriously. While encouraging experimentation with the what, we must call people back to and champion the cause (the why) of reaching the lost, not just helping them in material ways. Lostness is out of fashion in highly tolerant Western societies. We need to find fresh ways to bring forth a passionate call to reach the unreached with compelling clarity. Will our frontier missions vision inspire this generation to lay down their lives?

« The new generation is notably more motivated by social injustice than by lostness. »

The Problem With Fuzzy Vision

When our *vision* is fuzzy, our *mission* is in danger. If we focus on methods instead of doing whatever is necessary to disciple millions into God's healing, restoring, life-giving kingdom, we will lose ground. Though we may get our *what* right, with an unclear *why*, motivation to innovate or pay the price to try new approaches will wane.

Change is costly. To launch movements, we must see many significant shifts of paradigm and practice. When those we train are not sure why change is needed, they will only weakly apply what we teach. Discovery studies could be just a cool fad. They won't lead to multiplication unless the *why* is crystal clear.

I've attended numerous discovery studies that were no more than an inward focused participatory Bible study. The final question, "What will we do to apply or obey this?"

is answered, but there is no accountability the following week. "Who will we share this with?" may be asked as a matter of form, but no one in the group actually shares the story with anyone during the coming week. These groups do not multiply. They will not become movements with multiple generations, reproducing rapidly. They have lost the why behind discovery groups...reaching broken people and bringing them to the Savior.

Without the why burning in our hearts, we may learn to share our testimonies or the three circles approach or any other methodology. We then get too busy or shy to put it into our daily practice and lifestyle. It was just another cool evangelism approach.

When our why is diluted we divide into camps, instead of uniting around our common cause. We can not afford to do this.

« To launch movements, we must see many significant shifts of paradigm and practice. »

Principles and Values—the How

Within each team or organization, it is important to determine not only the why but also the how. These are our values, principles and beliefs. For those pursuing DMMs or CPMs we have many shared values. For example, a belief in the priesthood of all believers is at the core of anyone wanting to multiply disciples among the unreached. Every disciple can and must also become a disciple-maker. This is not the same as the *what*, but it is the *how*.

Know your *why* and stay true to your *how*, but constantly evaluate and adjust your *what*. Always be looking for better ways to accomplish the why. Discover new, more effective ways true to your values and beliefs.

« Know your why and stay true to your how, but constantly evaluate and adjust your what. »

No Favorite Programs


It is time to let go of our loyalty to pet methodologies of doing church planting. If God's shown you something and it's bearing fruit, by all means, keep using it! But if it is not...if your context has changed, or it's not working, think outside the box. Create an environment where field workers can try new things. Keep experimenting until you find a method that works to multiply disciple-makers among your people group.

Be willing to let go in order to go forward. Keep learning, evaluating and listening to your colleagues. Stay humble and observant. Ask questions and learn when others do things differently from you.

Passionate for What Truly Matters

Debating of strategy has its place. There is value in presenting the pros and cons of the various approaches. We need to test these methods against Scripture and check their theological soundness. But when we spend more time and energy debating mission strategy than we spend reaching lost people, we have lost our way. When our zeal for a particular approach, or our passion to see everyone in missions do things the way we think is most effective, consumes our thoughts, we must take a step back and think again. If we are more zealous about business as missions (for example) being a vital part of missions strategy than we are about sharing Christ with the Muslim sitting on the plane next to us, we need to prayerfully reconsider. Are we passionate about the things that truly matter? The things that God is passionate about?

« Are we passionate about the things that truly matter? The things that God is passionate about? »

Let's be zealous for what's important. 



The Rise & Fall of Movements

BY **STEVE ADDISON**

Steve Addison is a catalyst for movements that multiply disciples and churches, everywhere. He is an author, speaker, podcaster and mentor to movement pioneers. This article is an edited extract from his new book, *The Rise and Fall of Movements: A Roadmap for Leaders*. Visit Steve at movements.net.



The Council of Nicaea in AD 325 was the first worldwide gathering of Christian leaders. They represented the churches of North Africa, Europe, and the East as far as Persia.

The Emperor Constantine, robed in purple and adorned with jewels, entered and sat down on a chair of gold. Two hundred and fifty Christian leaders rose to their feet. As he looked out on the bishops he had assembled, Constantine saw empty eye sockets and mutilated limbs, grotesque reminders of the past. These men had been tortured by the empire he now represented. But after three centuries, Rome's fury was spent. Persecution had failed to crush the movement that began with Jesus.

This missionary movement—founded by a crucified criminal in an insignificant province—was everywhere. In an empire of sixty million people, one in ten called Jesus of Nazareth “Lord.” Christianity was the most tight-knit and widespread organization in the most powerful empire on earth.

Constantine's conversion was a mixed blessing for the Christian movement. According to Rodney Stark, imperial favor transformed the church into an elite organization, lavishly funded by the state bestowing wealth and power on the clergy.

A missionary movement became a state religion at peace with the world.

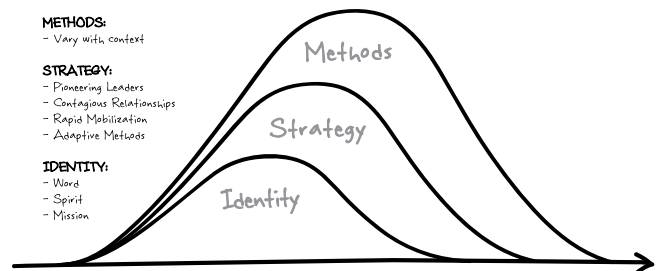
« By the end of the fourth century, the vast majority of people within the empire identified as Christian. »

The church lost interest in evangelizing the barbarians beyond the borders of civilization. Within the empire, coercion replaced persuasion as the method of evangelism. Now the church grew dramatically because of its favored position in society. By the end of the fourth century, the vast majority of people within the empire identified as Christian.

Meanwhile in the remote desert caves of Egypt the monastic movement was on the rise.

Here is the pattern of church history. Movements are born (Birth), and those that survive infancy become growing adolescents (Growth). They reach adulthood and survey their achievements. They become complacent and settle down (Maturity). Some find the will to return to their youthful zeal (Rebirth). Most play it safe (Decline). Declining institutions can linger for generations, slowly unravelling (Decay). Meanwhile, always on the fringe, new movements are emerging.

The Rise and Fall of Movements



1. Identity—Why?

When I was first drawn to the study of movements, I watched what they did, I discovered characteristics, and I observed Strategies and Methods. Years later I realized I was missing the most important thing: beneath the surface of observable activity is the *why*—Identity.

Two connected stories stand between Jesus' life in Nazareth and his Mission as coming King — his baptism and wilderness testing. They reveal how Jesus lived and ministered out of his Identity as the much-loved Son—obedient to his Father's Word, dependent on the Holy Spirit, pursuing his Mission. When Jesus walked out of the wilderness and returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, he knew who he was, and he knew what he had come to do. Movements rise and fall to the degree to which they move toward and away from the life and ministry of Jesus.

2. Strategy—How?

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit to launch a missionary movement. He expressed his Identity in strategic action. Strategy is *how* a movement operates. Strategy applies principles in pursuit of the mission. Jesus' strategy had four recurring aspects:

- Pioneering Leaders
- Contagious Relationships
- Rapid Mobilization
- Adaptive Methods.

Multiplying movements display these same patterns.

Strategy must be grounded in Identity—our *how* must serve our *why*. It is possible to miss the importance of Identity (Word, Spirit, Mission) and view Strategy as the determining factor in movements. We apply the principles to get the results. We build the Tower of Babel to reach the heavens. But God has a way of tearing down our constructions and confusing our efforts to bring us back to the question of Identity.

« Movements rise and fall to the degree to which they move toward and away from the life and ministry of Jesus. »

3. Methods—What?

Strategy is a movement's overarching *how*. Methods are *what* we do. Methods apply Strategy and they vary according to the context. They are the specific tools, systems, and processes we use to implement Strategy.


Our Methods put flesh on Identity and Strategy, but in the real world they are not always effective. We must continually evaluate our Methods, just as we need to make sure that our Methods align with the other elements of Identity and Strategy.

« Every generation of disciples must return to be with Christ in his baptism and desert ordeal. »

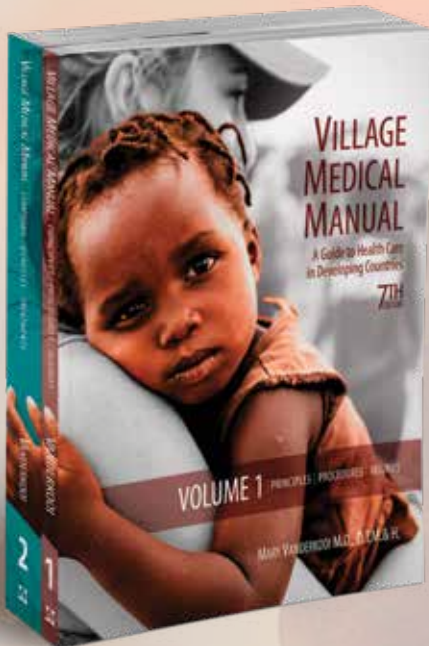
Conclusion

Every generation of disciples must return to be with Christ in his baptism and desert ordeal. Recall the disciples as Jesus found them after he had risen: they were done; the movement was over; its terrified leaders locked themselves in a room and shut out the world (John 20:19). The Jesus movement had risen and fallen within just a few years.

What did Jesus do? He brought them back to their Identity. He opened up the Scriptures to them and taught them from the Word of God (Luke 24:27, 45). He prepared them for the coming of the Holy Spirit in power (Acts 1:4–5). He explained their Mission, instructing them to go to the nations with the gospel of the forgiveness of sins, baptizing and teaching disciples to obey his commands, and forming them into churches. They were not to stop until he returns in glory (Matthew 28:16–20; Luke 24:45–49; Acts 1:1–8). The movement was reborn by a return to its Identity. Now it was ready for action.

For as long as you live and serve the Lord, you must never tire of returning to your Identity—the Word, the Spirit, the Mission. Jesus began the movement and He still leads the way. 

RELEVANT RELEASES



Village Medical Manual 7th Edition

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Mary Vanderkooi MD, DTM&H (Author)

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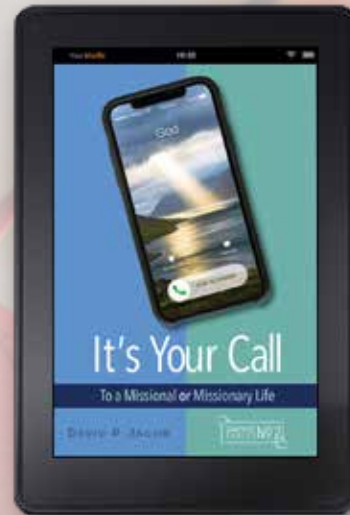
thousand illustrations and diagrams, help Western educated expatriates living in isolated locations to medically treat people and intelligently refer those that can be referred accordingly.

It contains clearly defined procedural techniques and diagnostic protocols for when sophisticated instrumentation and lab tests are not available. It also offers solutions and advice for overcoming barriers to best practices in global health.

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David P. Jacob (Author)

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things that can help you discover the adventure God has for you in his mission: prayer and Bible study, missionary mentorship, and short-term mission trips.

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Sacred Siblings

Valuing One Another for the Great Commission

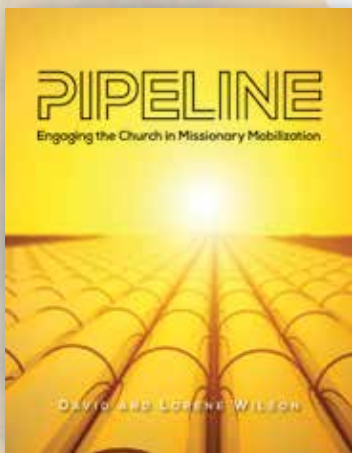
Sue Eenigenburg and Suzy Grumelot (Authors)

In *Sacred Siblings: Valuing One Another for the Great Commission* we learn about how teams come together with varying expectations of what team life should be. The authors offer ideas and positive practices of valuing one another based on a survey from

289 missionaries, representing 12 mission agencies. These practices not only build unity and understanding of each other, but enable greater effectiveness in ministry.

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Pipeline

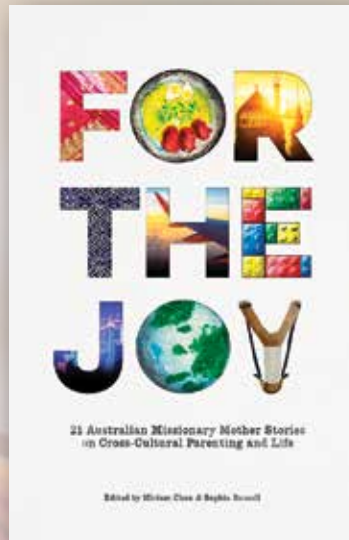
Engaging the Church in Missionary Mobilization

David & Lorene Wilson (Authors)

What would it look like if your church really took the last words of Jesus seriously? The Great Commission was not just a suggestion by our Lord, but an imperative mandate given to his followers. Missionary sending agencies are deploying

workers to the field, but many of them come from disengaged churches that are not producing well-equipped disciples. We need a fully integrated global supply chain—a pipeline—that has disciples as the precious commodity, as well as an effective infrastructure to distribute and replicate them around the globe. Pipeline seeks to re-engage the church in mobilizing the next generation of workers for the harvest. This is a collaboration of forty different authors from churches, agencies, and cross-cultural servants. As people in distant places wait for a messenger of hope and salvation, will your church venture into the pipeline?

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For the Joy

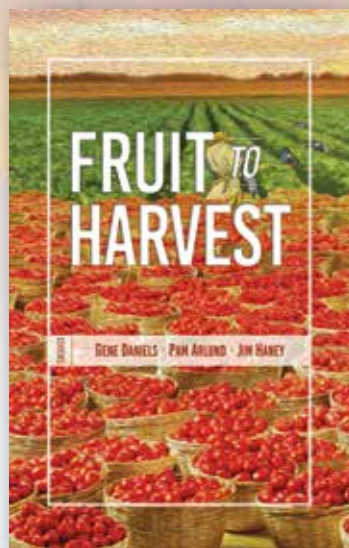
Missionary Mothers' Stories on Cross-Cultural Parenting and Life

Miriam Chan & Sophia Russell (Editors)

From the desert to the mountains, from remote far-flung places to some of the most populated cities in the world, *For the Joy* brings together 21 unique perspectives on what it's really like being a mother on the mission field.

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Gene Daniels, Pam Arlund, Jim Haney, (Editors)

Fruit to Harvest is a selection of keen insights about ministry to Muslims, drawn from a culturally diverse team of contributors from more than twenty countries. In this follow-up to the book *From Seed to Fruit*, you will join a global mission conversation located at one of the leading edges of gospel advance—the world of Islam.

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Seeing from Another Perspective

BY **GREG PARSONS**
DIRECTOR OF
GLOBAL CONNECTIONS
FRONTIER VENTURES

Last Saturday morning, I was listening to a three-year-old chapel message from Dallas Seminary as I fixed one of the sprinklers in my yard. Célestin Musekura was there from Rwanda doing his PhD and spoke during their global missions week. He leads the African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries, growing out of the Rwandan genocide in the 90s. As he shared stories about how the genocide unfolded, it was clear that it did not start in 1994. That is when the rest of the world heard about the killing of what was later estimated to range from 500,000 – 1,000,000. It started at least four years *before*, as extremists in the country, began to emphasize ethnic divides between Hutus (the ruling party) and Tutsis. These are not the usual folks we think of when we use the term “extremists.” But they did what extremists do when they hate another culture: they dehumanize them by stoking fears – in this case, on the radio. Day-by-day it became easier for one to kill those they considered non-human. This was even more painful when you realize that most of these are cultures that speak the same language, intermarry, live next to each other, work side-by-side and *go to church together*.

What? Did I mistype that? You see these extremists were “Christians.”

Almost 89% of the country are Christians, with 26.2% being

Evangelicals. Among the Hutus, who led the killing, 90% were Christians (28% Evangelicals). Among the Tutsis—who were involved in retribution killing months later—it was 95% (20% Evangelicals).¹ **Célestin said many in Rwanda were merely “baptized pagans.”**

A couple days before I heard from Célestin, I was listening to the President of Asbury Seminary, Dr. Timothy Tennent, who served in India and has ministered extensively around the globe. His observation from a global perspective was simple and clear: “Christendom has the ability to produce vast numbers of nominal Christians. That’s what Christendom does best. It’s like a huge, nominal Christian machine.”

I began to wonder about the latest mass-shootings in the U.S. Are we doing much better than Rwanda? In the U.S. we are 77.5% Christian – 26.82% Evangelical.

WE HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN THAT MANY PEOPLE WHO GO TO CHURCH MAY NOT BE “TRUE BELIEVERS.” You cannot always determine it by “their fruit.” After hearing from Dr. Musekura I read in the *L.A. Times* about a church in California that praised the shooting and killing of 50 in the gay bar in Orlando. Their website says: “No sodomite (homosexual) will be allowed to attend or join xyz (independent) Baptist Church.”

Did you see that? Not even attend! I wonder if they will let in an adulterer?

IF THOSE ARE THE KINDS OF CHRISTIANS WE HAVE, NO WONDER THE WORLD IS CONFUSED BY OUR MESSAGE. It makes you ask the questions: What are believers from the U.S. or elsewhere taking around the globe? What are we producing?

Before this, I was preparing for a presentation about refugee work and how we can reach out to those among us. I looked again at 1 Kings 8, where Solomon prays to dedicate the temple. He prays a lot of profound, wise prayers for the people and in worship—read it again! In verse 41 he turns to the foreigner “who does not belong to your people.” At this point in the biblical story, Israel’s kingdom is at its height. The temple was just completed. Do you remember what Solomon prays?

He deeply desires that these non-Israelites “will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm...” His prayer may have been lost in the sad history that followed and the ethnocentrism we see growing in the gospels. But note, he is praying for exactly what happened to you and me as the gospel flowed from Israel to us.



WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE PRAYED AND ACTED ACCORDINGLY... ALL OVER THE WORLD? What would happen to any extremists if even they were treated lovingly? I pray that all true disciples of Jesus will follow His most basic summary of the OT Law: *Love God and love your neighbor*. That is the command...no matter what background that neighbor is from.



¹ All stats are from www.joshuaproject.net



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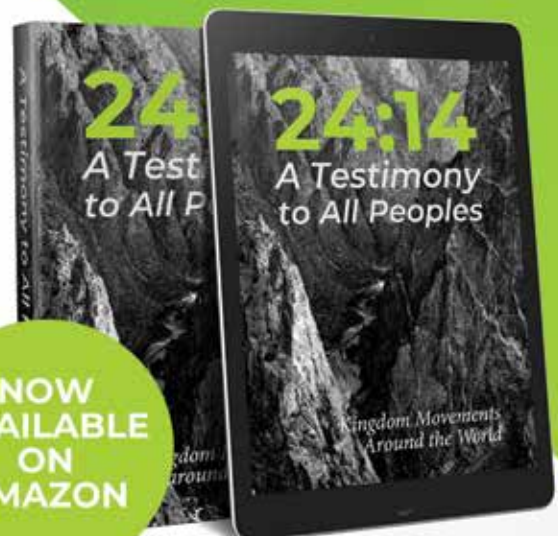
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