



## Being a Missional Church

### Biblical Missiology

Acts 29 Bootcamp San Diego; August 2006  
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"For the minister is constantly tempted to reductionist strategy for making the Christian gospel intelligible, rather than helping strangers to discover through the gospel why their lives are unintelligible."

**Stanley Hauerwas Preaching to Strangers, Willimon/Hauerwas, pg. 7**

"Tradition is the illusion of permanence"  
**Woody Allen "Deconstructing Harry"**

"The church is influenced by the world around her, and called to influence the world in which she exists."

"The more one focuses on one's own living, the less one is concerned about giving life to others."

"The real tragedy is not that churches are dying, but that churches have lost their reason to live."

"If those who prepare for leadership are looking for a safe place, who will lead the church into dangerous places?"

"The Church became a fortress from the world, rather than the hope for the world"  
**Erwin McManus**

"We need to go out in the power of the Holy Spirit and proclaim God's truth through word and deed, and leave the results to our missionary God"

**Mike Gunn**

### What is Church?

I believe that this is an important question to answer before we can move on to the mission of the church.

Classically the word for church is "Ecclesia" or assembly. The bible nowhere commands anyone to go to church, but we do see that Hebrews 10:25 does tell us to stop "*Assembling together,*" and much of the New Testament assumes the gathering of believers to interact, learn, worship and serve in most of its pages. As Elders we are admonished by Luke (Paul speaking) to "*Be shepherds of the church of god...*" (**Acts 20:28**), but what does that mean? It is all too easy for us, steeped in "Constantinian"<sup>1</sup> Christianity to view the church as an institution or a place to go to get...rather than seeing the church as the people of God. Subsequently most of our strategizing centers on program instead of people. Most of our theology interprets the pages of scripture individualistically instead of corporately. So

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<sup>1</sup> By "Constantinian" I mean the state accepted, institutional church. I would say that the reformation also did their part in making the church a place to get the word of God; to get the sacraments, etc. instead of a body utilizing all of their gifts as described in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.



when we read Ephesians 6:10-20, we try to figure out how to “*Put on the armor*” individually, instead of seeing the intent of the passage as spoken to a plurality of people and not individuals. The church is not a place, but a gathering of individuals into a community to be equipped for the sake of the mission (**Acts 14:27**). Thus most of our assimilation structures and programs are designed around an internal ecclesiology, and a self centered discipleship process. Everything is individual and internally centered, and the church has forgotten its mission to the world.

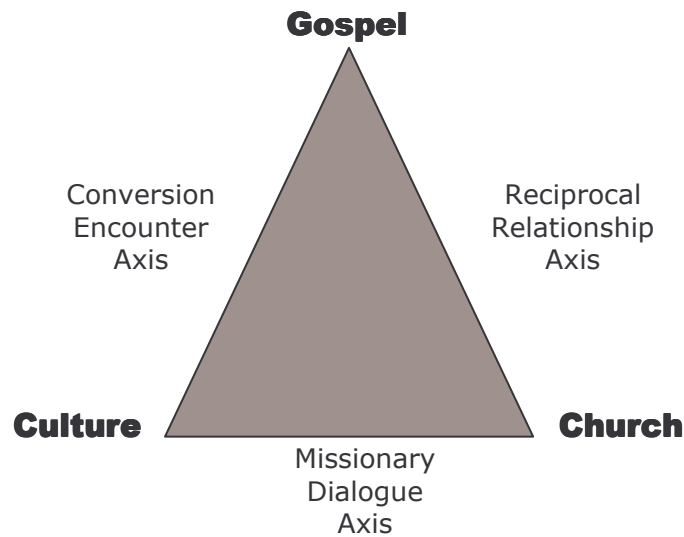
### **What is the Missional Church?**

There is a distinct philosophical difference from where many evangelical churches begin their philosophy of ministry and the philosophy of the missional church. Popular theory has capitulated to a “Seeker” mentality that is fiercely pragmatic and consumer driven, and I believe ultimately ill equipped to proclaim the gospel in a postmodern western context. The seeker church begins with a marketing approach to determine the “Target” audience’s needs and desires, and construct a church service and programs to meet those needs. This technique, though strategic and effective, panders to an individualistic and consumer base Christianity that moves into the business of the selling of religious “Goods and services.” This philosophy not only begins with man at the center, but creates programs and services that become the central focus of the mission, which neuters the idea that every Christian is a missionary to their culture. The missional church philosophy begins with the idea that it is God who is on mission for His own purposes and it is the church’s mission to become enlisted in that purpose in the world. To this David Bosch writes, “*The term mission presupposes a sender, a person or persons sent by the sender, those to who one is sent, and an assignment.*”<sup>2</sup> Verses such as **John 20:21** become the interpretive tool for the missional church. This is referred to as the “*Missio Dei*” (Mission of God). Jesus Christ embodied that mission and sent us. The Holy Spirit empowers that mission, the church is the instrument of that mission, and the culture is the “Context” of that mission. The missional church is called to train missionaries to GO into our culture and be the gospel to their spheres of influence. Therefore the missional church doesn’t shape their programs around Consumeristic Christian needs, but around ministries designed to proclaim the gospel to the non-believer. This is not done as a program but a lifestyle. Adapting a theology of mission from missiologist Leslie Newbigin, George Hunsberger, develops 3 relationships that must occur between the church, gospel and culture:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 1

<sup>3</sup> George R.; Craig Van Gelder; Ed. Hunsberger, *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, First ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996). 8-10



According to the Gospel and Our Culture Network ( [gocn.org](http://gocn.org)), there are at least 12 hall-marks of the "Missional Church:"

1. The missional church proclaims the gospel
2. The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus
3. The bible is normative in the Missional churches life
4. The missional church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
5. The missional church seeks to discern God's specific missional vocation for the entire community and all of its members
6. A missional church community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another
7. A missional church is a community that practices reconciliation
8. People within the missional church community hold themselves accountable to one another in love
9. The missional church practices hospitality
10. Missional church worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God's presence and God's promised future
11. The missional church community has a vital public witness
12. There is a recognition that the missional church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God

### **What is the Mission of the Church?**

Ask any evangelical and they will tell you evangelism, and without trying to define another word separately, they usually mean sharing the gospel to non-believers, and cite really biblical verses like Matthew 28:19-20, and Acts 1:8. While they might really be on to some-



thing I think it is a half mission that once again puts the focus on individuals and their choice, rather than on God's total mission in the world, and the focus properly on Him. Acts 1:8 calls us to be His witness. The idea behind that word is not as much what we say as much as what we do. The idea of the gospel does not begin in the New Testament with Christ; it begins in Genesis with creation. God created and made male and female in His image, and gave mankind the duty of being "Fruitful" (Implying something about the quality of multiplying), and keeping and serving the earth (**Genesis 1:26-27; 2:15**). This has been referred to as the "Cultural Mandate" of God. Of course man sinned messed up the plan, and was in need of God (According to His plan "before the foundation of the world") to restore this mandate through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now Romans 3:23-25 gives us some insight into how this all played out theologically, but for now I want to center on verse 25 which gives us the reason for all of this, so that Christ could "**Demonstrate His** (God's) **righteousness.**" The gospel is thus about God, and the restoration of righteousness to human community. The Gospel is God's inbreaking into human culture in order to transform it and redeem it for His glory!

What's more interesting is the word righteousness; δικαιοσύνη (righteousness, justice). We, being ingrained with an internal piousness, we see righteousness as a personal holiness, and almost never see righteousness in the biblical manner which describes a more social, justice ethic. In Christ, we are restored to be "Like" Christ, and defenders of justice and righteousness. There is no doubt it includes personal holiness, but there are far more verses throughout scripture that command the believer's treatment of the oppressed than it does in sexual politics. Subsequently I think the power of the gospel witness comes from God's presence through His people (The church empowered by the Holy Spirit), which includes both the *Proclamation* (Evangelism) of the gospel, and the *Presence* (Social Justice) of the gospel (see **Acts 4:32-34**).

Subsequently if the church is a living organism on a mission to do glorify God, and do God's will in this world, then we have to begin to develop our assimilation programs around a discipleship that brings people into the mission of God as defined by your church, which aligns with the word of God, as the Holy Spirit develops it amongst the leadership.

### **How Do We Get There?**

1. Think theologically, biblically and missionally
2. Be the "Hermeneutic of the gospel" (**Acts 4:32-34**).
3. Regard yourselves as "Ambassadors" (**2 Corinthians 5:17-20**).
4. Guard against syncretism and sectarianism (**John 17:13-18**)



5. Put all traditions through the crucible of the gospel and not visa-versa (**Acts 10**)
6. Allow your "Ooze" to be indigenous (**1 Corinthians 9:19-23**)
7. Develop your Ephesians 4 leadership (**Ephesians 4:11-13**)

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