

A F R I C A
T H E O L O G Y
S E R I E S

Introduction to Missiology



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Introduction to Missiology
Africa Theology Series

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AXIS ministries exists to serve the local church in West Africa so that the Glory of God might be declared and displayed among unreached peoples and places through healthy churches.

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SERIES PREFACE

The Africa Theology Series is a multi-volume series of books on Christian Theology. Unlike a typical systematic theology, each book in this series is a stand alone volume on a specific topic or doctrine. Also, unlike a traditional systematic theology, this series expands the scope to include biblical, systematic and applied theology. The goal is to give the African church a biblically faithful and contextually appropriate tool to help them, as Jude 3 states, “Contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Briefly introducing such a comprehensive work like the Africa Theology Series poses quite a challenge which is why an entire separate volume is devoted to introducing the series. In that first and key volume, the reader is provided with a foundation for all the subsequent volumes. This introductory volume explains the uniqueness of this series and explore baseline understandings of key components in the series. The introductory volume covers the contextual emphasis, the hermeneutical grounding and the theological framework for this series.

Therefore, the purpose of this brief introduction is neither an attempt to replicate nor replace the Introductory volume. To truly benefit from this series, one must start with that foundational volume.

Instead, this brief introduction is provided to explain four underlying goals for this series. Understanding these goals will help the reader gain the most insight when reading each separate volume. These goals are:

- Bridging knowledge with action
- Interacting with major faith systems
- Moving from defense to offense
- Creating a readable and helpful resource

Know, Be, Do: Bridging Knowledge with Action

Each volume in the Africa Theology Series seeks to move the reader from theological foundations (Know) to cultural implications (Be) then finally to practical applications (Do). In the African context, the concrete is much more impactful

than the theoretical. In fact, oftentimes grievous errors in the pulpit or in pastoral practice come from those who can articulate the great doctrines of the faith both eloquently and sufficiently. These men often hold degrees from theological institutions where they were trained in sound doctrine and biblical orthodoxy. In other words, the errors that seem to plague the African church aren't necessarily from a lack of knowledge but rather from a lack of application of that knowledge into practice.

A short-sighted overcorrection would be to throw out knowledge-based teaching and instead simply focus on obedience-based action. However, this would be just as dangerous and ultimately counter-productive to healthy church. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy are not against one another but rather two sides of the same coin. To have one without the other is not only incomplete but insufficient to build a biblically faithful and missions minded church.

The Africa Theology Series addresses these challenges by helping the pastor or church leader see the interconnectedness of knowledge and action. There is an African proverb that says, "Two hands wash one another." We need both knowledge and obedience. Therefore, each volume will, in its own unique way, lay a theological foundation for the specific doctrine being addressed as the authors seek to answer the question, "What should I know?"

The reader will then be challenged to see how this knowledge (what I know) necessarily informs identity (who I am). Every culture has elements that the Bible can affirm and appreciate and also elements the Bible condemns and corrects. Seeing your culture and your worldview through the Biblical lens is a painful but necessary step. In fact, this step of transformed hearts is the bridge needed on the path from transformed minds to transformed actions. The authors will challenge the reader to think deeply and introspectively about the cultural implications of doctrine as they seek to answer the question, "Who should I be?"

After knowledge and being comes doing. This is where information gets to work. Sound doctrine is not merely for the academic minded nor should it be reserved only for the seminary classroom. Instead, right doctrine must be applied and spill over into right practice. The authors of each volume will assist the reader in understanding the practical application of the doctrine in their lives as they answer the final question, "What should I do?"

The following statement provides a short summation of this goal:

KNOWLEDGE *informs* **BEING** *which drives* **DOING**

My Neighbor's Faith: Interacting with Major Faith Systems

Another unique feature of the Africa Theology Series involves interaction with other major worldviews/religions. Africa is a very religious place where atheists are few and far between. Whereas books from the West might lean more into apologetical arguments aimed at skeptics, this series looks to interact with the other major faith systems on the continent.

While there are obviously outliers, the majority of Africans fall into one of several religious categories. These categories are much more diverse than a simplistic designation and are oftentimes complex combinations of two distinct categories into one. One such example would be the syncretization of two distinct categories (Islam and ATR) into one faith system (Folk Islam).

Practically this means that two Muslim men from the same tribe and living in the same city might have drastically different understandings of their faith. This also implies that some who would claim to be Evangelical Christians actually practice a much more animistic faith. These nuances and caveats are real and rampant but beyond the scope of this series, which will examine only the orthodox positions of each faith system.

However, the problem of neatly labeling categories becomes even more challenging due to the ambiguous nature of African Traditional Religion (ATR). There is no such thing as THE African Traditional Religion with an agreed upon set of beliefs. Instead, ATR is a large designation for those who would cling to an animistic faith ranging from voodoo to ancestral worship and everything in between.

It would be impossible to try and interact with every potential version of each faith system. However, it is incredibly important to understand the basic tenets (even if not held by everyone in the same way) of the major faith systems on the continent. In other words, it is helpful to know what an “average” Muslim believes about the doctrine of God and how that’s different than the Evangelical Christian. Therefore, each volume in this series will provide side-by-side comparisons to highlight major differences between Evangelical Christians and these other religious systems.

Changing Tactics: Moving from Defense to Offense

There is an anecdotal account of how those working to detect counterfeit currency spend their time only examining real currency. The story is used to illustrate the importance of focusing time and energy studying the truth instead of spending time dealing with falsehoods. While this is a point worth noting and

we would agree that knowing the truth is of utmost importance, we also believe it is a good and biblical practice to expose falsehoods.

The Africa Theology Series adopts an offensive standpoint instead of choosing to play defense alone. Far from being done in a mean-spirited fashion, each volume takes pastoral care to warn the flock of the dangers of false doctrines currently wreaking havoc on the African Church.

The prosperity gospel and many practices in Neo-pentecostalism pose an even greater threat to healthy church and missions advance than Islam or ATR. Throughout the New Testament there is a constant warning of dangers that arise from wolves pretending to be sheep. These dangers are especially devastating because they come from within the church. Paul tells the church in Corinth of a tactic of Satan wherein he disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14).

Any good shepherd knows he is responsible to care for his flock. This means two things practically: one, he must provide for them by leading them to grazing grounds and sources of water; secondly, and just as important, he must protect them by keeping them from dangers which seek to harm the flock.

In the same way pastors must provide and protect their flocks. They must lead their people to the green pastures of God's Word and to drink from the Living Water of knowing Christ. However, pastors must be able to defend their flock and protect them from enemies who would seek to destroy and harm.

Each volume will seek to expose the various errors and dangerous ways of prosperity teachers and Neo-pentecostal practitioners. The authors will show how these false teachers twist and misuse the Scriptures and, therefore, confuse various key doctrines. The hope, then, is that these volumes will help pastors and church leaders protect both themselves and their flocks by nurturing a spirit of discernment that can detect and expose unbiblical teaching and practices.

Short and Simple: Creating a Readable and Helpful Resource

The American author Mark Twain once said, "I'm sorry this letter is so long. I did not have time to write a short one." In this quote Twain reveals a common misconception that the more words that are spoken (or typed) then the better the content. While it is true that sometimes exhaustive explanations are necessary, the reality is most subjects can be sufficiently and succinctly explained without endless words.

The volumes in the Africa Theology Series are intentionally short and written in a way to be accessible to the largest audience of readers. The shortness

comes from a ruthless approach to writing that seeks to explain the most significant truths with the fewest amount of words in the simplest way possible.

The goal is to create a resource that is readable and helpful. The authors seek to use story, dialog, proverbs, concrete examples, and other illustrious words to help complicated doctrines become understandable and applicable. Each volume also includes quick access reference guides for comparative charts on the various beliefs of each faith system.

The Journey Ahead

There is an African proverb that says, “A baby on its mother's back doesn't know the journey is long.” Everyone, to some level, has benefited from the hard work of others. Teachers, pastors, theologians, authors, professors, parents, and myriads of others have suffered greatly to carry us along. We are where we are today because of their sacrifice.

The volumes in the Africa Theology Series have come about because many men who have many responsibilities deemed it worthy to set aside time to create the resource you now hold in your hand. These resources are the result of countless hours of work so that the African church might grow in her faithfulness to the task. Our hope is that their sacrifice “carries” you along in your faith journey.

Mark Phillips and Kevin Rodgers
Series editors

INTRODUCTION TO MISSIOLOGY

Long plane flights, strange languages, even stranger foods, and *somebody else* are often the images and ideas that come to mind when we think about missions. We frequently think that only super-spiritual and heavenly called people are called to become missionaries and be involved in missions. We also sometimes believe that missionaries are people from the past who cut through dense jungles, navigated raging rivers, and meticulously created the maps that we study. Here in Africa we often think that missions is someone from a wealthy country like the United States, France, or the United Kingdom coming here to help Africa solve its problems and give out resources.

In 2002, American historian Philip Jenkins noted that Africa, Asia, and Latin America were increasingly becoming the “center of gravity in the Christian world.”¹ Approximately twenty years later, this prediction is becoming a reality. In fact, Jenkins has recently written that Africa is the future of Christianity.² What we need now is for Christian scholarship to begin to reflect this new reality. The books in this series will prayerfully fill that gap in scholarship. As for this book, we hope to also address another gap – a missions gap. Unfortunately, very few Africans are serving as missionaries and only a few African churches are actively involved in the work of missions.

What is the reason for this gap in missions involvement from Africa?

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

I see a few reasons why so few Africans are missionaries and so few African churches are involved in missions. First, many of us Africans think that missions work is only done white people (in Chichewa we call them *azungu*). Becoming a missionary and doing missions work is often associated with white skin. Even today it sounds strange to tell people that you are a missionary with black skin.

¹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.

² Philip Jenkins, “The Future of World Christianity is African,” 7 August 2020; accessed 16 October 2020; available from <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/future-christianity-african/>

Second, there is a lack of bodies responsible for missionary work. For example, in the West there are many organizations, bodies, and societies solely responsible in supporting missionaries.

Third, there are inadequate numbers of people who have a missionary mindset. For example, William Carey went to India as a missionary trusting God through band of believing brothers. Andrew Fuller did a lot to support Carey. He held the rope for Carey as he was in mission field. Here is what William Carey said:

“Well, I will go down, if you will hold the rope.” But before he went down . . . he, as it seemed to me, took an oath from each of us, at the mouth of the pit, to this effect—that “while we lived, we should never let go of the rope.”³

Fuller and others had a personal comment. They would support Carey spiritually and financially. Without this support, Carey could not go.

Next, some denominational backgrounds seem to hinder involvement in missions. For example, for some of my Malawian Presbyterian friends, it is very unlikely for them to go on door-to-door and open-air evangelism. They will also not go on mission work. They cling to the idea of Hyper-Calvinism -- the view that opposed offering the gospel to all men and said it could not be the duty of the unregenerate men to believe on Jesus, and therefore one should not tell them they should do what they have no duty to do. Ironically, this was the same view that William Carey stood up against.

Next, the first missionaries in Africa from the West never taught us Africans that it is also our responsibility to get involved in mission work. They were doing everything by themselves.

Finally, many people in Africa believe that they have their own gods and that Christianity is a religion brought by the whites.

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

There are very few African missionaries and very few churches involved in missions because churches, pastors, and evangelists in Africa do not teach about missions and the need of missionaries for the field. I have been a Baptist member for a long time. I served as a youth leader and became youth leader for the Southern region of Mozambique. I also finally served as non-ordained pastor for three years. I was a student of Bible School, and I attended several confer-

³ John Piper, *Andrew Fuller* (Wheaton, IL, USA: Crossway), 21.

ences and heard many Africans preachers, **but never heard the emphasis on missions** or heard **people encouraged to do missions.**

It is difficult to teach something that we do not understand. Therefore, Africans need to understand what missions is and why do we do missions. Very few Africans understand what missions is or where to start to be involved as missionary. Some other people think that missionary is white person from abroad, such as, America and Europe. These thoughts gave little knowledge and much misunderstanding about missions. I learned about Missions at the Baptist Theological Seminary of Malawi. My church never spoke about missions, maybe because most African church leaders lack theological training and education. Most African churches are not involved, nor do they contribute financially or spiritually for missions causes because they think Western countries will send missionaries to our churches.

Throughout this little book, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray that your image and ideas about missions will be radically changed. We desire that you will come to understand that missions is something that all of God's people are called to be a part of. We pray that God will begin to stir in the hearts of His people across this beautiful continent to take the Gospel from its shores to the ends of the earth for the Glory of Christ and for the joy of the Church!

WHAT IS “MISSIOLOGY?”

Like many other theological and scientific English words, Missiology is the combination of other two other. Just as Theology is the study of God (*theos*) and Christology is the study of Christ and Biology is the study of life (*bios*), Missiology is the study of missions. Of course, in order for this definition of Missiology to be helpful, we will need to have a clear definition of “missions,” and we will return to that question soon.

In any area of study, we need structure. Structures in academics are like the outer frame of a house. They give us something to hang big concepts upon. When studying Missiology, one way to organize that study is under the following headings:

- Biblical Basis for Missions
- Theology of Missions
- History of Missions
- Practice of Missions

These four areas will act as the frame of our house as we study Missiology. Before we can study each of these topics, however, we will need to make sure that we are “together” by defining some key terms.

Definition of Key Terms

GOSPEL

Gospel is an old English word that translates the Greek word *euangelion* which translated directly means “good news” or “good message” or, for those of you who enjoy older English, “glad tidings.” There are many different ways that we can talk about the gospel, but the following acronym is a helpful way to remember the key concepts of the gospel.⁴

The gospel is a message about:

God’s Character and Holiness

In order to answer the question, what is the gospel, I want to start with another question – “What is the essential nature or character of God?”

As recorded by Luke, Mary declares that God’s “name is holy.”⁵ As Isaiah approached the throne of God during his call, the seraphim sang, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Armies; his glory fills the whole earth.”⁶ John’s vision of the throne of God echoes Isaiah’s image where he saw God being worshipped “day and night” by creatures who kept saying “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who to come.”⁷ As we can see from these passages throughout Scripture, God’s essential characteristic is His holiness.

So, the first element of the gospel is that the gospel is a message about God’s holy character or God’s holy nature. What does it mean to say that God is holy?

In his important work, *The Holiness of God*, R.C. Sproul writes that the essential meaning of holiness is otherness: “When the Bible calls God holy, it means primarily that God is transcendentally *separate*.”⁸ God’s separateness is

⁴ I (Phil) first heard this acronym presented in 2015 by Dr. David Platt when he was the President of the International Mission Board of The Southern Baptist Convention. We are aware that this acronym only works in English, so we encourage readers to develop an acronym in the language in which they minister.

⁵ Luke 1:49 (CSB)

⁶ Isaiah 6:3 (CSB)

⁷ Revelation 4:8 (CSB)

⁸ R.C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 1998), 46, emphasis ours.

what theologians call a Creator-creation distinction. God is not just a better version of the best human that one can imagine. God is in a category of his own. He is completely distinct from ALL of creation.

Not only is God completely other, God is completely *perfect* in his otherness. An early Christian thinker named Anselm wrote that God's nature is "the good without which there is no good."⁹ There is no trace of sin within the nature of God. Everything that it means to be good is found in God and no element of bad or evil or imperfection is found in God. He is HOLY! It is important to remember – the gospel begins with God!

Now, you do not have to look very long to see that the world is far from perfect. People get sick. The novel coronavirus pandemic in 2020 was a clear indication that the perfect world that God created is, in fact, far from perfect. Not only do individuals get sick, but communities of people fight with one other. Racism and bigotry pervade the hearts of individuals. Systemic racism and structural sins infect institutions and organizations. Countries go to war. The world has a lot of problems. No one can look at the world and think otherwise. So, who is to blame for the world's problems? The answer to that question leads us to the second key element of the gospel which is the Offense of Sin.

The **O**ffense of Sin

God's holy character and nature is offended by sin to the point that He *must* punish sin. Mankind is not merely sick or ignorant. Mankind is dead in his sins. In fact, all of humankind are God's enemies.¹⁰

So, now we see the problem. God is holy. Humans are sinful. This begs the question of how do we go about addressing this problem? Do we need more education? Do we need better rules? In his book, *Tell the Truth*, Will Metzger says that many people have decided to follow one of two paths. Metzger calls the first path, "God-Centered Living," and the second path "Self-Centered Living." In "Self-Centered Living," people live according to their own desires – not caring about God or other people. In "God-Centered Living," people try to live by God's rules and to obey God in all things. They may even talk about loving

⁹ Anselm, *Monologion 6 (Major Works)*, 18) quoted in Matthew Barrett, *None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Books, 2019), 68.

¹⁰ Romans 5:10.

God and loving other people, but their life is all about rules and being good enough.¹¹

While “Self-Centered Living” is obviously wrong, “God-Centered Living” can sound like Biblical Christianity. After all, God does call us to obedience. In fact, God commands many different things from us. However, when our focus and hope are on how obedient we have become, we lose sight of the completed work of Christ who is “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”¹² When this happens, we forget that the Bible testifies that no matter how “good” we act we are still not good enough.

Quoting the Old Testament, Paul tells us in Romans 3 us that “no one is righteous . . . all have turned away . . . no one who does what is good.”¹³ In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes that “it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous will live by faith.”¹⁴

So, we now return to the next major question. That question is, “How do we solve the problem of God being completely separate from man because of God’s holiness and man’s sinfulness?”

The third key element of the gospel is

The Sufficiency of Christ

We just asked, “How do we solve the problem of sin?” The biblical answer is that we do not solve it. God does. God the Father sends God the Son to solve the problem of sin. As Dane Ortlund wrote, “Christ was sent not to mend wounded people or wake sleepy people or advise confused people or inspire bored people or spur on lazy people or educate ignorant people, but to raise dead people.”¹⁵ Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came and lived a perfect life we could not live. He died a sacrificial death we deserved to die. He rose to life again winning a victory we could not win.

Jesus lived a perfectly sinless life – he never sinned either in his activity or in his inactivity. He was perfect in all things. The author of the book of He-

¹¹ Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People, A Training Manual on the Message & Methods of God-Centered Witnessing*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), 58-67.

¹² Hebrews 12:2 (CSB); the CSB footnote also allows for the translation, “founder and completer” or the “source and completer.”

¹³ Romans 3:10ff (CSB)

¹⁴ Galatians 3:11 (CSB)

¹⁵ Dane C. Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*, Kindle ebook version (Wheaton, IL, USA: Crossway, 2020), location 2233.

brews writes that Christ was “tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.”¹⁶ Sometimes this is called Christ’s active obedience. Christ was perfect in every action that he took – and in every action that he refused to take. In all of this activity, he always avoided sin.

Because of this perfection, Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for our sins. The theological phrase for this concept is penal substitutionary atonement.¹⁷ Christ paid the penalty for our sins by becoming the object of God’s wrath against the sin and sinfulness of humankind. This truth is so *simple* that even a child can understand. Jesus died to take our punishment. This truth is also so *profound* that all of the best theological minds throughout the history of the Church will never be able to completely explain and plumb the depths of the truth that “the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”¹⁸

Jesus’ death alone, however, could not save us. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead demonstrated his *victory* over sin and death. Without his resurrection our faith is futile and cannot save us from our sins: “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.”¹⁹

So, Christ’s sinless life, perfect sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection is the *solution* to our problem of being separated from God, but how do we make that solution effective in our lives?

That question leads us to the fourth key element of the gospel which is

A **P**ersonal Response to Christ

Jesus makes many different demands of the whole world.²⁰ One of the most amazing commands is Jesus command for us to repent and believe in the gospel.²¹ What does it mean to believe? What is faith? What is repentance?

¹⁶ Hebrews 4:15 (CSB)

¹⁷ For a Biblical support for the concept of the death of Christ as a perfect sacrifice for our sins (i.e. penal substitution), see Romans 3:25; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 7:27; 9:14; 10:10, 12; 1 John 2:1-2. For contemporary defenses of the doctrine of penal substitution, see *In My Place He Stood Condemned* by J.I. Packer and Mark Dever and *Pierced for Our Transgressors: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* edited by Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach.

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:21 (CSB)

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:17 (CSB).

²⁰ For an exhaustive study of the commands of Jesus, see John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006).

²¹ Mark 1:15.

Some people think that faith is believing in something that is contrary to reason or cannot be proven. Many also think that repentance is simply saying that you are sorry for doing something wrong.

American pastor and author Greg Gilbert corrects these misunderstandings of repentance and faith:

Putting your faith in Christ means that you utterly renounce any other hope of being counted righteous before God. . . . Faith means admitting that [your good works] are woefully insufficient and trusting in Christ alone. . . . If faith is turning to Jesus and relying on him for salvation, repentance is the flip side of that coin. It is turning away from sin, hating it, and resolving by God's strength to forsake it, even as we turn to him in faith.²²

During our discussion of theology of missions later in this book, we will discuss one aspect of soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). In that study, we will see that the Bible teaches that explicit faith in Jesus is necessary for eternal salvation. This position is called exclusivism, and we will demonstrate that it is the only option for faithful Bible-believing Christians.

Instead of providing additional content of the message, the final two elements describe the gospel describe the gospel.

So, the fifth element of the gospel describes its importance.

The gospel is a message of **E**ternal Urgency

The manner in which one responds to this message indicates their eternal destination – whether they will be with Christ for all eternity or outside of Christ. Because of this truth, we should be eager to share this message with others.

Finally, the Gospel should lead to something. It should lead to a changed life.

The gospel is a message about **L**ife Transformation

The root of salvation is the finished work of Christ. The fruit of our salvation is the way that our life is transformed.

So, we have understood that our definition of the gospel is vital to missions. Let's look at our next definition.

²² Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010).

EVANGELISM

Evangelism has been defined by many people from different denominational backgrounds through the years. As you read through the various definitions below, take note of the context from which each author is writing. The oldest definition is over 100 years old. Some are from academic settings. Some are from church settings. After you have read each of these definitions, think about how you would define evangelism in your context. What are the essential elements that you must include? How is your context reflected in your answers?

1. "To evangelize is to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church." - *1918 Anglican Archbishops' Committee*
2. "Evangelism is witness. It is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread." - D.T. Niles, *That They May Have Life, 1951*
3. "According to the New Testament, evangelism is just preaching the gospel, the evangel. It is a work of communication in which Christians make themselves mouthpieces for God's message of mercy to sinners." - J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, 1961*
4. "To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the Gospel invitation, we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world." - *Lausanne Covenant, 1974*
5. "Evangelism is a concerted effort to confront the unbeliever with the truth about and claims of Jesus Christ and to challenge him with the view of leading him into repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and, thus, into the fellowship of the church." - Lewis Drummond, *Leading Your Church into Evangelism, 1975*

6. “[Evangelism is] to proclaim Jesus Christ as God and Savior, to persuade people to become his disciples and responsible members of his church.”
- Donald McGavran and Win Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth*, 1977
7. “Evangelism is what WE do to help make the Christian faith, life, and mission a live option to undisciplined people, both inside and outside the congregation. Evangelism is also what JESUS CHRIST does through the church's *kerygma* (message), *koinonia* (fellowship), and *diakonia* (service) to set people free. Evangelism happens when the RECEIVER (receptor, respondent) turns (1) to Christ, (2) to the Christian message and ethic, (3) to a Christian congregation, and (4) to the world, in love and mission--*in any order*.” - George Hunter, *The Contagious Congregation*, 1979
8. “Evangelism is being, doing, and telling the gospel of the kingdom of God, in order that by the power of the Holy Spirit persons and structures may be converted to the lordship of Jesus Christ.” - Delos Miles, *Introduction to Evangelism*, 1983
9. “Our task is to present faithfully the gospel message by our lives and our lips. Any definition of our task that includes results is confusing our responsibility with God's prerogative, which is regeneration.” - Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 1984
10. “We can best improve our thinking on evangelism by conceiving it as that set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time.” - William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*, 1989
11. “The three stories [of the Old Testament] are the *promise* made to the ancestors, the *deliverance* from slavery, and the gift of the *land*. . . . It is my argument that evangelism means inviting people into these stories as the definitional story of our life, and thereby authorizing people to give up, abandon, and renounce other stories that have shaped their lives in false and distorting ways.” - Walter Brueggemann, *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism*, 1993
12. “Evangelism is whatever the community of God does to make people new creatures in Christ Jesus.” - Darius Salter, *American Evangelism*, 1996
13. “Evangelism is the intentional sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ with a view toward persuading men and women to repent of their sin and follow Christ.” - Dr. Jeff Walters, Missions Pastor at Pinelake Baptist Church, Brandon, Mississippi, USA

14. “Evangelism is the compassionate sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ with lost people in the power of the Holy Spirit with the purpose of winning them to Christ as Savior and Lord that they in turn may share Him with others.” - Dr. Bill Henard, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Athens, TN, USA
15. “Evangelism is the active calling of people to respond to the message of grace and commit oneself to God in Jesus Christ.” - *Holman Bible Dictionary*.

All of these definitions have strengths and weaknesses. In the end, we should recognize that evangelism is communicating the gospel to a person or to a group of people in a way that they understand both its content and what it requires of all people – which is to repent and believe. As mentioned above, take time now to write a definition of evangelism that will be faithful to the central message while also being relevant to your cultural context.

African Authors’ Definitions Of Evangelism

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

Evangelism is the work of the Holy Spirit through or from someone who believes in Jesus to someone who has never believed in Jesus; this believer shares the Good News about salvation in Jesus Christ alone.

EVANGELIST

Since evangelism is communicating the gospel, then an evangelist is someone who communicates the gospel with the lost in order to draw them into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. For the purposes of this book, we are going to distinguish between an evangelist and a missionary. As you read through this book, you will see what that distinction is important, and later we will discuss the definition of missionary, but for now we are going to define evangelist as anyone who communicates the gospel with a lost person (or people) in order to draw him (or them) into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. In other words, it is one Christian telling a non-Christian how to become a Christian, which leads us to our next definition.

CHRISTIAN

Statistics say that Christianity is the largest religion in the world. According to a 2010 report, 31.5% of the world's population identify themselves as Christian.²³ The same article reports that Christians make up the majority of the population in 157 countries.²⁴ It has also been reported in 2010 that 57% of Sub-Saharan Africa is "Christian."²⁵ Depending on the survey, the country of Malawi is approximately 60-85% "Christian."

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

While these percentages are accurate inasmuch as they reflect what people say about themselves, sometimes the percentages may not reflect the true picture of what is on the ground. This may cause some churches to go to sleep. In other words, by stating that the majority (or even the vast majority) of people in a given country or community are Christians, some churches may become unmotivated to evangelize their immediate environs.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

These statistics do not represent the reality of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa. In Africa most of the people are just church-goers. They pretend to be Christians, but they are not Christians. Mostly they go to church because of their parents. However, there are many villages particularly where the whole village belongs to a particular local church and are very much committed members.

These statistics are helpful because they are an eye-opener that we have a huge task of doing missions and evangelism so that we reach out to people with the gospel. But on the other side of the coin, the statistics are unhelpful because the high percentages could make Christians reluctant in sharing the gospel.

²³ Tom Heneghan, "No religion" third world group after Christians, Muslims," on *Yahoo! News*; accessed on 19 December 2012 (available from <http://news.yahoo.com/no-reigion-third-world-group-christian-muslims-122420720.html>). Roman Catholics make up one half of that total.

²⁴ Tom Heneghan, "No religion" third world group after Christians, Muslims," on *Yahoo! News*; accessed on 19 December 2012 (available from <http://news.yahoo.com/no-reigion-third-world-group-christian-muslims-122420720.html>).

²⁵ Darren Carlson, "Christianity is not Exploding in Africa," accessed on 27 July 2013 (available from <http://trainingleadersinternational.org/blog/548/christianity-is-not-exploding-in-africa.html>).

From Bento Simoia (Mozambique)

Well, the statistics may represent the reality based on the self-reporting. However, what I know as African is that there is a much work to be done in Africa. True Christianity is all about being Christ-centered, and not about being born into Christian family or being a church-goer.

We need statistics to know where is much work for evangelism, or what kind of Christian work is mostly need to be done to reach the unreached people. My worry is that when someone starts to be very interested with the numbers, it can create the spirit of laziness. Remember that Paul told his son Timothy to preach the word.

So, what is a Christian? In some ways we can say that a “Christian” is anyone who identifies himself as a “Christian.” And if we are merely sociologists trying to do a survey of a country, city, continent, or people, then that’s all we need people to do – self-identify.

However, if we are pastors, evangelists, missionaries, then we are *very* concerned about what it *truly* means to be a Christian. Self-identification is first step, but we cannot stop there. If someone tells you that he is a Christian, is that all you need to know? What if he tells you that he is a Christian, but he is a member at Kingdom Hall (JW’s) or the LDS Church (Mormons) or the Roman Catholic Church? What if someone says that she is a Christian, but she does not believe that Jesus died for her sins or that He rose from the dead? What if he tells you that he thinks that there is more than one way to know God and be saved eternally?

One hundred fifty years ago, American Charles Hodge wrote the following definition of a Christian:

A Christian is one who recognizes Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, as God manifested in the flesh, loving us and dying for our redemption; and who is so affected by a sense of the love of this incarnate God as to be constrained to make the will of Christ the rule of his obedience, and the glory of Christ the great end for which he lives.²⁶

As we look at this definition piece by piece, we will see that being a Christian impacts the head, heart, and hands of an individual.

²⁶ Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (1863), p. 133.

Head

Recognizes Jesus as the Christ.

The English word “Christ” is a transliteration of the Greek word *Christos* which is a translation of the Hebrew word that is translated Messiah. These words mean Anointed One, so Christians must first recognize that Jesus is the Christ – the Messiah. The inclusion of this qualification rules out anyone who while calling themselves Christians believes Jesus to have simply been a great moral teacher but rejects Old Testament prophecies about Christ being the Messiah. If someone rejects the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus, all the biblical meaning of “Christ” is removed. As a result, anyone who calls himself a Christian but rejects the Old Testament is something less than a truly biblical Christian. While not many will explicitly reject the Old Testament, some Liberal theologians dismiss the Old Testament as myth and teach that the stories of the Old Testament are not grounded in history.

Recognizes Jesus as the Son of the living God.

This aspect of the definition rules out Jehovah’s Witnesses (JW’s) who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. It also rules out Mormons who both reject the *biblical* understanding of Jesus as the unique Son of God and instead believe Jesus to be “one of us.”²⁷

Recognizes Jesus as God manifested in the flesh.

Again, JW’s are ruled out as are any other “Christian” cults who make Jesus out to be something less than God Himself. Any so-called Christian groups who reject the Trinity are not Christian in a biblical sense of the word.

Believes that Jesus loves us and died for our redemption.

This point assures that belief in (trusting in) the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ is essential to our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. Contrary to what some Prosperity Gospel preachers teach, the death of Christ was not a ransom that God the Father paid to Satan.

²⁷ See Gerald R. McDermott and Robert L. Millet, *Claiming Christ: A Mormon – Evangelical Debate* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007).

Heart

Is affected by a sense of love of this incarnate God.

While the first four points dealt with the cognitive (intellectual) aspect of what it means to be a Christian, this point shows that one's affections (emotions) must also be impacted. Whether someone is emotionally impacted, of course, is a very hard thing to judge in another person. While we might not be able to always discern whether or not someone is emotional impacted by Christ's love for us, some emotional response is appropriate.²⁸

Hands

Is constrained to make the will of Christ the rule of his obedience.

Not only must our intellect and our emotions be affected so must our behavior. We saw this earlier when we saw that life transformation is an essential aspect of the gospel.

Makes the glory of Christ the great end for which he lives.

As with number 5 above, this one is hard to assess in others but needs to be part of our definition because it rules out self-centered living.

Only God knows a man's heart, and our evaluations are never perfect. However, we need to have some kind of understanding of what it means to truly be a Christian, because, after all, that is what we are calling people to become. The way that one becomes a Christian is vitally important to this discussion, so our next key term is . . .

NEW BIRTH

The New Birth has two aspects – regeneration and conversion.

Wayne Grudem defines regeneration as “a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us.”²⁹ Millard Erikson defines regeneration as “God's transformation of individual believers, his giving a new spiritual vitality and direction to their lives when they accept Christ.”³⁰

²⁸ See Jonathan Edward's *Religious Affections* for a biblical understanding of the interplay of the intellect, the emotions, and actions.

²⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 699.

³⁰ Millard J. Erikson, *Christian Theology*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 955.

So, regeneration is a *work of God* in which *He* gives people new life in His Son through His Spirit.

So, what is conversion?

Grudem defines conversion as “our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.”³¹ Grudem goes on to write that conversion is a “single action of turning from sin in repentance and turning to Christ in faith.”³² Augustus Strong wrote that conversion is “that voluntary change in the mind of the sinner, in which he turns, on the one hand, from sin, and on the other hand, to Christ.”³³

Conversion is when we repent of our sins and believe (or trust) in Christ alone to take the punishment for our sins and be our substitute. Conversion always involves repentance and faith. In fact, Jesus commands us to repent and believe in the gospel.³⁴ Look back to the definition of the gospel to see what these two concepts mean. Are people saved by being regenerated – through a work that is initiated and completed by God? Or are they saved by conversion through repentance and faith? Let’s look at some biblical passages in order to try to answer that question.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, we see that an individual’s salvation is transformative. The individual actually becomes a new creation. From Jesus’ words in John 3:3-8, we see that this transformation is not optional. Jesus tells Nicodemus that life transformation is necessary in order to be able to see the Kingdom of God. Romans 6:4 tells us that our baptism in Christ guarantees that we will be raised with Christ. In Ephesians 2:1-10 we read that salvation in Christ is by grace through faith and brings people from death to life. Later in Ephesians (Ephesians 4:20-24), Paul tells us that we must take off the old self and put on the new self.

As we looked at these biblical passages, in addition to seeing that regeneration and conversion are same experience from two different experiences we can also see that regeneration and conversion are indeed miracles. So, as we can see

³¹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 709.

³² *Ibid.*, 714.

³³ August Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: A Compendium, Designed for the Use of Theological Students*, Three Volumes in One (Valley Forge, PA: The Judson Press, 1907), 829.

³⁴ Mark 1:15.

from the biblical evidence, regeneration, and conversion are simply two ways of looking at the same experience.³⁵

CHURCH

Because of the emphasis that missions places on the task of church-planting and church renewal, we will need to establish a definition of church.

First, it needs to be recognized that the church is both local and universal. There is one sense that when speaking about the Church (with a capital C) we are speaking about all true believers of all times in all places. Since this is not a book about systematic theology, however, we are more concerned with providing a definition of the local church (with a lower case c).

Contrary to popular opinion, a church is *not* wherever two or more people are gathered together in the name of Jesus. The Scripture passage from which this phrase is taken is referencing church discipline.³⁶ Church discipline is certainly an important part of what it means to be a church, but that passage is *not* meant to provide a definition of the church. Many of those who advocate for this definition do so in order to stand against another popular notion – namely that a church is a *place* where people go on Sundays.³⁷

We share the concern that the church is too often identified with the place that the church meets. It is going too far, however, to oversimplify the definition of the church by saying that the church is wherever two or more are gathered together in the name of Jesus. When one of our families reads the Bible, prays, or talks with someone in the market or on the street about Jesus, we are *not* a church. We are acting as *ambassadors of our local church* as we seek to connect the lost to Jesus, but we are not an autonomous church.

³⁵ Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People, A Training Manual on the Message & Method of God-Centered Witnessing*, Revised Edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), 89. Erikson agrees with Metzger's understanding of the relationship between regeneration and conversion, Erikson, *Christian Theology*, 955. For a book-length treatment of the two different perspectives on the gospel – what the author calls the gospel in the air and the gospel on the ground – see Matt Chandler *The Explicit Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2012).

³⁶ Matthew 18: 15-20.

³⁷ For example, the website adherents.com contains an article under the heading “Baptist church, The True Definition of Church” which states that “Biblically speaking, church is not a building. It is not a place with stained glass windows and pews that house people who are believers for one to two days a week. It is not a place that people sing. The building on Sunday is just a building. A church is when two or more people come together to worship and learn about God,” accessed 17 March 2009 at <http://religion.adherents.com/Other+Topics/2-baptist+church.html>

So, if the church is something *more* than wherever two or more are gathered together in the name of Jesus and should not be merely associated with a meeting place, then what is our definition of church? We are very comfortable with the definition provided by the Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M):

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.³⁸

From this definition we are given the who, the what, and the how of the church.³⁹

The Who of the Church

The church consists of a group of baptized believers who freely associate with one another through a covenant commitment. Each true member of a church has individually come to Christ through repentance and faith for salvation from sin. As a group the members have covenanted with one another to live in community with one another. This does not mean that church members will live in the same household, but it does mean that “the family of believers take precedence over one’s biological family.”⁴⁰

The What of the Church

The church is the Body of Christ. The church is the Family of God. It is not a social club where one goes to meet with other people who you like and who are

³⁸ “The Church,” in *The Baptist Faith and Message* [online] accessed 30 June 2020; available from <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>. It should also be noted that this definition of church has been provisionally accepted by the African Baptist Theological Education Network (ABTEN).

³⁹ Noticeably absent are the where and the when of the church. As we have already mentioned, we believe that the where question is tangential at best and distracting and unhelpful at worst. The when of the church is addressed in the BFM’s statement on the Lord’s Day, but a discussion of that subject is beyond the scope of this brief section.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Mburu, *African Hermeneutics* (Nairobi, Kenya: Hippo Books, 2019), 40.

like you in order to sing songs, tell stories, and eat chicken and *nsima*.⁴¹ Many churches around the world think that they exist simply to make life more comfortable for their members. Other churches believe that it is their duty and responsibility to give their members something to do each day of the week.

However, we must admit that the church is also not a filling station where we stop whenever we need to be “filled up.” People often decide which church to attend by asking the question, “What’s in it for me?” Likewise, many pastors and church leaders design church services to be attractive so that people will have fun and enjoy themselves. While being relevant and making unchurched people comfortable is appropriate and even recommended, when being attractive to unchurched people is our primary goal, we have lost sight of the purpose of church.

As the BF&M statement makes clear, the church has God-given assignments. First, the church should observe the ordinances of the Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Biblical baptism is the immersion of a person who has come to Christ through repentance and faith and is performed as a public profession of faith of the one who is being baptized. The Lord’s Supper is a memorial whereby the church declares to itself and to a watching world that the members of that church are united together in Christ. By taking the Lord’s Supper they are remembering the historical event of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and are anticipating His second coming.

Second, the church ought to be a place where its members exercise their spiritual gifts and serve one another. The Apostle Paul makes it clear his letter to the Ephesians, that Jesus gave certain gifts to certain people for “equipping the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.”⁴²

Church leadership ought to provide avenues for members to express their spiritual gifts through service to the church. Leaders should also be eagerly receptive to church members’ ideas for service and ministry. In so doing, Christ’s body will be built up and grow closer together and will be more unified as the individual members of the church grow in faith and knowledge. Service benefits the whole as it builds up the individual.

⁴¹ *Nsima* is the Chichewa word for a dish that is served all over Africa. In Nigeria, it is called *tuwo*. In French West Africa, it is referred to a *tom*. In Ghana it is variously called *banku*. In Zimbabwe it is called *sadzza*. In Kenya it is called *ugali*.

⁴² Ephesians 4:12-13 (CSB)

Third, the church should seek “to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.” Evangelism and missions are essential elements of the church and should be built into the DNA of churches that we seek to plant. Not all members of a given congregation will be able to travel on mission trips or be appointed as missionaries. However, in what we might call missions by proxy, all members can be *intimately* involved in missions by supporting those who do go through prayer and financial giving. Those who actually go on mission trips are merely the tips of the fingers which are being supported by the entire Body of Christ.

While the importance of a church being missions-minded might be taken for granted as a given by those who plant churches, it will not necessarily be so for those who are receiving the gospel for the first time. It does not take long for spiritual shortsightedness to set in at a church, and it is the missionary’s job to cast a vision for evangelism and missions from the very beginning. As we tell people about the family that they enter when they become Christ-followers, we must also cast a vision for the millions who have yet to hear and to whom this new church might have the privilege of going.

The How of the Church

The church is organized and placed under God, and God has designed the church to be led by qualified members. A local church ought to identify and call out deacons and elders who are biblical qualified.⁴³ Biblical church leaders should not lead as tyrants or dictators without consulting the members but should provide strong leadership and clear direction under the democratic process of the church.

We have observed that this is a common and disturbing problem in some Baptist churches in Zambia. So-called “elders” usurp the authority of the congregation and the teaching pastor. Instead of involving the entire church in decision making, this group only informs the church about the decisions they have already made. From a biblical perspective, these men are not acting as pastor/elder/overseers, however. Instead, they are acting more like a corporate board of directors.

Once a church is operating on its own, these leaders should be identified and called out by the local church members. Of course, it will be difficult if not

⁴³ See 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9.

impossible for churches to do this right away, so one of the key responsibilities of the missionary is to identify and train the first leaders of the church. It is into this first group of leaders that the missionary should pour his life under the prayerful expectation that this first generation of leaders will call out and train leaders who are able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2).

MISSION

According to George Peters mission is “the total biblical assignment of the church of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁴ Peters writes that mission is *all* the ministries of the church. Mission is *everything* that Jesus left for the church to do, and all of those activities serve to point people to the Kingdom of God. Gailyn Van Rheenen writes that mission is “the work of God in reconciling sinful humankind to himself.”⁴⁵

In other words, we will use the word “mission” in a very broad sense. We can speak about most anything that the people of God are assigned to do as being “mission.”

MISSIONS

The term missions (with an “s” on the end) refers to the specific task of crossing cultural, geographic, or linguistic barriers to do the work of mission. Van Rheenen writes that missions “is the plans of committed believers to accomplish the mission of God.”⁴⁶ This definition is too broad to be helpful. We need to look at a narrower definition in order to avoid falling into the trap of calling everything missions. Peters writes that missions is

the sending forth of authorized persons beyond the borders of the New Testament church, and her immediate gospel influence to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in gospel-destitute areas, to win converts from other faiths and non-faiths to Jesus Christ, and to establish functioning, multiplying local congregations who will bear the fruit of Christianity in that community and to that country.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1972), 11.

⁴⁵ Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 20.

⁴⁶ Van Rheenen, *Missions*, 20.

⁴⁷ Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 11.

By taking these together, we can see that missions is when a particular individual or a specific local church carries out the mission of God in a context that is not their own. Peters stresses that missions is the task of “authorized persons.” In other words, it is missionaries who do missions, so we will now discuss the definition of missionary.

MISSIONARY

J. Herbert Kane wrote that a missionary is someone who “[has] been called by God to a full-time ministry of Word and prayer (Acts 6:4), and who [has] crossed geographical and/or cultural boundaries (Acts 22:21) to preach the gospel in those areas of the world where Jesus Christ is largely, if not entirely, unknown (Rom. 15:20).” While we can use the term missionary in a broader sense, for the purposes of this class, we will agree with Kane’s definition which stresses the cross-cultural/intercultural aspect of missions. As Nigerian scholar and missiologist Segun Adekoya succinctly writes, “The missionary is someone who has gone from his or her own people and church to another people.”⁴⁸

In the same work Kane lists several important roles that a missionary fills. Of course, there is some overlap in these roles, but it will still be helpful to look at each one of them one-by-one.

An Ambassador for Christ.

Just as political ambassadors are not free to communicate messages of their own design, missionaries do not create a message that they want to preach or tell the world. Instead, they represent Christ and his message (the gospel) to the world. The missionary receives his message from Christ and then shares it with whomever he may have the opportunity to do so.

A Herald of Truth.

In today’s world we are often told that everyone must find his own way -- that one person’s way may not be the way of another person. However, Jesus said that He is THE Way, THE Truth, and THE Life (John 14:6). As a herald of the truth, missionaries declare this message to people of all cultures and lands. While some people may think that they are intolerant for telling people that

⁴⁸ Segun Adekoya, *You Could Be a Missionary*, rev. ed (Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria: Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute, 2004), 9.

there is only one way to God, missionaries will herald the truth even when it makes people hate them.

An Apostle of Love.

Jesus said that the world would know his disciples by the love that they showed for one another.⁴⁹ The great missionaries down through the ages have been apostles of love. Missionaries demonstrate this love through a willingness to love their enemies, to love those who society has discarded and though unlovable, and through a willingness to love Christian brothers and sisters wherever they find them.

An Envoy of Peace.

The missionary promotes peace first and foremost by calling people to be reconciled to God.⁵⁰ The next step is for man to be reconciled to one another.⁵¹ When the gospel enters a new area through the planting of churches, the churches in that area should promote peace, justice and mercy.

A Bearer of Culture.

Some will say that missionaries should not be interested in changing culture, but this is only partially true. There are evils in every culture that must be addressed and transformed by the gospel. After all, we as individuals are called to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds.”⁵² Since cultures are made up of individuals, cultures too must be transformed.

⁴⁹ John 13:35

⁵⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:20

⁵¹ Ephesians 4:17-19

⁵² Romans 12:2

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR MISSIONS

The Now that we have clarified our vocabulary, we can move on to the four different aspects of Missiology we mentioned earlier. The first aspect of Missiology is the biblical basis for missions. The biblical basis for missions is foundational for all the other aspects that we will discuss in this book. Without being founded upon and grounded in Scripture, missions will not end up calling people to true biblical Christianity. In the following pages, we will look at how the theme of missions is woven throughout the entire Bible. In fact, Christopher Wright writes that missions is “a major key that unlocks the whole grand narrative of the canon of Scripture.”¹ The following evaluation of Scripture will demonstrate this reality. We will look at the major sections of Scripture starting with the Torah.

MISSIONS IN THE TORAH

The Creator God

Upon reading the book of Genesis, we learn that the God of the Bible is the Creator of ALL things – including all peoples. Since God is sovereign Creator over all things, all peoples should glorify and worship Him.² Calling all peoples to worship and obey God is the central task of missions, so the concept of God as Creator is foundational to the concept of missions. As the Creator of all peoples, God has the right to demand worship from all peoples. This verse

¹ Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downer's Grove, IL, USA: IVP Academic, 2006), 17.

² T.J. Betts, “The Great Commission in the Old Testament” in *The Challenge of the Great Commission: Essays on God's Mandate for the Local Church*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Thom Rainer (Pinnacle Publishers, 2005), 19.

demonstrates the scope of God's mission. It is universal – encompassing all peoples, tribes, nations, and languages.³

The God who Seeks

In Genesis 3:8, God comes and seeks Adam and Eve who had deliberately sinned against him. God is a missionary God who comes and seeks those who have deliberately sinned against Him.

As we reflect on this passage, we have reached several interconnected conclusions.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

We can see that God is gracious. He loved us even when we sinned against him. He is constantly pursuing us in love.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

The immediate application based on Geneses 3:8 is that there is idea of moving out. We do not only sit in our church buildings and invite people to come and see. We go and preach the gospel to the people that have not heard gospel with an idea of compelling them to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus. We need to follow the pattern of God himself who is the first and best example of missions in history.

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

This verse describes the love of God toward sinful man. God loves Africa. He loves the world even if we sin against Him. That does not mean that He loves our sin, but He cares about man perishing. That is why He seeks for lost people. Jesus said that he is the good shepherd. A good shepherd seeks for the lost sheep. He cares for and disciplines the sheep because of love. In fact, apostle Paul says in Romans 3:23 “for **all** have **sinned** and **fall** short of the glory of God”. This verse doesn't say that God falls short of His people; no, but people fall short to His glory.

Africa needs people (missionaries, preachers...) to show them that God is seeking them. God is seeking those who practice witchcraft, the robbers, the

³ We will see this truth expanded upon in the sections to follow, but two passages that point to this reality are Daniel 7:14; Revelation 7:9-10

magicians, those who are under the bondage of ATR. God loves people in America, God loves people in Europe, God loves people in Australia, and God loves people in Africa. God loves and is seeking people in the whole world. Luke in the Book of Acts 4:12 says “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved.” So all people must understand that salvation is through Jesus Christ alone.

Finally, we conclude that this verse demonstrates the heart of God and provides an example/method for the how of missions. The task of missions is to go! God did not sit in heaven and call to Adam and Eve to return to Him. He came down out of heaven and came to find sinners. In the same way, our task is not to sit in our churches, put up billboards, hire radio advertisements, and wait for people to come. Our task is to go!

The Gospel in Genesis

Genesis 3:15 gives us the message of missions and is often referred to as the *protoevangelion*. The prefix “proto” is used to express the idea that something is partially revealed before being fully revealed. For instance, before a new version of a mobile phone is released to the general public, it will often be released to a limited number of people as a “prototype.” So, we can see that the word *protoevangelion* means something like a preview of the gospel. After God rebuked the man and the woman for their willful and deliberated act of disobedience, He promised that He would send a Messiah to crush sin and defeat Satan. The fulfillment of this reality is seen in 1 John 3:8 where the Apostle John writes, “The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the devil’s work.”⁴ God had made a perfect world. Mankind caused sin to enter the world through their deliberate disobedience and created a cosmic problem. In Genesis 3:15, God promises to fix the problem – though it was not “his problem.”⁵

The Call of Abram

In Genesis 12:1-3, God calls Abram (who will later have his name changed to Abraham) out of the Ur of the Chaldes. Abram came from a people who wor-

⁴ 1 John 3:8, *CSB*.

⁵ See Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God*, 195.

shipped false gods.⁶ Archaeological evidence tells us that the people of this area worshipped idols. In the midst of this idol worshipping and false gods, God shows mercy and grace to Abraham. God promises that “all peoples of the earth will be blessed” through Abraham. In Galatians 3:8, we see the New Testament fulfillment of Abraham’s call. Abraham left behind security, stability, and cultural obligations for the sake of God’s call.

As we reflected on the question, “What is an application for your life from these verses?” we came up with several responses.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

Just as Abraham answered the call by faith, we should also take the step to answer God’s call, not putting our conditions on the call.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

When God tells me to move, I have to move. In some moments we give excuses to God and look at the comfort of the place we are. These comfort zones have, at times, contributed to our losing our true calling.

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

Sometimes I look around and see things that are around--physical properties, friends, good job, comfortable house and bed, family, church position, etc. Then when God calls us for missions, we easily become blind to understand and to accept God’s calling.

When God opened the opportunity to go to Malawi for theological studies, I had excuses, of course. I was working. My wife was working. Our house-building project was still in the beginning. It took time for us to accept it and to leave whatever we were doing for the theological training.

Gods calling does not come in easy ways. Most Africans are still blinded with things around them and do not wish to leave behind. My fellow Africans, let us open our eyes for the missions; let’s open hearts to God’s calling purposes!

⁶ See Joshua 24:2

The Exodus from Egypt

The Exodus of God's people out of slavery in Egypt is one of the most important events in the history of the world. It should be thought of as *the* central event of the Old Testament. In Exodus 7:5; 14:4,18, when Yahweh leads his people out of Egypt under Moses' leadership, He explicitly states that the reason that He sent the plagues was so that "the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord."⁷ In fact, later, in Exodus 9:13-16, we are told the purpose of the entire exodus event is "to show you my power and to make my name known on the whole earth."⁸ The Lord wants the whole world to know that He alone is God – the Creator of the entire universe and the One who controls all things.

The Mosaic Covenant/Legislation

We often read the Old Testament as being a story about the people of Israel – ethnic descendants of Abraham. However, there are several passages in the Mosaic Covenant that indicate there were members of the believing community who were *not* ethnically descended from Abraham.⁹ There are several provisions for how foreigners who have come to dwell among the people of Israel are to be treated. The central idea is that these foreigners are to be accepted as full members of the community. In order to demonstrate their unity with the people of Israel, these foreigners must practice circumcision (Exodus 12:48), prepare burnt offerings (Leviticus 17:8-9), and generally participate in the life of the believing community.¹⁰ The people of God are the people who love, honor, obey, and follow God – whether they are physically descended from Abraham or not.

The People of God

Throughout the book of Exodus God continues to demonstrate this desire to use the people of Israel as a way for all peoples to come to know God. In Exodus 19:5-6 God calls the people by three names. First, God calls his people His "treasured possession." The idea here is that God's people were "treasures that

⁷ Exodus 7:5, CSB.

⁸ Exodus 9:16, CSB.

⁹ See Exodus 12:48 and Leviticus 17:8-9.

¹⁰ Betts, "The Great Commission," 22.

he could move around and disperse as he pleased.”¹¹ By moving his treasure from one place to another God was moving his witnesses into places where his will and Word were not known.

Second, God calls them a “kingdom of priests.” The role of a priest is a “mediatorial role.”¹² The role of a mediator was to communicate the will and Word of God to the nations around them. The people of God were commissioned to fulfill this role in both word and deed.

Finally, God calls the people a “holy nation.” As we saw earlier, the concept of holy is best thought of as “set apart,” so when God called Israel to be a “holy nation.” he was calling them to “be set apart not only in their lives, but also in their service.”¹³ As a people called to serve the nations, the most excellent way that they could do so was by calling them to worship the One True God. In other words, as a nation set apart, they could evangelize the other nations by pointing them to the One and Only True God – the God who created all things and made a covenant with Moses.

MISSIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: HISTORY AND WISDOM LITERATURE

The Historical Books and Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament are not often thought of as containing a lot of teaching about missions, but the following passages will demonstrate that just as the whole Bible is concerned with missions, so too are the Historical Books and Wisdom Literature.

Remember how we read that God’s purpose for the Exodus was to make His name known throughout the whole earth? In Joshua 2:8-11, we see that the people of Jericho had heard about God’s mighty acts. In other words, God’s plan for his dealings with Egypt to cause others to hear about Him was successful. Not only had the people of Egypt heard that the Lord is God, but the people of Jericho had heard about God’s mighty acts, as well.

In Joshua 2:10-11 we see that God’s mighty acts had become known among the people of Jericho. Rahab reports, “For we have heard how the LORD dried up the wate of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings you completely destroyed

¹¹ Kaiser, *Missions in the Old Testament*, 22.

¹² Kaiser, *Missions in the Old Testament* 23.

¹³ Kaiser, *Missions in the Old Testament*, 23.

across the Jordan. When we heard this, we lost heart, and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below."¹⁴

In Joshua 4:19-24, we read that God dealt with the people of Israel not just for their sake but "so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord's hand is mighty."¹⁵ When God works in and through us, He is working not only for our sake but for others, as well. His desire is for His mighty acts to be known by the whole earth.

In 1 Samuel 2:10, we read about how Hannah praised God at the birth of her son Samuel. From the rest of 1 Samuel we read about how Samuel would rule over Israel as a judge and who would then anoint David as the King over all of Israel. In Hannah's prayer, she said that God was concerned with the whole earth – not just Israel. Notice here that the concern that God has here is in the form of judgment – "The Lord will judge the ends of the earth."¹⁶

The story of 1 Samuel 17 is a well-known biblical story. It tells the story of when David, the one whom Samuel had anointed, slayed Goliath and thus defeated the enemies of God. In verses 46-47, David proclaimed that the Lord had a purpose that was bigger than David – and even bigger than the giant Goliath. The purpose was so that the whole world would know that Israel's God is real and is powerful. The mighty works of God are not primarily for the benefit of His people but for the proclamation of His name and for the ingathering of His people from all nations.

In 2 Samuel 7:8-9,19, we read about the Davidic covenant. We need to read this passage in light of its ultimate fulfillment. David is an earthly human king who is like a shadow of the coming Messiah – the heavenly God-man king. Jesus comes and fulfills this passage.

Much of the history of the Old Testament centers around the Temple and the Tabernacle. The Temple and the Tabernacle are connected by the four interconnected components" of "presence, power, holiness, and worship."¹⁷ In fact, Temple worship is often thought of as an example of the exclusivity (as op-

¹⁴ Joshua 2:10-11, CSB.

¹⁵ Joshua 4:24, CSB.

¹⁶ 1 Samuel 2:10, CSB.

¹⁷ J. Daniel Hays, *The Temple and the Tabernacle: A Study of God's Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Books, 2016), 18.

posed to universality) of Jewish worship.¹⁸ However, “the Lord was simultaneously extending the offer of salvation to others during the Old Testament era in addition to Israel.”¹⁹ To support this assertion, Kaiser points to Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the Temple in 1 Kings 8:41-43. One of God’s purpose in having His people worship Him at the Temple was to have “all the people of the earth” know His name. That’s missions!

When King Hezekiah prays and asks God to intervene for Israel in 2 Kings 19, he declares the Lord to be the One and Only True God and asks God to “save us from his power so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, Lord, are God – you alone.”²⁰ Like Hannah and David and Moses before him, Hezekiah appealed to God’s own fame in order to ask for Him to act on behalf of His people. God, who is jealous for His glory, responds to Hezekiah. This response ultimately comes through sending the Son of God to die for the sins of the world and to call out people from every earthly kingdom.

In 1 Chronicles 16, we read when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem. The bringing of the ark might, at first, seem like a national celebration focusing on the Israel as people. However, as the ark enters the city, David praised God by saying that His Name should be declared throughout the earth. The Chronicler records, “Let the *whole earth* sing to the LORD. Proclaim his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the *nations*, his wondrous works among *all peoples* . . . Let the heavens be glad and the *earth* rejoice.”²¹

The Singing of Psalms

George Peters called the book of Psalms “one of the greatest missionary books in the world,” and pointed to Psalms 2, 33, 66, 72, 98, 117, and 145 as examples of “missionary messages and challenges.”²² Kaiser adds Psalms 67, 96, and 100 to the list of Psalms that contain a missionary message.²³ In each of these Psalms the people of God sing praises to God among the nations. By singing songs of praise to God, “the expected results would be that all the ends of the

¹⁸ These terms, exclusivity and universality, should not be confused with the terms exclusivism and universalism – which will be explained later in this book.

¹⁹ Kaiser, *Missions in the Old Testament*, 24.

²⁰ 2 Kings 19:19, CSB.

²¹ 1 Chronicles 16:23-24,31, CSB, emphasis ours.

²² George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 116.

²³ Kaiser, *Missions in the Old Testament*, 30.

earth would turn to the Lord and all the families on earth would bow down in worship to him.”²⁴ In other words, the people of God would sing praises to God, and as a result, people would turn from their self-centered lives and become true worshippers of the One True God. That is missions.

THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

Contrary to the popular understanding of a prophet as someone who foretells the future and tells people about coming doom, *biblical* prophets are best thought of as bringing “the divine word to a people who desperately needed to hear it.”²⁵ Furthermore, Old Testament prophets spoke the words of God “primarily to motivate God’s people to faithful living in the present.”²⁶ Of course, as the prophets call the people of God back to covenantal faithfulness, there will be some future aspects to their messages as a result of their faithfulness (or lack of faithfulness).

The Message of Isaiah

The message of Isaiah is a message of missions. In Isaiah 42:5-9, God’s role as Creator is tied to His role as Redeemer. He will (future) redeem all people. In Isaiah 49:1-6, we read that redeeming Israel is “too light a thing” to be worthy of the Messiah. His task is bigger! He will bring in people from the whole earth! In Isaiah 52:1-12, we read that the nations *shall* see God in the work of missions. In Isaiah 55:1-5, the role of the Suffering Servant, who is the Messiah, is to call out the nations: “[S]o you will summon a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you will run to you.”²⁷ That nation will run to him. In Isaiah 56:3-7, foreigners who obey the Law can become a part of the people of God. In Isaiah 66:18-23, Isaiah *is* looking into the distant future to a time when all tongues and all nations will come together.

The section of Isaiah from chapter 40 through chapter 45 teaches that “Israel is to declare to the Gentiles that Yahweh alone is God and that to him they

²⁴ Kaiser, *Missions in the Old Testament*, 37.

²⁵ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 340.

²⁶ Arnold and Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament*, 343.

²⁷ Isaiah 55:5, CSB.

should yield honor, worship, allegiance, and obedience.”²⁸ As we saw from the passages that we just read, however, the message of missions in Isaiah is not limited to those chapters but can be found throughout the book.

As we reflect on Isaiah, we have drawn the following conclusions.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

We are surrounded with all sorts of problems and challenges such as diseases, wars, political fights etc. All human history is marked by warfare. The struggle will not forever continue. The word “comfort” is throughout Isaiah. Even if we may pass through all these challenges, God has promised through Christ that all evil will be removed.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

These portion of Scriptures from Isaiah about missions are very important in the context of Sub-Sahara Africa – particularly in this 21th century where we have a lot of sugarcoating gospel preachers. They preach for their own self-gain. But the truth of the matter, per these portion of Scriptures, is that we should be doing whatever we do for the glory of God. All these passages are instructing us to give glory, worship, and honor to God. In Sub-Saharan Africa today, many so-called ministers do everything for their own glory. The central concept of missions is to share the saving knowledge of Jesus. As people confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour of their lives and His kingdom advances, God is given all glory – just as He deserves.

For instance, many African preachers are very rich due to the heretical teachings – particularly their prosperity messages. I have discovered that people are being manipulated in the midst of their poverty of the little that they have. One of the illustrations used to steal money from the pockets of poor people is about seed. They say that if a farmer plants a seed, he harvests a lot from it, so if you plant your seed for money, then the Lord will multiply their money as seed is being multiplied. They would make sure to get an illustration which would be understood by anyone even a typical villager. Imagine if there are 1000 people in the building, it means the preacher will have one million kwacha

²⁸ Hicks, “The Missionary Intent in the Old Testament,” 58.

(Mk1000000) on a day if each person gives him 1,000 kwacha.²⁹ People will give because they believe that their seed will be multiplied.

The other part, which these passages are applied in our context, is that all these passages are leading people to the idea of one true God. It is a bit tricky in sub-Saharan Africa in the sense one may claim to be a Christian on the basis that he/she goes to church. Also in Africa one may claim to be Christian yet still hold to the gods of parents. For example, when sickness comes on a child, parents have no problem to inquire to traditional doctors and well-known “sing’anga,” As a result, it becomes difficult to know which is which. Therefore, preaching the Gospel by leading people to the one true God would be the good mission of missions.

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

In sub-Saharan Africa, most people are still blinded by thinking that the message is only for them. But these chapters from Isaiah teach us that we need to share what we have with others. The role of the nations and churches and believers should be to call other people to come to Christ.

The Life Witness of Jonah

W. Bryant Hicks claims that “the book of Jonah may be the most missionary book in the entire Bible.”³⁰ If you know the story of Jonah, you know, of course that Jonah was anything but a willing missionary. He was, however, still a missionary. Jonah’s unwillingness to take the message of repentance and faith to the people of Ninevah is contrasted with God’s care for them:

So the LORD said, “You cared about the plant, which you did not labor over and did not grow. It appeared in a night and perished in a night. But may I not care about the great city of Ninevah, which has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot distinguish between their right and their left, as well as many animals.”³¹

²⁹ One million Malawian kwacha is about \$1,500 in July 2020.

³⁰ W. Bryant Hicks, “The Missionary Intent in the Old Testament,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville, TN: Broadman& Holman Publishers, 1998), 59.

³¹ Jonah 4:10-11, CSB.

God used Jonah to display His own heart for other nations to come and worship him. Jonah cared more for his own comfort than for the destruction of 120,000 people. While Jonah should NOT be held up as an example of a faithful missionary, his life does reveal that the concept of missions is present in the OT prophets, because missions is in the heart of God Himself.

Other Prophets

Space does not allow us to look at every incidence of the concept of missions in Old Testament Prophets. We will close by briefly mentioning a few. Joel looked forward to “a day when God would pour out his Holy Spirit on ‘all flesh.’”³² The book of Amos promises that David’s house will be restored, and as a result the Gentiles would bear God’s name.³³ The fourth chapter of Micah pictures a day in which all nations will come to the Lord God in order to seek instruction and find peace in the presence of the one and true God.³⁴

CONCLUSION OF MISSIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

As we have seen, the entire Old Testament contains a missionary message. However, the people who were first heard and read the message of the Moses, David, and the Prophets did not interpret it as a missionary document until later. During the 400-year intertestamental period, Jews began to travel the world. As they travelled, they shared the universal message of the coming Messiah and the universality of the worship of YHWH with non-Jews. During this time period, non-Jews began to convert.³⁵

Australian scholar Michael Bird argues that these missionary efforts, however, were not organized and concentrated during this time period.³⁶ Instead, they were sporadic and irregular. However, we can see that early Christian missions, while having a clear background in Jewish efforts to convert non-Jews, required something new to spark the more deliberate and concentrated efforts

³² Kaiser, *Missions in the Old Testament*, 71.

³³ Kaiser, *Missions in the Old Testament*, 72.

³⁴ Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 128.

³⁵ David Filbeck, *Yes, God of the Gentiles, Too: The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL, USA: Wheaton College, 1994), 6.

³⁶ Michael Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, MA, USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 12.

to convert Gentiles that we see in the book of Acts. That something new is the person of Jesus Christ.³⁷ We now turn to the New Testament basis for missions.

MISSIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

As we begin our study of the biblical basis for missions in the New Testament documents, we clearly see that Jesus “shares the identity with YHWH, the Lord God of Israel.”³⁸ This identity is reflected in Jesus’ life and ministry as recorded in the Gospels. It is further reflected in the universality of the gospel as proclaimed, defended, and celebrated in the book of Acts, the New Testament letters, and Revelation.

The Gospels

Regarding the topic of missions, the most significant shift from the Old Testament to the New Testament is that “the gospel was no longer a future hope but a present reality.”³⁹ All of the missiological hope that is prophesied of in the Old Testament Prophets and foreshadowed in the Old Testament narrative is made clearer in the four accounts of the Gospel as recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. As we look at each of the four Gospels we will not be able to highlight all of the relevant missiological texts. What follows will only be a small sampling of the biblical basis for missions in the Gospels.

Matthew

In New Testament studies, the Gospel according to Matthew is often depicted as the gospel for the Jews. While it is true that Matthew’s account seems to be especially targeted to Jews, there are several elements in the Gospel that tell us that God’s mission includes missions.

In Matthew 1, we see that the genealogy includes non-Jews. When we read Matthew 1:1, “Matthew highlights the universal significance of the one who would, as son of Abraham fulfill what was promised for Abraham’s see (blessing for all nations), and as son of David, would exercise the prophesied messianic

³⁷ Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, 152-156.

³⁸ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 121.

³⁹ Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God’s Mission in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA, 2003), 185

reign over all the earth.”⁴⁰ The inclusion of Gentiles in these genealogies is not just a literary technique Matthew employs. It is also a reminder to all readers that “Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, had Gentile blood in his veins.”⁴¹

In Matthew 2:1-2, we read more about the God’s plan to reach the nations. Matthew is the only Gospel writer who includes this passage about visitors from the East who come to see the Christ child. The text explicitly says that they left their home to find and worship the King of the Jews.⁴² After seeing Jesus, they, indeed, fall down and worship Him – thus becoming the first fruits of a harvest that was to come.⁴³

In Matthew 8:5-13, we read how the faith of a pagan Roman was greater than the faith of Jews. Jesus responds to the centurion’s faith by saying, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with so great a faith. I tell you that many will come from east and west to share the banquet.”⁴⁴ Köstenberger and O’Brien note that this passage “clearly foresees the Gentiles’ full future participation in God’s promise to Abraham.”⁴⁵

In Matthew 24:14, we continue to see the theme of missions. We will talk more about this verse later when we talk about the motivation for missions. For now, we will mention that we do not believe that this passage is teaching that we can formulate a list of “unreached people groups” and check them off one by one and thereby ensure that Jesus will return when our list is all checked off. Instead, this verse shows the *result* of missions. Jesus said that “this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world.”⁴⁶ Therefore, the question is not whether the church will reach all the peoples of the earth with the gospel. Jesus said that will happen. The question is whether you want to be involved in Jesus’ work of reaching all the peoples. Mordecai’s words to Esther echo off the walls of this verse: “If you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jewish people from another place, but you and your father’s house

⁴⁰ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 243.

⁴¹ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 512.

⁴² Matthew 2:2.

⁴³ Matthew 2:11.

⁴⁴ Matthew 8:10-11, CSB.

⁴⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, New Studies in Biblical Theology Series, Vol. 11, ed. D.A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 94.

⁴⁶ Matthew 24:14, CSB.

will be destroyed. Who knows, perhaps you have come your royal position for such as time as this.”⁴⁷

No discussion of the biblical basis for missions would be complete without the “Great Commission” in Matthew 28:16-20. However, we should note that these verses are not a “surprise ending” to the book of Matthew. It is also not simply the final command that Jesus gave to his disciples (though it is that). The Great Commission is “the unifying climax” of the entire book’s message.⁴⁸ This passage also tells us by what authority we do missions. We do missions by the authority of Jesus the Messiah – who has been given all authority on heaven and earth.

Mark

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest Gospel, and it is characterized by fast-paced action with Jesus and his disciples moving quickly from one scene to another. However, Mark’s Gospel does contain several passages about missions. In Mark 11:15-17 when Jesus’ cleanses the Temple, notice that He does *not* say that the people are violating the holiness of the sanctuary (though that certainly would have been true). He also does not say that the people are dishonoring the place in which God had promised to be His special dwelling place (which is also true). Instead, He says that this place (the Temple) was supposed to a house of prayer for ALL nations, not just for God’s people, the Israelites.

Mark 15:38-39 can be thought of as the climax of Mark’s Gospel – the death of Jesus on the cross. Notice that the two events that immediately follow Jesus’ death are related to missions. First, the curtain of the Temple is torn so that the Temple in Jerusalem (and the Holy of Holies) is no longer a legitimate way to way to encounter God. There is no need for the High Priest to go to the Holy of Holies and offer sacrifices any longer. Second, the first person who Mark records to have professed faith in Christ is a Gentile – and a Roman centurion, none the less!

Luke

New Testament scholars often refer to Luke’s Gospel as the Gospel for the Gentiles – or the Gospel for the whole world and not just the physical descen-

⁴⁷ Esther 4:14, CSB.

⁴⁸ Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 87.

dants of Abraham.⁴⁹ Luke clearly states that the purpose of his Gospel is so that believers will “have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”⁵⁰ The amount of material related to missions in Luke is immense. We will look at a few examples.

Luke 2:29-32 is the “Song of Simeon,” and it contains a quote from the Isaiah with an explicit statement that the Messiah for whom Simeon has been waiting will be “a light of revelation to the Gentiles.”⁵¹ The Greek word translated Gentiles is *ethne* and can also be translated nations.

Luke 4:16-27 is surely one of the clearest passages in which Jesus declares that He is the Messiah. In his reference to the widow at Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian, Jesus made it clear that His function as Messiah is to extend beyond ethnic Israel to the Gentiles – to the nations.

In Luke 14:12-24, we read a parable with a powerful message about the inclusion of Gentiles into the Kingdom “by offering [membership in the Kingdom] to outsiders.”⁵² Köstenberger and O’Brien go on to write that in this parable, “Gentiles are placed on equal footing with Jews in the messianic age.”⁵³

Luke 24:44-47 contains the message of missions. David Bosch writes that this passage “reflect[s], in a nutshell, Luke’s entire understanding of the Christian mission.”⁵⁴ According to Bosch, there are several elements of the Christian mission that can be seen in this passage.

- Jesus’ life and ministry is the fulfillment of the OT (v. 44).
- The heart of the gospel is the story of Jesus (v. 46).
- The desired response is for people to repent and accept forgiveness (v. 47).
- Jesus’ mission is universal – i.e., it is for the nations (v. 47).

Reflecting on this same passage, John Piper writes that Jesus was teaching that Christian missions is not only to “Gentile individuals but also as an array of world peoples who must hear the message of repentance for the forgiveness of sin.”⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Books, 1998), 101-102.

⁵⁰ Luke 1:4, ESV.

⁵¹ Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 115.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 122.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁵⁴ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 91.

⁵⁵ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Academic, 2010), 209.

John

The Gospel of John is frequently given to new or potential converts and is often the first book of the Bible translated when the Bible is being translated into a new language. This is probably because the Gospel of John contains the clearest picture of Jesus as God, as Savior, and as Lord. It is also true that the focus of the Gospel of John is “the mission of Jesus: he is the one who comes into the world, accomplishes his work and returns to the Father . . . he is the Sent One.”⁵⁶ With the idea that the mission of Jesus is central to the Gospel of John, let’s look at some passages from John that relate to the topic of missions. In what is probably the most often quoted Bible verse in the world, John 3:16 tells us that God’s love motivated Him to act to save the whole world – not just the people of Israel. In fact, love for sinners, and our humble response to this love, is the central aspect at the heart of who Jesus is.⁵⁷

In John 17:18, Jesus prays for His disciples. In that prayer, He says that they will be sent by Jesus in the same way that Jesus was sent by the father – with a mission and a purpose.

In John 20:21, Jesus explicitly commissions His disciples. Once again, Jesus says that they are sent in the same manner in which He was sent. Jesus is the model by which His followers carry out the mission that He left for them to do. As such, Kostenberger and O’Brien write that missionaries today can learn several lessons.⁵⁸ First, missionaries should acknowledge that they are “a church under orders.” Second, missionaries “need to acknowledge anew the sovereignty of God” in missions. Third, missionaries should rejoice that the “mission of God in this world cannot be thwarted.” The final lesson for missionaries from John’s Gospel is that missions is “not to be carried out as an individualistic enterprise.”

MISSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: ACTS

The book of Acts is a missionary book. As such, the task of discussing the topic of missions in the book of Acts is more a process of narrowing down than it is in selecting passages that are about missions. The book recounts the spread-

⁵⁶ Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation*, 203.

⁵⁷ Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, Location 798.

⁵⁸ These four lessons are taken from Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation*, 225-226.

ing of the gospel from the time of Jesus' ascension and the subsequent sending of the Holy Spirit. It serves as a textbook for missionaries and missiologists.

While one could very easily say, "Read the book of Acts, it's about missions," we must first deal with a central but often overlooked and/or assumed question. We need to ask if the book of Acts is descriptive or prescriptive. After we determine our answer to that crucial question, we will look at some specific passages to see what they specifically teach us about missions.

Prescriptive or Descriptive – What is the Purpose of Acts?

Should the book of Acts be read as an instructional manual for how missions should be done or as a history of how missions *was* done in the 1st Century?

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

The book of Acts is primarily descriptive because it is historical in nature. It gives an account of the actual events that took place at a particular time related to missions and general information. However, though it is descriptive and not prescriptive, we can learn from it and apply some of the principles of missions in our context.

So, while there are certainly timeless principles in the book of Acts, Luke's original purpose for writing the book was historical and apologetic. In the opening chapter of his Gospel, Luke writes that the purpose of his Gospel is "so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed."⁵⁹ In Acts 1:1-3, we read that Luke is also the author of Acts and that he sees Acts as a continuation of his first book – his Gospel. Luke writes, "I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus *began* to do and teach."⁶⁰ Given this close tie between the beginning of Acts and the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, we can conclude that Luke's purpose for the book of Acts is similar to his explicitly stated purpose in his Gospel. By going through a process of correctly reading and interpreting the book of Acts, we can apply it to our own life and setting.

With this in mind, let's look at some of the passages from Acts that speak about missions. Acts 1:8 gives us the scope of missions. This verse gives us an outline for the book of Acts. One author has called Acts 1:8 the "Table of Con-

⁵⁹ Luke 1:4, CSB.

⁶⁰ Acts 1:1, CSB, emphasis ours.

tents”⁶¹ for the book. As the book of Acts proceeds, Christ’s disciples do, in fact, become His witnesses to all of these geographic areas.

From this verse we can also see the following three lessons about missions from Acts 1:8.⁶² First, from the phrase, “my witnesses,” we see that the theme of missions is Christ. Any and all preaching must center on the person of Christ, His life, His death, and His resurrection. Second, from the phrase, “you will be . . .” we see that the medium of missions is the church. While parachurch organizations and mission societies can be useful means, the gathered people of God – the churches – are the ones empowered and sent by Jesus into the world. Finally, from the phrase, “receive power,” we see that the power of missions is the Holy Spirit. Without the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the task of missions would be impossible.

In Acts 2:14-40 Luke records Peter’s sermon in Jerusalem during the feast of Pentecost. In that sermon, he “spells out the content of the disciples’ witness.”⁶³ The gospel is the story of the Bible – from the beginning. Our message begins in the Old Testament, so missionaries need to preach the whole counsel of God.

Immediately after Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:41-47, Luke reports how the people of God created a community and recounts the activities to which they were committed. This passage helps missionaries see what their goal is. This is the kind of community that missionaries want to see – a community who “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.”⁶⁴

Acts 4:12 teaches that Jesus is the only way of salvation. This idea is called the exclusivity of Christ. We will discuss this verse more when we discuss the theology of missions.

Later in the same chapter, Luke tells the story of Peter and John teaching and preaching about Jesus all over Jerusalem. They are ordered to not speak about Jesus. Their response in Acts 4:19-20 has echoes of Matthew 28:18. They say, “Whether it’s right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than God, you decide; for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen

⁶¹ Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation*, 130.

⁶² These three lessons come from J. Herbert Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), 51.

⁶³ Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation*, 132-3.

⁶⁴ Acts 2:42, CSB.

and heard.”⁶⁵ The authority to be Christ’s witnesses comes from Jesus, and no government has more authority than that.

The story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40 tells how the gospel first came to Sub-Saharan Africa. It is also an interesting text in regard to the issue of baptism. Finally, this passage also teaches that missionaries should always begin with the knowledge that people have about God and build on that.

Acts 13:2-3 records the first commissioning service for Christian missionaries. Barnabas and Saul are called out by the Holy Spirit “for the work to which I have called them.”⁶⁶ Notice what this church doing when God the Holy Spirit spoke to them. They were doing “normal” church life. They were worshipping and fasting. In other words, they were being obedient to be the church and do the things churches should always be doing. Obedience to what God has told us will lead always lead to further opportunities for service to Christ.

The Jerusalem Council is recorded in Acts 15. This is an important passage for intercultural missions, because it teaches that people need not become part of the same ethnic and cultural group as the missionary – be they Americans or Africans – in order to become Christians. This does not mean, however, that people do not have to make any cultural changes. The gospel demands transformation. This transformation must include “behavior, beliefs, and the worldview that underlies these.”⁶⁷

In Acts 16, Luke shows that Paul and his companions were dependent upon the Holy Spirit when deciding the where of missions. Luke records that they were “forbidden by the Holy Spirit” in verse 6 and that “the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them” in verse 7. In verse 9 Luke gives the account of the man from Macedonia who pleads with Paul in a vision to “cross over to Macedonia and help us!” In verse 10, Paul follows this vision, “concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” All in all, we see that Paul actively sought and followed the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Some contemporary preachers denounce proper doctrine and theology and emphasize passion and zeal as being more important than knowledge. For instance, American pastor Costi Hinn, the nephew of Prosperity Gospel preacher Benny Hinn, was warned about the teachers at his college. His father told him

⁶⁵ Acts 4:19-20, CSB.

⁶⁶ Acts 13:2, CSB.

⁶⁷ Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Academic, 2008), 11.

that “they’re all head knowledge with no heart.”⁶⁸ In contrast to this attitude, the Bible teaches in the account of Apollos in Acts 18:24-28 that passion for the gospel is not enough. Apollos’ teaching was incomplete. In the end, he learned the message of God “more accurately.” As missionaries, we need more than (but never less than) passion. We need proper knowledge.

The sudden ending of the book of Acts is quite confusing. However, that ending is a stark reminder that the task of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth has been left for us. The story is ongoing and will remain ongoing until Jesus returns. An international church-planting organization called Acts 29 gave themselves that name due to a “desire to be part of the continuing story of the early church.”⁶⁹

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

When the Lord is calling you for missions or any other work, we do not need to argue or ask questions such how about home, children, business, welfare, etc. We just need to obey and follow His way as instructed.

For instance, God used Philip at Samaria greatly. Great things were happening, Philip was cool in his comfort zone, and the church was growing! Later, to my surprise, God, through His angel, came to Philip and told him to move to the desert road. This never made sense to me. Nevertheless, Philip obeyed the Lord and moved to the desert road where he ministered to a man from Ethiopia. The profound question that lingers in mind is, if Philip disobeyed and did not go, would he have another opportunity to minister to the lost eunuch? I have no answer, but the idea of going out from “successful” ministry posts is extremely important. Many ministers in Malawi, especially those leading megachurches, do not bother to do missions. They think that they have no reason for doing that, because they have large and successful churches. However, I remember Charles Spurgeon once said that just because the church is large does not mean it is healthy. It could just mean it is swollen.

MISSIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: PAUL’S LETTERS

Paul was a pastor. Paul was a theologian. Paul was a missionary. We like to think that Paul had the heart of a pastor, the head of a theologian, and the hands (and

⁶⁸ Costi W. Hinn, *God, Greed, and the (Prosperity) Gospel: How Truth Overwhelms a Life Built on Lies* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan, 2019), 84

⁶⁹ Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, “How Acts 29 Survived—and Thrived—After the Collapse of Mars Hill,” 5 December 2017; accessed 4 July 2020; available from <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-acts-29-survived-and-thrived-after-the-collapse-of-mars-hill>

feet) of a missionary. All three of these roles played a part in how Paul wrote to churches and individuals. Eckhard Schnabel's investigation of Paul's letters revealed some themes concerning missions that occur throughout.⁷⁰

From 1 Corinthians 1:24; 2:1-5; 3:5-7; and Romans 15:18, Schnabel demonstrates that *God is the Lord of all missionary work*. God gives gifts to His people for the purpose of missions. These gifts are given to different people, and God's power is necessary for missions. Missions is not ultimately about the missionary, nor is it ultimately about unreached peoples and places. Missions is about Him.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

God is focus of every activity. He has the agenda in his hands; he empowers us for missions. He should be our focus.

From 1 Corinthians 3:7-9, Schnabel writes, *Effectiveness in missionary work . . . does not depend on people, programs, techniques or methods*. "Success" belongs to the Lord of the harvest – not the workers. This truth should be both humbling and inspiring. It should humble us when we realize that we cannot take credit for any perceived success. If missionaries successfully enter a new people group of place, if people come to Christ through evangelism, if disciples are growing in their faith, if healthy churches are planted and grown, and if leaders are developed and educated, then none of these "successes" are due to the cleverness or ability of the missionaries. "Success" is due to the kindness, mercy, and grace of Christ.

The truth that "success" belongs to the Lord should also inspire and give boldness to missionaries who realize that *God* will give growth to His church, and His sheep *will* hear his voice. Think of that person whom you believe is "too far away" to come to Christ. Is he or she murdering Christians and systematically trying to destroy the church? Saul was. God saved him and called him to become the greatest missionary and theologian in the history of the Church.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

We should always credit God in our efforts in ministry recognizing his Lordship. However, we should use programs, techniques, methods, and strategies as they are key to any mission activity. God has not left us to jump into mission with blind faith. While trusting Him, we should trust Him with our already laid out plans.

⁷⁰ All of these points (in italics below) are adapted from Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 151-4.

From 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2; 3:11; and 15:2, Schnabel concludes that *the crucified and risen Jesus Christ is the content, foundation, criterion, and measure of church planting and church growth*. Jesus and His Gospel are the most important factors in the work of missions. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are the content of the gospel. His promise to be with us and His command to go are the foundations upon which we do missions. Since He is the Lord of the harvest, He will judge and measure our missions' efforts.

Christ is the focal point of ministry, and the message should center on his death, burial and resurrection.

From 1 Corinthians 3:5; Colossians 1:23,25; 2 Corinthians 4:7-15; Colossians 1:24, Schnabel concludes that *Paul understands himself as a "servant" of God and of His Word*. God uses weak, frail, and broken people to share His gospel so that He will be glorified and not the vessels. God did not call you because He thought that you would be useful to Him. The Lord called you to bring glory to Himself by using jars of clay.

Many of the mistakes that many pastors make is to think that their success lies in what they have achieved physically – things like a fat bank account, educational achievements, number of people who attend church, the type of car the pastor drives, and so on. The concept of being a servant is out of the mind of many. Many of them want to be served rather than serving the people they are called to serve. In ministry, we should always remember that God sustains us in every activity and that we should honor him.

From 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; 3:1; 5:12, 20; 13:3 and Romans 15:18, Schnabel writes that *Paul understands his missionary work to be a public proclamation of the victory of God*. Paul's status as an ambassador of Christ is all that matters. He does not need to boast about himself or claim titles and positions for himself. Paul does not need to stress his importance. He is much more concerned with stressing the importance of his Saviour.

Stressing forth our achievements is the mistakes that most of us pastors make. Insidiously, we slide into pride of self-praise and achievements. We should understand that the reason we are in ministry is to proclaim Jesus and him alone.

In 1 Corinthians 3:6,10; 9:10 and Colossians 1:29, Schnabel teaches that Paul knows himself to be called by God to work as a pioneer missionary who "plants" churches, who lays the foundation as an "expert master builder," that is, who establishes new communities of believers. Missions is hard work, but a servant does not question his master. He does the work that he is told to do.

Knowing who called us and who we are in our ministry is key to our success. We should always be obedient to his word and calling.

From Romans 10:14-17; 15:18; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, 11; and Colossians 1:28, Schnabel concludes that *the central process of missionary work is the oral proclamation of the good news about Jesus Christ the Messiah and Savior*. The only way of salvation is through hearing the gospel. While our actions will communicate a lot about what we believe about the gospel, our actions alone cannot lead someone to a saving understanding of the gospel. There is an old saying, “Share the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words.” I have heard someone critique that statement by saying that it is like saying, “Give me your phone number, and, if necessary, use digits.” Well, guess what? It is always necessary to use digits when giving someone your phone number. Likewise, words are necessary for sharing the gospel.

Here, I must also differ by stating that salvation does not only come through hearing alone. Salvation might come through the verbal or written word. There are many testimonies, especially in prisons, about individuals who came to know Christ through the written word. Besides, how do we qualify deaf individuals who only read by braille? Salvation can be gotten even though tracts dropped by faithful Christians.

From 1 Corinthians 9:19,22-23 and Romans 1:14, Schnabel shows that *the foundational rule of missionary work is the consistent attention to the listeners. Jews have to be reached as Jews, and Gentiles have to be reached with the gospel as Gentiles*. Everyone needs to hear the gospel. Different audiences require the missionary to act differently and speak differently according to the audience. Missiologists call this contextualization. We will return to this concept later in the book.

This understanding is key to our ministry even as we evangelize. The mistake that most missionaries make is to try to change the culture they enter into with their culture. We should always contextualize.

According to Schnabel’s analysis of 1 Corinthians 9:19 and Romans 10:16, 18, *Paul is not satisfied with the “success” of his mission*. He always wants to reach more people. Paul does not have a goal of having so many people come to Christ or having a church with this many members. He always wants to reach *more* people.

This concept is key to our success in missions. There is no satisfaction in missions. Those who are truly called want to do more and more.

From 1 Corinthians 3:6-8, Schnabel points out that *Paul does not work alone*. All of the introductions to Paul’s letters indicate that he doesn’t work alone. Though one person may be the first to share the gospel and others follow up on that sharing, they are all doing the same work. One may plant (evangelize). One may water (disciple). God is always at work.

In ministry, we recognize the fact that it is not about one-man shows. Division of labour is important. We delegate work and recognize gifts that can help to build the church. Paul recognized that he was an evangelist and someone else was watering.

From reading Romans 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; and Ephesians 3:1-13, Schnabel writes that Paul is convinced that his missionary work takes place in the last days and that it has a significant role in God's revelation of the "mystery" of his plan of salvation. A Gentile converting to Christ without becoming Jews first is a testimony to God's redeeming and transforming grace.

According to Schnabel, in 1 Corinthians 3:8,12-15 Paul teaches that *missionaries, evangelists, preachers and teachers are responsible to God for their actions and their motivations*. God, not the church or other workers, will determine whether a particular missionary had a "successful" career. Some people will gather large groups of people into groups and will call these churches, but they may not be true churches. God will judge.

As ministers, we are responsible for our actions. We must be diligent in teaching God's word.

**Reread all the above principles and reflect on this question:
"How do these principles apply to your ministry?"**

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

These principles give a broader understanding on how to do missions. In Africa we have so many people who call themselves prophets, apostles, missionaries, pastors, bishops, and so many other titles. However, when looking at the real sense of their intention, it is not about the ministry of bringing people to Christ but gaining money from people and becoming popular. These kinds of ambitions and goals do not reflect proper missions.

I would rather be like Paul, who was never satisfied in preaching the gospel to a few people. I would like the people to be interested in listening to the gospel rather than focused in who am I.

The principle number nine relates the reality of so many leaders here in Africa. Sadly, even evangelical leaders are often more concerned with numerical growth of the church than with spiritual growth. During my ministry serving a church in Mozambique, most of the time that I could call the executive committee to evaluate the church activities, because they were only concerned about increasing the number of people joining our church.

Sometimes I would have conversations with some friends from Reedmed Christian Church, Assemblies of God, and others, and the concern most often expressed was the slow growth of the church numerically. That is still problem among African leaders. We need to understand Paul's intention for missions.

Ngwira: These principles should be applied to missions today. For instance, one principle of missions is doing missions under the authority of Jesus. However, the precise approach of executing missions will be different based on the context. Even today, as we are in the 21st century, we need to live a life that reflects the reality of the life we claim to have in Christ. Living in this way will help many people to come to our faith.

Our suffering for Christ may also help to compel many lost souls to Christ. It is just unfortunate that this kind of teaching is taboo to prosperity gospel preachers. But suffering for Christ is a biblical fact. In Philippians 1:29, the Apostle Paul tells the people at Philippi to enjoy not just the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for Christ.

MISSIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: GENERAL LETTERS AND REVELATION

The General Letters are the letters in the New Testament that were not written by the Apostle Paul. They are Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, and Jude. We will look at each book to see what they teach about missions.

Hebrews

The central purpose of the book of Hebrews is to show Jesus' supremacy over ALL things. Specifically, the book of Hebrews shows how the gospel is superior over Judaism.⁷¹ Throughout the course of the book, the author (whoever he may be) demonstrates that Jesus is superior to angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, the priesthood, the old covenant, and ordinances and sacrifices. The theme of the book of Hebrews is Jesus.

So, what does this theme have to do with missions? Since missions is largely concerned with introducing people to Jesus, teaching people about Jesus, and worshipping and glorifying Jesus, the book of Hebrews is all about missions! If

⁷¹ David L. Allen, "The Purpose of Hebrews" in *The New American Commentary: Hebrews, An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Scripture*, digital WORDsearch edition (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010).

we do not have a proper understanding of the person and work of Jesus, then we will not accurately share the gospel with people. If we are not correctly sharing the gospel with people, then we are not doing biblical missions. Theology and doctrine matter. Denominations, churches, and individuals with a deficient theology – especially a deficient Christology and soteriology – are not really doing missions.

James

The book of James teaches us that missions should have hands and feet. It has been said, “A hungry man has no ears.” Verbal proclamation of the gospel is central to evangelism and missions. Without a clear and accurate proclamation of the gospel, missions is not being done. The book of James reminds us, however, that sharing our faith without accompanying works of compassion and mercy is worthless.

James 2:1-4,14-17 can be read as James’ commentary on Jesus’ message about the division of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 as well as Jesus’ command to produce fruit in keeping with repentance in Luke 3 as well as other teaching in Luke.⁷² Jesus’ expectation (and James’s reminder in these passages) is that verbal evangelism will take into account the needs of the people with whom we are sharing the gospel.

Does James’s teaching mean that we should give anything to anyone anytime they ask something from us? Why or why not?

From Bento (Mozambique)

Well, it does not necessarily mean that. First we should know that we are human beings. We do not have everything. This argument does not say we should not give. Instead, we should do it according to our capacity and will. Giving is an art. The more we give the more we develop the skills to give. Sometimes giving is a danger, but it is also blessing. Giving is a danger to give without teaching the person how to work and find it by himself. Giving is blessing when you give kindly and help the person to survive. God is the giver, who gave His Son to the humanity. Giving is a something that we have to practice. We should first give them the Word of Salvation.

⁷² Luke 3:7-11; 6:30; 14:12-14

In Africa, many people think that missionaries are there to give money, build church buildings, and give food. That misconception grew even to the pastors and church leaders. The proverb I read once is **“Do not give me a fish, but teach me how to catch fish.”** If you give me fish, I will eat and finish once; but if you teach me how to catch fish, I will always eat fish.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

This does not literally mean to give anything to whoever asks you. But the Holy Spirit will guide and teach us on how to navigate in such things. For example, remember John when he and his friend were asked for money at the entrance of the gate. He prayed for him to have healing. However, it was all orchestrated under the Holy Spirit.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

First of all, we need to understand the mindset of the many people we want to evangelize. They think that when we reach them for Christ, they will acquire physical benefits. This mindset can be blamed on the first missionaries who gave handouts to desperate and poor Africans. This, in turn, went on to be a norm. We are not obliged to give each time the gospel is preached. In Africa, the gospel goes hand in hand with physical benefits. People will listen to the gospel only when they see physical benefits. But should we stop the gospel because of this mindset? Who knows? The same people might be transformed by the word we teach them.

1 and 2 Peter

The book of 1 Peter reminds us that all believers are sojourners and this world is not our home.⁷³ Peter speaks about the suffering of Christ and reminds us that suffering is part of the normal Christian experience.⁷⁴ From 1 Peter 4:12-19, we can learn two principles about missions. *First*, when we seek to live the life that Jesus has called us to (and this includes verbally sharing the gospel), then we will suffer. We should not question whether or not we are doing God’s

⁷³ Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey* in *Encountering Biblical Studies* series, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 364-5.

⁷⁴ D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 429.

will just because we are suffering. In fact, our suffering may be the prime indicator that we are doing *exactly* what God wants us to do.

Second, the *manner* in which we suffer may draw people to Christ. Earlier in this book, we saw that Simon of Cyrene and his family apparently became Christians after Simon was forced to carry Jesus' cross to Golgotha. It seems that the manner in which Jesus suffered was what drew Simon to Him. The way that we suffer can show that we value our Savior over our comfort. Suffering for the sake of Christ in the cause of missions does not guarantee that any individual will come to Christ, but it is an indication of faithfulness in the missionary task.

The book of 2 Peter reminds us of the importance of Scripture and the danger of false teachers.⁷⁵ Missionaries must continue to stress the centrality of Scripture in all that they preach and do. They also must warn about false teaching. In contemporary Africa, the most dangerous false teachings are coming from Neo-Pentecostalism and the Prosperity Gospel movements. The Roman Catholic Church also continues to influence Christian theology negatively throughout the continent. John Philips explains, "Peter wrote his first letter because he was moved to the depth of his being by the *suffering* of the people of God. He wrote his second letter because he was moved by the *seduction* of his people."⁷⁶

What should our response be to false teachers in our communities?

From Bento (Mozambique)

That is profound question and very interesting, I may use Paul's words to his young man Timothy, "**Preach the Word!**" This *is* the work we were given to do. I think we are called to take our time in preaching the truth and not be concerned about false teachers in the communities.

However, if the false teachers come into our churches, we are responsible and should rebuke them strongly. The Apostle Peter writes that God did not spare angels who sinned, so we should know that false teachers are under condemnation. Let us not open room for false teachers into the community of God.

⁷⁵ Elwell and Yarbrough, 366.

⁷⁶ John Philips, "Part 1 Introduction" of "Exploring the Second Epistle of Peter" in *Exploring the Epistles of Peter: An Expository Commentary* in *The John Phillips Commentary Series*, WORDsearch digital edition (Kregel Publications, 2005)

From Tapiwa Ngwira (Malawi)

Our response towards false teachers, theologically also known as heretical teachers, is to replace that false teaching with sound biblical teaching in our churches, family, TV, radio and other Christian gatherings.

Second, we need to respond to the heretical teachers by introducing seminaries and Bible schools that will be faithful to the Bible and will stick to expositional preaching of the Word. A good number of people are led astray by false teaching due to ignorance of proper theological training.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

False teachers have infiltrated our communities in a huge number. Some time ago we used to have witchdoctors and magicians. All these people have crept in church to mislead people. Our attitude and response should be that of guarding and preaching the true biblical message.

1, 2, and 3 John

The topic of assurance of salvation is important to missions – especially when doing missions in a place or among a people who have been exposed to Christianity. For instance, Europe was once the center of Christianity. The Great Century of Christian Missions (that will be discussed below) was launched from Europe. Europe is still home to many beautiful church buildings and was home to the Protestant Reformation. Unfortunately, the number of vibrant Christian believers living in Europe is very small. However, many in Europe still consider themselves to be Christians.

When attempting to share the gospel in a place like Europe, missionaries might ask an individual, “Has there ever been a time in your life when you have made Jesus your Lord and Savior?” Similarly, sometimes an individual is asked to give his or her testimony and are told that their testimony should include three elements – my life before Christ, how I met Christ, and my life since meeting Christ. The implication of that kind of question and that kind of formula for a testimony is that the moment that one came to Christ should be clear to the individual and that not being able to formulate such a testimony or give a clear answer to such a question might mean that the individual is not truly saved.

Interestingly, the Apostle John does not take this approach when writing about assurance. Instead, John says that we should ask other kinds of question.

1 John 2:7-11; 3:11-18; and 4:7-10 point to the question, “Do you love other Christians?” 1 John 2:15-17 indicates the question, “Do you love the world or the Father?” 1 John 1:8,10 should lead to the question, “Do you claim to have no sin?” while 1 John 1:6 asks, “Do you continue in ongoing sin?” An individual’s responses to these kinds of questions, according to the Apostle John, are clear indicators of whether he or she should have confidence that he or she is truly a Christian.

Based on the verses above, what would you do if a member of your church asked you how to know if he really is a Christian?

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

In Africa many church members are still doubting their assurance of their personal salvation. To be Christian mean to have Christ in heart, means to be transformed by Christ and to live a life dependent on Christ alone. John wrote to the Church, so his writings will help to examine if someone is a Christian or not. If a person says he is a Christian while still hating people and still loving the things of the world and continues in sin definitely, then he is not a Christian.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

My immediate response would be a real Christian is not subjected or enslaved with sin. I may have time with him/her to make clarification on the term subjected or enslaved. In simple it means that you are always been driven by sin, but a child of God once sin he/she goes for confession not repentance and this happens under the influence the Holy Spirit inside of a believer. The righteousness of a Christian is totally based on Jesus Christ. I have no sin in me because Jesus has taken that way from him. The key phrase is “in me” it is no longer in the life any Christian. I may refer him to the Book of Romans 8:14 for assurance of his salvation.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

By genuinely showing love to brothers and sisters, one should love God more than the things of this world. True believers should not be persistent in sin.

John’s second and third letter teach us to support the work of missions by rejecting false teachers and supporting missionaries. In 2 John 10, we learn that we must not endorse anyone who teaches a false gospel. When we do so we tell a lie about who God is and what His gospel means.

The converse of that idea is found in 3 John 5-8. From those verses, we see that when we support the work of other brothers' efforts in missions, we become their partners and show ourselves to be co-workers in the truth!

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

These verses are all about supporting the people who are truly workers of God. We may support through finances, prayers, motivating them, calling them and knowing much their challenges and success.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

These verses give us a picture that we need to be supporting the work of missions either with funds or whatever may be possible. It is not a surprise to see John Piper using these options; go, give, pray or disobey. This leaves us not to have an excuse in getting involved in the work of missions. If missionaries come into our community, it should be our responsibility as believers to feed, provide shelter, and help them go around in the community and interact with them.

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

I educated my brother-in-law who was sending tithe every month to Benny Hinn every month. He belonged to a local church where he was not able to support but opted for Ben.

We should avoid those who teach falsely and encourage those who preach the true gospel.

Jude

The book of Jude was written by the younger brother of Jesus. In this important book, the author reminds us to contend for the one true gospel. Just as 2 Peter and 2 John warn us against false teachers, Jude encourages us to “contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all.”⁷⁷ Since evangelism is the sharing of the evangel – the gospel, the good news – then a loss of the evangel would kill missions.

⁷⁷ Jude 3 (HCSB)

What does it mean to “contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all?”

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

African churches suffer duo membership. What do I mean? Most people are members at the certain church and attend church service in the morning, but at the same time he/she is member at the certain ministry.

The teaching is different when it comes to doctrinal issues. These people are not stable in the faith that was delivered to him. Most of the so-called prophets in Africa teach that anointing water or oil is more important than faith. They offer anointing oil and water to the members.

So, to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all means that no one can take away the faith that we have in Christ Jesus. Paul taught that even if an angel came from heaven teaching another different gospel from the one you received, do not accept it. Remain in the truth until Christ comes.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

This means “the faith” consist of the gospel proclaimed by Christ and the Apostles. It is the fixed and unalterable truth given by Holy Spirit. And with my little knowledge of Greek, the word **contend** describes the battle that the faithful believer must fight in defense of faith. In other words, it literally means struggle or suffer.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

I think it means to defend the truth aggressively as it was taught to them by Jesus and the Apostles. Even today, we must be able to stand up against those who are preaching false messages

Revelation

Revelation, the final book of the Bible, is written by the Apostle John. This apocalyptic book tells us that missions will result in Jesus being worshipped by all kinds of people. According to Revelation 7:9-10, some individuals from ALL peoples will one day worship Jesus. This is the sure and steady hope of missions. It will accomplish the goal of gathering worshippers for Jesus. This passage in Revelation 7 acts as a reversal of the story of the Tower of Babel in

Genesis 11. Instead of many languages being a barrier to human glory, multiple languages are being used for the glory of God in Christ.

CONCLUSION

The Bible is the basis for missions. Missions is a consistent and constant theme in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. As we move to the next section of this book on theological issues in missions, the Bible will be the foundation for all theological formulation. The Bible will also be the motivation for our missionary practice and the anchor of the missionary call. It will be the evaluative grid through which we will assess the practices of various missionaries throughout the history of missions and any and all proposed missions methods. In other words, while we mark the end of the section of this book on the biblical basis for missions, we will never leave the Bible behind.

THEOLOGICAL ISSUES IN MISSIONS

Since evangelism is the central function of missions, one of our central theological concerns is soteriology – the study of salvation. While the topic of soteriology is broad and contains many roads down which we can travel, we will only concern ourselves with the question, “Is Jesus the only Saviour?” There are five basic positions responses to that question.

SOTERIOLOGICAL POSITIONS

Universalism

The first position is known as universalism. In answer to the question, “Is Jesus the only Savior?” universalists say, “**NO!**”¹ The reason that they say “NO!” is because universalism is the teaching that all people will be saved. There are a few different types of universalists, but we will concern ourselves with those who claim to be Christians. These so-called “Christian” universalists see God’s love as so powerful that it will ultimately “win” and, therefore, all people will be saved. Some universalists say that Man is too good to be damned while other universalists say that God is too good to damn Man.² Some universalists, like Origen in the early church, believed that those who sin against God can be restored “by a process of discipline and punishment that could continue after death . . . [and] given unlimited time, it would result in all souls being united to God, including Satan and the devils.”³

Universalism is theologically and biblically indefensible. Theologically, many contemporary universalists tend to claim that God’s love is his essential at-

¹ Ebbie Smith, “Contemporary Theology of Religions,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 416.

² Timothy K. Beougher, “Are All Doomed to be Saved? The Rise of Modern Universalism,” in *Who Will Be Saved? Defending the Biblical Understanding of God, Salvation, and Evangelism*, ed. Paul R. House and Gregory A. Thornbury (Wheaton, IL, USA: Crossway Books, 2000), 104 n6.

³ Donald R. Dunavant, “Universalism” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), 989.

tribute. They use this assertion to “prove” universalism. However, this position simply ignores the justice and wrath of God – which are equally clear in Scripture. The theological doctrine of God’s simplicity means that we cannot separate his love from his justice or wrath. We have to take all of them together and seek to understand how they work together. We cannot assert that one attribute overrides the others.

In addition to being theologically weak, universalism is also unfaithful to Scripture. Verses like Acts 4:12, Hebrews 9:27, Galatians 6:7, and others clearly make universalism impossible. Simply put, it is a biblically indefensible position. As Beougher writes, “In the final analysis the issue comes back to the integrity of Scripture.”⁴

Pluralism

Pluralism also answers the question, “Is Jesus the only Saviour? with a clear “No.” In pluralism all people will be saved by following their own path. While pluralist theology differs somewhat from one person to another, there are some common characteristics:⁵

Pluralists base revelation primarily on religious experience

In doing so, pluralists are elevating the authority of experience over the authority of Scripture.

Pluralists consider the doctrine of Christ’s incarnation the product of myth

If one believes in the incarnation (as the Bible defines it), then pluralism would not be possible, since pluralism’s understanding of incarnation as myth impacts the way that they understand the nature of the atonement (and, therefore, salvation).

Pluralists champion the salvific nature of all religions

One of the most vocal proponents of pluralism is John Hick. Hick proposes that “Christianity is not the only way of salvation, but one of several.”⁶ According to Hick, all religions have the ability to save – if one is a faithful adherent to that religion. Some pluralists say that we must follow the religion of “our peo-

⁴ Beougher, “Are All Doomed to be Saved?” 99.

⁵ These characteristics are taken from Smith, “Contemporary Theology of Religions,” 417.

⁶ Smith, “Contemporary Theology of Religions,” 418.

ple” – that our religion should be based on our geographic, family, or tribal connections.

Pluralists speak of the unknowable and unknown God

Hick also believes that “the real God, the nominal God, appears to people in the various religions in ways that are both different and conflicting, both misleading and inadequate.”⁷ In other words, pluralists believe that since God cannot be truly known, any religious system can lead to God.

Annihilationism

Annihilationists answer the question of Jesus being the only Saviour, “Yes, but . . .” This position says that while salvation is limited to those who profess faith in Christ, those who do not profess in Christ will be annihilated and will not face eternal judgment/punishment in hell. While this position might be more acceptable to modern hearts and minds, it is not biblical.

Matthew 18:8; 25:41,46; 26:24 and Revelation 20:10 all confirm that those who die outside of Christ will spend eternity apart from hope in everlasting torment.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

These verses show that if the believers will be in heaven forever, then unbelievers will be in hell forever. We should remember that our sins bear an eternal consequence since we sin against an Eternal Being.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

The concept of Annihilationism is not biblical though it sounds logical by arguing that a just God will not punish a person permanently for a temporal sin. But the portions of Scripture stated gives evidence that unbelieving persons, including the Devil and his fallen Angels, will be thrown in lake of fire as an eternal punishment. In simple words, it means that if believers will be in heaven forever, unbelievers will be in hell forever, too. The Annihilationist fail to fully comprehend the idea of eternity. The verses quoted contradict the idea of Annihilationism, which is the idea that unbelievers will not suffer eternal punishment.

⁷ Smith, “Contemporary Theology of Religions,” 419.

Inclusivism

Inclusivism answers the questions about Jesus being the only way of salvation with “Yes, but . . .”⁸ Inclusivism is the idea that “salvation is accessible apart from special evangelization.”⁹ In this perspective, “God saves all people who recognize their spiritual need and throw themselves on the mercy of God, irrespective of whether they actually hear and believe the gospel.”¹⁰ Another type of inclusivists say that “all will ultimately be evangelized, if not before, then after, death.”¹¹ Two proponents of inclusivism are John Sanders and Clark Pinnock. Inclusivists share some common points:¹²

Inclusivists insist on universally accessible salvation

Inclusivists insist that neither ethnicity nor geography limits someone’s access to salvation. On this point, we can agree that universally accessible salvation is desirable – but not a reality. Universal accessibility to the gospel is one of the goals of missions organizations. They seek to make the gospel understandable and accessible to all people. We also should affirm that neither ethnicity nor geography nor language nor culture should be a barrier to salvation. When those things are barriers to the gospel, the church’s task is to get around, over, and through those barriers.

Inclusivists insist that universally accessible salvation differs from universalism

Inclusivists do not believe that all people will be saved. Certain people like unrepentant murders and adulterers will not be saved. Bible-believing Christians can agree with inclusivists on this point.

Inclusivists see a difference between Christians and believers

Inclusivists insist that all Christians are believers, but not all believers are Christians. In other words, they believe that some “true believers” have never heard of Jesus. This idea points us to the central idea of inclusivism – which is the next point.

⁸ Smith, “Contemporary Theology of Religions,” 419.

⁹ David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 56.

¹⁰ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms*, 56.

¹¹ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms*, 57. This position is very close to the idea supported by Origen of God’s love winning in the eternal state mentioned earlier.

¹² Smith, “Contemporary Theology of Religions,” 422-6.

Inclusivists believe redemption is possible through non-Christian religions

Those who seek after God in other religions are sometimes called “holy pagans” or “pagan saints.” Some have said that the religions of the world are full of these types of people – sometimes referred to as “anonymous Christians.”¹³

Inclusivists believe that salvation is possible through general revelation

While biblical evidence teaches that general revelation is only sufficient for condemnation, inclusivists teach that those who respond to general revelation properly can be saved.

From Tapina Ngwira (Malawi)

Romans 1:18-20 gives a clear picture that some things that may be well comprehended by the creation that we are surrounded with. Creation portrays the righteousness and holiness of God. The Scripture does not say that one may be saved through general revelation but may only know that there in an intelligent and wise God that exists. One of the Scriptures that shows that salvation is found in Christ alone is Acts 4:12.

Inclusivists support the concept of postmortem salvation

Pinnock believes that 1 Peter 3:19-20 and 4:6 give support to the idea that people will have the chance to respond to Christ after death – though not all of them will respond positively.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

According to Hebrews 9:27, there is no second chance after death. We face judgement after death. Jesus was not suffering in hell. His work was actually finished on the cross.

From Tapina Ngwira (Malawi)

Personally, in my Christian life, 1 Peter 3:19-20 has been one of the problematic passages for me. I have always found it difficult to interpret, and it has puzzled me for a long time. However, my standpoint on this is that faith comes by hear-

¹³ Philip Graham Ryken, *Is Jesus the Only Way?* (Wheaton, IL, USA: Crossway Books, 2012), 27. Please note that Ryken is not promoting this idea. He is reporting Clark Pinnock's position in *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan, 1992).

ing and hearing of the word of God. This tells me that someone who is dead in sin will not have opportunity to hear the word of God again. Jesus wanted to demonstrate and show his deity and sovereignty that He has power over life and death. God sent believers to preach the gospel to the lost all over the world. If you do not respond to this call, nothing else will happen. The people preach and the Holy Spirit does the work of regeneration in the lives of sinful people.

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

The people that Apostle Peter refers to here may have been Christians that heard him preaching and died before responding in faith. The Bible is clear that today is the day of salvation. The chance of people to get salvation is now. After death there is no more hope of salvation; rather after death is the time to wait for last judgement.

Exclusivism (also called Restrictivism or Evangelist)

In response to the question we've posed, "Is Jesus the only Savior?" exclusivism says "Yes!" While some have criticized the word "exclusivism" as negative sounding, the concept behind exclusivism is sound. Exclusivists believe that conscious faith in Christ (before one dies) is required for salvation. Charles Van Engen presents what he calls an "evangelist paradigm" that consists of the following three positions:¹⁴

Faith-particularist

Van Engen writes that a personal faith relationship with Jesus is necessary for salvation. Paul G. Hiebert promoted the idea of "centered sets" as opposed to "bounded sets."¹⁵ The goal of evangelism is to get people to meet Jesus and to center their lives on Him through repentance and faith.

Culturally pluralist

All cultures have some sinful elements. However, not every element of non-Christian cultures is sinful.

¹⁴ Charles Van Engen, "The Uniqueness of Christ," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 4th Edition, ed. Ralph Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 179.

¹⁵ Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Academic, 2008), 36.

Ecclesiologically inclusivists

Missions and evangelism are not motivated by increasing the number of names on our church rolls but on seeing God's Kingdom expand. We should seek to make disciples for Christ regardless of the church the new believer affiliates with.

Timothy Tennent prefers the term “*engaged* exclusivist” and promotes two qualifiers for this position. First, Tennent insists that we must recognize that there is continuity between general revelation and special revelation. General revelation, according to Tennent, acts as a *preparatio evangelica* in all peoples so that they have some “sense of the Divine.”¹⁶ Second, Tennent states, “Engaged exclusivism affirms the notion that good theology must be missiologically focused.”¹⁷

Whether we call this position, “exclusivism,” “engaged exclusivism,” or the “evangelist” position, we must affirm that explicit personal faith in Christ as the one's only hope is necessary for salvation. As Sri Lankan theologian Ajith Fernando writes, “The Bible does not give us sufficient grounds to entertain a hope of salvation for anyone apart from the gospel.”¹⁸ As a result of this conviction, we must also agree with Nigerian theologian, Yusufu Turaki, who writes, “The universal concept and scope of Christ's salvation gives the church and believers the strength and power to present and proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the whole world inspite [sic] of claims of world religions and cultures to the contrary.”¹⁹ Turaki goes on to assert this mission for the church because he believes that the truth of Christ's uniqueness for salvation “negates any claim of modernism, pluralism, relativism, secularism, universalism, or animism . . .”²⁰

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

J. Herbert Kane wrote, “Nowhere is the sovereignty of God more clearly seen than in the Christian mission, and this is in several ways.”²¹ This topic, the sov-

¹⁶ Timothy C. Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Academic, 2002), 26.

¹⁷ Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable*, 26.

¹⁸ Ajith Fernando, *The Christian's Attitude Toward World Religions: Responding to the Idea that Christianity is Just Another Religion* (Wheaton, IL, USA: Tyndale House Publishers, 1987), 139.

¹⁹ Yusufu Turaki, *The Unique Christ for Salvation: The Challenge of the Non-Christian Religions and Cultures* (Nairobi, Kenya: International Bible Society Africa, 2001), 252-253.

²⁰ Turaki, *The Unique Christ for Salvation*, 252-253.

²¹ J. Herbert Kane, *Understanding Christian Missions*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 86-96. All of the principles below are taken from this resource.

ereignty of God, is the second theological topic that we will cover. Kane goes on to list several ways in which God displays His sovereignty in the task of missions.

God is sovereign in His Dealing with the Missionary

God's choice of the man

Think of the some of the men from the Bible whom God called into ministry: Abraham, Moses, David, Jeremiah, and Paul. Did any of these men “volunteer” to serve God? No. Abraham came from an idol-worshipping family. Moses was a murderer who could not speak well. David was so unremarkable that even his own father did not think to call him in from the fields when the Prophet Samuel came to his house. Jeremiah was young. Paul not only murdered people but systematically sought to destroy the people of God. God sovereignly chooses those who will serve Him through missionary service.

The kind of ministry.

Who was the Apostle to the Gentiles? Who was the Apostle to the Jews? While Peter was called the apostle to the Jews and Paul the apostle to the Gentiles, their ministry was not their own choosing. Paul was indoctrinated in the Hebrew Scriptures; Peter was an “untrained fisherman.” God chose their respective ministry, and those choices did not “make sense” from our perspective. The uneducated fisherman was sent to the Jews. The Jew of Jews (Saul of Tarsus/Paul) was sent to the Gentiles. God is sovereign over the kind of missions ministry to which individuals are assigned.

The sphere of the ministry

As we saw in our discussion of the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit led Paul on his missionary journeys. The Spirit of Jesus directed Paul's ministry. He continues to direct missions today.

The duration of the ministry

Stephen was martyred shortly after becoming a deacon while Philip served for many years. James was beheaded, and his brother lived many years in service to Christ.

When we first arrived in Nigeria (the first country where we served in Africa), one Nigerian brother prayed and thanked God for sending my family to Nigeria “for this season” of our lives. I was offended. I thought, “We’re not

here for a season; we're here to stay!" Eleven months later we were evacuated from Nigeria due to security concerns. He was right; it was just "a season," but I didn't know that. Upon reflection, all missions assignments are "for a season."

There are certainly ways that we, as ministers, can build bridges for the gospel to cross and can also put up barriers to ministry "success." However, we must admit that ultimately God is the one who "gives the growth" in all types of ministry – especially in missions.

God is sovereign in His Dealing with the Sinner

The fate of the sinner is decided by a judicial act of God, so that only those who are "drawn" by the Father will ever come to Christ

As Kane writes, "Without the seeking Shepherd the sheep would never be found."²² While a discussion of the theological concept of election is beyond the scope of this book, it is sufficient to quote Jesus who said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44).

The very faith by which a person believes is itself the gift of God

Ephesians 2:8-9 is often quoted to prove that salvation is not by works. Truly, this glorious truth must be recognized. We must *also* see in this beautiful verse that the very faith that we exercise is itself a gift from God. J.I. Packer wrote, "If we forget that only God can give faith, we shall start to think that the making of converts depends, in the last analysis, not on God but on us."²³

Only persons united to Christ by the Holy Spirit remain steadfast in the faith; the others fall away

Some of those who called themselves Christ's disciples fell away. Some who identify with Christ or His Church will walk away from the faith they once proclaimed. Upon an examination of John 6:60-69, we see that Jesus "refused to panic when the crowds began to dwindle."²⁴

According to 1 John 2:19, we learn that there will be some who make an initial decision or indication that they have come to Christ, but when they walk away, you will know that they never really belonged to the Church.

²² Kane, *Understanding Christian Mission*, 91.

²³ J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1961), 27; quoted in Kane, *Understanding Christian Mission*, 91.

²⁴ Kane, *Understanding Christian Mission*, 92.

God is sovereign in how He orders world events.

The times and seasons are in God's control

God sets the times and seasons. Ecclesiastes teaches us that there is a time for everything. Acts 1:6-8 teaches us that the Father alone sets the time for world events to come to pass.

The opening and the closing of doors are the prerogative of God, and open and closed doors involved a great mystery; but God has explained the mystery in the Scriptures.

Read Ephesians 1:11, 1 Corinthians 10:32, Psalm 76:10, Daniel 4:35, and Isaiah 55:8-9 and reflect on how these verses apply to missions.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

These verses are generally talking about the sovereignty of God over his creation. Him alone stands lofty and lives in unapproachable lights. He controls everything beneath and above.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

These texts apply to our lives that God is a sovereign. He does everything that pleases Him, and nobody can question Him. There are moments that He allows believers to pass through painful moments to show his sovereignty by delivering his people from judgment. God thinks different than us. He is infinite being while humans are finite beings. We will not be able to comprehend every step that He is taking us on or any mission field He is leading us into. It may happen as you are the on course of your comfort zone in a mega-church, and then He tells you to go the typical village. You have no time to argue with Him. He knows what He is doing. We just need to obey.

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

God is sovereign, He is the owner of all things including personal matters. In Isaiah He says even the thoughts of man He knows, even the ways of man He knows nothing is hidden to Him. Man should do anything which is good to glorify Him alone and to build the church of God. The thoughts of God are higher than man's thoughts, which means that man is limited but God is not limited.

God's command to us is to get on with the job of world evangelization whether the circumstances are favorable or unfavorable

When unfavorable times come, God is still at work. Sometimes God will call people to stay, and He will call others to go. Remember Peter and Paul in prison. In Acts 5:17-21 Peter escaped prison when given the chance. In Acts 16:25-34 Paul stayed in jail. God was sovereign over both.

The sovereignty of God does not mean that Christians have no responsibility in terms of missions. Why not?

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

One thing I love about God is that he does not play events like dice nor leave anything to chance. He carefully and divinely orchestrates events according to his ordained purpose. Having worked fishing on the lake with my father, missions is the same. One needs to prepare by learning and buying fishing requirements such as nets, boats, hooks, paddles and so on. This means that I need to do my part before I go on missions. I need to do the planning and all the needful things as well as learning from the experience. God is the one who causes people to be saved. Peter fished the whole night and caught nothing, but when they went with sovereign Lord, they caught plenty

From Tapiwa Ngvira (Malawi):

Simply put, it is GOD'S Grace and HIS alone in which HE gives us a chance to be participants in HIS Kingdom work. Could GOD do it all Himself? Absolutely!! Does GOD "need us" for anything at all??!! Not even a little bit. And in that, lies the unbelievable blessing to walk with and glorify the Creator of the heavens and the earth!

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

The issue of the sovereignty of God has been misinterpreted in many ways. I have heard people say that through God's sovereignty, He is able to bring all people to Him without our going for evangelism or even thinking about missions. As a theologian, I condemn this false teaching.

The Bible is clear that God is concerned about the sinful state of human beings. He showed love and desire to bring man to His fellowship. In fact, Moses recorded in Genesis 3:9 that God **called** to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" God seeks the lost person. During Jesus' end of His ministry,

He gave the instructions and mission to the apostles to go and make disciples (Matt. 28:19). This mission was not commissioned only for the eleven disciples that were present on that place but rather foretells that those who believe will have this responsibility. The summary of Christian work is to take missions seriously .

CONCLUSION

Much more could be written about theological issues in missions. By the grace of God, African theologians and missionaries will be on the forefront of writing about those issues in the years ahead. For the purposes of this work, however, instead of looking at those issues systematically, we will see how theological issues intersect with the final two legs of the missiological stool – the history of missions and the practice of missions.

HISTORY OF MISSIONS

In Galatians 4:4, what does Paul mean when he wrote that “the time was ripe” or that “the time had fully come?” Some have protested attempts to quantify this statement with historical realities that were occurring at the time. They believe that doing so challenges God’s sovereignty. Instead, we should just take it to mean “when God was ready,” but this perspective undermines the truth that God always uses means to accomplish his purposes – sometimes those means are historical realities. Therefore, we will look at some general factors for the time “being ripe” for the coming of Christ.¹

Roman Road System

While the Persians were the first to develop a road system (to deliver mail), the Romans’ road system was better. An old phrase says, “All roads lead to Rome.” The Roman road system was revolutionary for its time. People were able to travel from town to town and village to village as a result of this system. Travel to various villages and towns was fast and relatively easy.²

Pax Romana (Latin for “the Peace of Rome”)

As a result of Rome’s military strength, peace prevailed in the first century world of the Church. Using the aforementioned roads, Paul and other evangelists were able to travel from city to city and place to place without a great deal of fear “in relative safety and astonishing speeds.”³ While robbers and thieves might have been a threat, there was no area of civil war that had to be avoided.

¹ These factors come from a lecture by Dr. John Mark Terry at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and were originally presented by Latourette, *A History*, 3-30.

² Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (Downer’s Grove, IL, USA: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 203.

³ Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 1556.

The fear of the Roman army led to a general peace throughout the Empire. The resultant prosperity allowed for the spread of ideas.⁴

Greek Language

As Paul moved from town to town, he was able to preach in Greek and did not have to learn languages or have translators with him. While Latin was also widely used, the Greek language was used “in religious contexts in which people sought ‘direct communication with the deity.’”⁵ The use of Greek gave this new faith “an Empire-wide hearing.”⁶

Greek Philosophy

In addition to the Greek language, Greek philosophy and education was very open to new ideas. As Latourette writes, “The religious aspects of philosophy attracted many of those who suffered from the hunger for a satisfying faith which was so prominent in the Roman Empire.”⁷

Presence of Jews and Synagogues

We will return to the place that synagogues played in early Christian missions later when we see how the gospel spread in the Second Century. For now, we will just mention that synagogues were “the central institution of Diaspora Judaism.”⁸ As such, they often provided a “starting point” for preachers wishing to promote the idea of Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah.

GROWTH IN THE SECOND CENTURY (A.D. 100-199)

Christianity in the second century “spread naturally along the main roads and rivers of the Roman Empire.”⁹ By the end of the second century the gospel had

⁴ Latourette, *A History*, 21.

⁵ Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 1100.

⁶ Latourette, *A History*, 22.

⁷ Latourette, *A History*, 28.

⁸ Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 645

⁹ John Mark Terry, “The History of Missions in the Early Church,” in *Missiology*, 168.

spread into Arabia, North Africa, and into Europe. It is during this time that churches in North Africa became the first Latin-speaking churches. The churches in the area now known as Turkey (then called Asia Minor) became very strong. We can look at the church at Rome as an example of other churches during the second century.

Contrary to what one might think, we know very little about how the church in Rome was started. Some have suggested that Paul himself had planted the church, but the entire letter of Romans indicates that Paul had not yet been to the church.¹⁰ Others have proposed that Peter was the founder of the church at Rome. However, once again, the internal evidence of the Romans itself indicates otherwise. Additionally, the preface to a commentary written in the 4th century gives additional credibility to the theory that neither Peter nor Paul were involved in the planting of the church at Rome: “They [the Romans] had embraced the faith of Christ, although they saw no sign of mighty works nor *any* of the apostles.”¹¹ So, if it was not Paul or Peter, then who planted this church?

It is likely that Jews and/or Gentile proselytes or God-fearers who had been present when the Holy Spirit came on the Apostles in Jerusalem at Pentecost and were converted under Peter’s preaching there were the founders of the church at Rome.¹² Internal evidence from the New Testament books of Romans and Acts indicates that the church was made up of both Jewish and Gentile Christians. While Paul mentions several people by name in Romans, we just want to point out one – a man named Rufus mentioned in Romans 16:13. When taken together with evidence from Mark 15:21, the Rufus mentioned by Paul in Romans was likely the son of Simon, the man who was forced to carry Jesus’ cross to Golgotha. Could it have been that Simon’s close observation of the sufferings of Jesus attracted him to the gospel and resulted in his entire family coming to faith?

GROWTH IN THE THIRD CENTURY (A.D. 200-325)

Even though Jesus spent most of his life and ministry in rural areas, the church in the second century spread primarily to cities. The term pagan comes from the

¹⁰ D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 242.

¹¹ Bruce, *The Spreading Flame*, 136, f.n. 2, emphasis ours.

¹² Both Bruce and Carson/Moo/Morris put forward this theory and reference Acts 2:10 as evidence.

Latin word for “rural person.”¹³ In fact, up until A.D. 260, church growth was confined to the cities, but around that year, rural people began to come to Christ. Due to civil unrest due to the threat of Germanic tribes invading the Roman Empire and economic hard times, “rural folk began to question their traditional cults as the hard times continued . . . [and] the gospel offered both social justice and assurance of power over demonic forces.”¹⁴ Rodney Stark believes that the church grew in the third century because of its ability to provide “potent antidotes to life’s miseries here and now.”¹⁵

Are churches in Africa today providing answers to the questions that people are asking and addressing the problems that people have?

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

No, most of our churches do not do that. Our churches fail to provide answers that people ask and do not address the problems that people have. This is because most of the Church leaders including pastors do not spend much of their time with the Bible and are untrained in theological matters and church traditions. In fact, people in Malawian churches do not know how to stand in what they believe. In other words, most of our local Churches are not oriented toward apologetics.

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

In our context, by this I mean in our African churches, most churches are not providing answers for the people instead, they are promising them blessings and prosperity. The people themselves are bent to believe in false prophecies that have dead ends in their fulfillment. Very few churches are addressing the people’s problems holistically.

EARLY CHURCH MISSIONARY METHODS

We have seen a brief *history* of the growth of the Church from Acts until A.D. 325. Now we will discuss the missionary and evangelistic *methods* employed by

¹³ Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (New York, Harper One, 2006), 2.

¹⁴ Terry, “History,” 169.

¹⁵ Stark, *Cities of God*, 30.

the church from the time of Acts until A.D. 325. The following missionary and evangelistic methods were employed by the early church.¹⁶

Public Evangelism

Synagogue Preaching

As mentioned early, Jewish synagogues played an important role in missions during the early church period. Just as the Apostle Paul did in Acts, presenting Jesus as the Messiah in the synagogue was an early method for evangelism. Anyone might be called upon to read from the Scriptures during a service at a synagogue. Accordingly, early Jewish Christians were given plenty of opportunities to stand, read a passage of Scripture, and then demonstrate how that passage of Scripture is fulfilled in Jesus. In doing so, these early Jewish evangelists were able to communicate clearly who Jesus was, how He fulfilled the Law of Moses, and how He was the One to whom the prophets pointed.

Open-Air Preaching

Both Jesus and Paul preached in public places, but they did not invent this kind of public preaching. Jewish, Christian, and even pagan preachers all practiced “open air” preaching. As reflected in the New Testament, at times the preacher was welcomed warmly by the crowd whom he addressed, and at times he was mocked and even put in physical danger.

Teaching Evangelism

W.O. Carver writes, “It was of the very essence of Christianity to become a teaching religion and to create and promote intelligence and culture.”¹⁷ It was in this culture of teaching and learning where “teachers evangelized both their students and the surrounding communities.”¹⁸

Testimony

The zeal with which early church Christians shared their personal testimonies was a major factor in evangelism. The English word martyr comes from the Greek word *μαρτύριον* which means witness, and these martyrs (or witnesses)

¹⁶ These various methods are taken from John Mark Terry, *Evangelism: A Concise History* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994).

¹⁷ William Owen Carver, *The Course of Christian Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1949), 50.

¹⁸ Terry, *Evangelism*, 37.

spoke both privately and publicly about the saving power of Christ. Church historian Michael Green writes, “It was this utter assurance of the Christians that they were right about God and Christ and salvation, which in the end succeeded in convincing the pagan world that it was in error.”¹⁹

Household Evangelism

The informality, intimacy, and ability to have a genuine dialogue made household evangelism crucial to the growth of the early church.²⁰ Terry notes that the “hospitality offered by Christian homes no doubt influenced many.”²¹ The household, which was made up of blood relatives, workers, friends, and other acquaintances – held a very important place in the society and culture of the first, second, and third centuries – both among Jews and Gentiles. Christian evangelists intentionally used households as “lighthouses . . . from which the gospel could illuminate surrounding darkness.”²²

Personal Evangelism

We have already listed testimony as one method of evangelism in the early church. When we speak about “personal evangelism” here, we are talking about a broader category than sharing one’s testimony. Your testimony is NOT the gospel. Sharing your testimony can be appropriate and helpful, but you must *always* include the gospel when sharing your testimony in order to lead someone to Christ. If you are only sharing your testimony and not the gospel, then you are ultimately testifying to yourself and not to the Christ who saved you. As Christians went through their daily lives and work, they shared the gospel, and people were won to faith in Christ.

Literary Evangelism

Translations of the letters of Paul, the Gospels, and other New Testament books played an important role in the literary evangelism of the early church. Additionally, people like Justin Martyr and Tatian were “literary” missionaries in the early church. Throughout the early church period, letters and essays were

¹⁹ Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 207.

²⁰ Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 207.

²¹ Terry, *Evangelism*, 37

²² Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 208-9.

written “explaining and defending Christianity against misunderstanding and assaults . . .”²³

PATRICK OF IRELAND

As we continue to study the history of missions, we will be looking at some historical figures throughout the history of missions. None of these individuals were perfect, but, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to learn lessons from each one of them. First, let’s look at a missionary who stands between the time of the Early Church and the Church in the Middle Ages – Patrick of Ireland. By studying Patrick’s life, method of evangelism, and his approach to culture we will understand his approach to missions.

Patrick’s life

The Apostle Paul was willing to be uncomfortable to share the gospel: “But I count my life of no value to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God’s grace.”²⁴

A study of Patrick’s life will demonstrate that he followed the Apostle’s example. Patrick was born in a village in the area that is now Wales into a Christian family. Patrick’s grandfather had been a priest. When Patrick was 16 years old, his village was raided, and he was taken into captivity and eventually sold into slavery on the island of Ireland. He spent six years as a slave until one night he heard a voice in his dream telling him that he was “going home” that his “ship is ready.” Patrick woke up, walked to the coast, and boarded a ship for home. Once back home, he became a priest and spent the next 25+ years serving the Church. At the age of 48 he had another dream. In this dream an angel appeared to him, and he was given letters from those who had formerly held him captive. The letters, written in the language of his captors and slavers, said, “We appeal to you, holy servant boy, to come and walk among us.”²⁵

²³ Carver, *The Course of Christian Missions*, 48-9.

²⁴ Acts 20:24 (HCSB)

²⁵ George G. Hunter, III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West . . . Again* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 15.

What would you have done? You spent six years as a slave to a group of people, and now you were being asked to return to those people to share the gospel with them. Would you go?

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

If God commands me to do so, yes, I could go. For those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). In fact, Paul goes further saying he can do all things through Him who strengthens him (Philippians 4:13). These two quotations from Paul's sayings helps us to understand that God can send me or you to any group of people for the sake of His glory. The other good example is Moses who grew in Egypt. Later he flees to Midian, even knowing that people in Egypt wanted to kill him. He chose to obey God.

In an African context, we need obedient hearts because most of the time African church members do not know real forgiveness. We tend to live in guilt with someone for so many years. A longtime ago, I heard a preacher say that he could not be at the village where he grew up. If people did not practice witchcraft, he could go and plant a church. But they bewitched him when he was teenager. It is difficult for him to go back to the witch people.

In towns there are more churches than in the remote areas and villages. Those who preach and are good leaders are mostly people who grew in the village areas. I could like to use this privilege to invite and encourage my fellow Africans to be ready to go whenever God calls.

From Tapina Ngwira (Malawi)

Humanly speaking, this would be probably one of the hardest decisions I would ever make in my life. I do not think I would go to that area. However, if the Lord speaks to me with a clear assurance, I would take that mantle of going. Perhaps I would conclude that my six years of slavery to that country was one of the ways of equipping me and spying the land.

From Chris Chanda (Zambia)

It will take a lot of discernment. In other words, it will take a lot of convictions from the Holy Spirit to make such a decision. God has not left us to zero for reasoning. At the same time, missions is not suicide. There is no way I could go to Moslem-dominated areas without doing my homework. Before I make such a decision, I will need to be sure this is what God wants me to do.

Patrick went. Despite the fact that he could have justified staying and ministering where he was or simply saying that he was too old, he went. Despite the fact that he was opposed by both the local religious leadership in Ireland who wanted the people to keep on worshipping rocks and trees as well as raiders from Britain – his country – who would steal from and kill his converts, Patrick endured.²⁶ Patrick served in Ireland for 28 years, saw hundreds of churches planted and as many as 1000 priests ordained for Christian ministry.²⁷

While we will look at Patrick's method of missions and evangelism below, we should recognize that his success in discipling the Irish can largely be attributed to his personal willingness to do the hard work of an evangelist and to suffer for the sake of gospel missions.

Patrick's method of evangelism

When Patrick and his group arrived in a given area, he worked through a process.

First, he met with the local leaders (like chiefs and headmen) to get approval to speak to the people of their areas.

Next, Patrick and his co-workers would spend time among the people. They prayed for the sick and the demon-possessed. They would counsel people and help to settle their conflicts.

Then, Patrick or one of his co-workers would preach. They often did this by receiving questions from individuals and then answering those questions in a public forum.

When individuals were converted, they were gathered into a church, and a church building was built for them.²⁸

When leaving an area to move onto a new mission field, Patrick would leave one of his apprentices behind to nurture the new community. He would also give them a sort of textbook with the basic of the Christian faith.²⁹

In short, Patrick was concerned with understanding the people with whom he was sharing the gospel and also believed that planting churches and not just reaching individuals was the goal of evangelism. Ruth Tucker believes that while some of these methods had been used by others before, the key difference be-

²⁶ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 2nd Edition, revised by Owen Chadwick (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 50.

²⁷ Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, 22-3.

²⁸ Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, 21-2

²⁹ Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, 22.

tween Patrick's approach and the approach of others was the how he "placed a great emphasis on spiritual growth."³⁰ Instead of being left behind after conversion, new converts "given intensive training."³¹

Patrick's understanding of culture

¹⁹ Although I am a free man and not anyone's [slave], I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win those under the law. ²¹ To those who are without [that] law, like one without the law—not being without God's law but within Christ's law—to win those without the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some. ²³ Now I do all this because of the gospel, so I may become a partner in its benefits.³²

Once again, Patrick followed the Apostle Paul's example. Hunter writes, "Patrick understood the people and their language, their issues, and their ways."³³ It was from this understanding and love for the people that Patrick evangelized the people of Ireland. Patrick's successors followed his example and "extended it."³⁴ They did this in at least two ways. First, their approach to the Christian life was community oriented. Second, instead of ignoring the spirit world, they addressed issues such as angels and other spiritual beings through prayers and songs.

MISSION IN THE MIDDLE AGES

In this section, we will look at several missionaries during the Middle Ages. We will be able to learn some lessons about missions from each one of them.

³⁰ Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 39.

³¹ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 39.

³² 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (HCSB)

³³ Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, 19.

³⁴ Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, 27.

Augustine of Canterbury (534-604)

Augustine of Canterbury (not to be confused with Augustine of Hippo, North Africa) is known as The Apostle to the English. It is interesting to note that while Patrick had set off on his mission to the Irish from the island of Britain, the native Britons were not yet evangelized. Patrick and his family were a Roman-British family and native Britons. When Pope Gregory first asked Augustine to go to England to convert the people, he did not want to go. The pope insisted and gave Augustine and his co-workers the challenge to see the king of England converted. Augustine and his other missionaries led honorable lives before the king and his people, and they preached the gospel. As a result, the king and 10,000 people were converted.³⁵

The instructions below were sent to Augustine by Pope Gregory via a man named Mellitus. Gregory instructed him about how to handle the missionary task.³⁶

Tell Augustine that he should by no means destroy the temples of the gods but rather the idols within those temples. Let him, after he has purified them with holy water, place altars and relics of the saints in them. For, if those temples are well built, they should be converted from the worship of demons to the service of the true God. Thus, seeing that their places of worship are not destroyed, the people will banish error from their hearts and come to places familiar and dear to them in acknowledgement and worship of the true God. Further, since it has been their custom to slaughter oxen in sacrifice, they should receive some solemnity in exchange. Let them therefore, on the day of the dedication of their churches, or on the feast of the martyrs whose relics are preserved in them, build themselves huts around their one-time temples and celebrate the occasion with religious feasting. They will sacrifice and eat the animals not any more as an offering to the devil, but for the glory of God to whom, as the giver of all things, they will give thanks for having been satiated. Thus, if they are not deprived of all exterior joys, they will more easily taste the interior ones. For surely

³⁵ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 2nd Edition, revised by Owen Chadwick (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 59.

³⁶ Gregory I, "Letter to Abbot Mellitus, Epsitola 76, PL 77: 1215-1216;" accessed on 22 May 2020; available from <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/greg1-mellitus.txt>

it is impossible to efface all at once everything from their strong minds, just as, when one wishes to reach the top of a mountain, he must climb by stages and step by step, not by leaps and bounds....

Was it was good for Augustine to use old pagan temples as church buildings? Would it be okay to use a juju compound for seminary? What about using a bar for a church?

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

I have no problem seeing Augustine using old pagan temples and turning them to place that people worship true God. The structure is less important than meeting together as body of believers to edify each other. But if others within the local church are not happy or comfortable then I would suggest to shift it to another place. Of course, it would be cool to use bar or juju compound for seminary or church. The demons do not live in bricks; therefore, I have no any problem to use juju's structure for seminary or church. But the biggest problem toward this may be culture and the mindset of the people particularly in rural areas. People have a misconception of demonology and the church structure itself, forgetting they themselves are the Church. From our African perspective we have got certain reverence towards church buildings.

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

When I first started a church in one of the peri-urban areas of our town, one of the converts gave up his bar where people used to take their beer for a church.

Boniface – (675-754)

Bishop Stephen Neill called Boniface “the greatest of all the missionaries” during the Middle Ages.³⁷ Boniface’s real name was Wynfrith of Crediton, and he lived as a monk until he was 40 years old, at which time he became a missionary and laboured for 40 years.³⁸ Boniface was a famous evangelist who spread the gospel in the area that is now Germany.³⁹

³⁷ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 64. Neill used the phrase “Dark Ages.”

³⁸ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 64.

³⁹ Terry, *Evangelism*, 50.

Boniface is probably best known for defiantly chopping down an oak tree that was the center of the pagan worship of the Thundergod.⁴⁰ Some missiologists and missionaries have read about this experience and developed an approach to evangelism that they called a power encounter or power evangelism. Terry writes that Boniface's experience is reminiscent of Elijah mocking the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.⁴¹ We can also think of Peter and John healing the man at the gate of the Temple. However, it should be noted that Elijah's confrontation of these prophets and the healing of the lame man "were not followed by mass conversions."⁴² However, Boniface's ministry did yield long-term success. Over the course of his 40 years of missionary labour, as many as 100,000 Germans were baptized through his ministry.⁴³

What do think of Boniface's decision to chop down the tree? Are power encounters a good approach to evangelism? Why or why not?

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

We should approach people with the Scripture. No matter how good an approach seems, if does not direct people to the Word of God or to see the power of God, then it is nothing.

Where I come from I have seen people who are magicians and have powers to do great things that people cannot do. The results are that they are famous and respected. So in the case of Boniface, the decision may have worked on that particular moment. I cannot see it being profitable. We should use the Word of God and leave God's power to work, rather than using personal powers to impress people.

From Tapina Ngwira (Malawi)

I would answer the first part of the question with biblical reference which I have stated below; "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

⁴⁰ Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 47.

⁴¹ Terry, *Evangelism*, 50.

⁴² Paul G. Hiebert, "Healing and the Kingdom," in *Wonders and the Word: An Examination of Issues Raised* by John Wimber and the Vineyard Movement, ed. by James R. Coggins and Paul G. Hiebert (Winnepeg, MB, Canada: Kindred Press, 1989), 133.

⁴³ Terry, *Evangelism*, 50.

This portion of the Scripture helps to conclude that this was a special calling for Brother Boniface. He was called and anointed for that specific ministry as the Samson was. Power encounters may be good or bad depending on the context, but personally I would quickly say it is not good and perhaps not biblically recommended to use power for evangelism.

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

There was a man by the name of Musonda. He became born again under the missionaries who came to his village. This is a real story. One day he found eggs of a chicken at the door of his house in the morning. Many people came and waited to see what he would do, as they thought it was a taboo. Alas, he took them and boiled them and ate them. Nothing happened to him. This made many villagers believe in the new God Musonda he was worshiping.

It also happened to me personally when a group of people came and approached me at church. One person had something that looked like charms at his door and they were asking for assistance to burn it. I went and burned that thing. The next Sunday I received lots of visitors in church.

Cutting a tree might be negative or positive. It's negative in the sense that there are those in the community who attach such sites with culture and traditions. They attach to it history and memories. In Zambia there are many untouched areas like that for the same reasons. Destroying such places might spark protests.

However, there are trees and places that are highly revered because they are associated with ancestral spirits that have certain powers. This makes some people worship such places. So when a person dares to cut such a tree, people would think a spell would fall upon such a person or the ancestral powers would strike him. When they see that nothing happens to him, it is a sure sign that such a person is more powerful than the powers the ancestor have. This can be a point of evangelism.

Cyril (826-869) and Methodius (815-885)

Cyril and Methodius were missionary evangelist brothers among the Slavic peoples in Eastern Europe. They prepared the first Cyrilic alphabet (which is now used by many languages like Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian, and others). They also translated the Bible into an ancient Slavonic language, and evangelized the people of Eastern Europe.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Terry, *Evangelism*, 51.

Since Methodius was a painter, they also used artwork to evangelize the king and his court. When the King saw one of the paintings that Methodius had done, he and his officials were baptized. However, in an unfortunate instance of being overly zealous for his newfound faith, the king ordered that all the people of his kingdom should either be baptized or be killed!⁴⁵

Cyril and Methodius' influence was great. Not only had the king and his court come to know Christ, they also set the pattern of churches in Eastern Europe to "employ its own language and leadership" rather than using Latin and accepting leadership from Rome as the Catholic Church did.⁴⁶

What lessons can we learn from Cyril and Methodius?

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

Unfortunately, in Africa we still have some tribes that have no Bible in their own language. For example, the Nyungwe tribe in central Mozambique do not have a Bible in their language. If I could have the opportunity to translate the Bible into their language, it could be a great benefit for them in the life to come and the Kingdom of God. I preached to these people many times and saw the great need. However, God's time is the best. Cyril and Methodius have left a great lesson to missionaries. People need and must receive the gospel and read the Bible in their local language.

One day I heard a testimony of a certain Baptist pastor in Mozambique. He said that he did not have old people at his church. He said that the people he has are youth and children because when old people, come they are not able to understand the Portuguese language. These old people need Changana language. He plans to start services in Changana in order to target the Changana local language speakers.

All people need the gospel, all people need Christ, and all people need salvation. They deserve to understand well the teachings and the preaching.

From Tapwa Ngvira (Malawi)

The lesson taken from these two evangelist brothers is that they used their God-given skills for evangelism. There are other places or countries where you may

⁴⁵ William Owen Carver, *The Course of Christian Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1949), 69.

⁴⁶ Terry, *Evangelism*, 51.

not literally open a Bible to minister unto people. But if you have a certain skill or profession, you can build relationships with the people by helping them in a particular area. There are places or countries that would deny you a VISA the moment you tell them you are going in their country for evangelism. But they would accept you when you are skilled or professional in a certain discipline, such teacher or nurse. Therefore, the best way to propagate the gospel is to serve people with your profession or skill, as Cyril and Methodius did.

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

A great lesson is that we should not be limited to one formula. We should be creative and dynamic. We should use our trade or profession to engage the people we serve.

Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

Though Francis came from a wealthy family, he “forsook the luxuries of his former life and devoted himself to serving the poor.”⁴⁷ Terry attributes Francis’ success in evangelism to his self-sacrificial lifestyle and his use of music.⁴⁸ Francis has also been held up as an example of how to relate to Muslims: “I am convinced God needs radicals today in the image of Francis who will spurn current aggressive attitudes of suspicion and hostility which stereotype Islam as our enemy.”⁴⁹

How should we relate to Muslims in our communities?

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

Muslims are people created in the image of God like everyone else. Muslims are sinners like everyone else. Therefore, these people need to be shown the love of God and salvation through Jesus Christ alone. In most cases in Africa, we Christians treat Muslims as our enemies. That is wrong. We should love them as God loved the world despite their beliefs.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

I live in a Muslim community, so I will answer from my perspective. I have realized that loving Muslim people is the best way to relate with them. I try to avoid

⁴⁷ Terry, *Evangelism*, 52.

⁴⁸ Terry, *Evangelism*, 52.

⁴⁹ Christine A. Mallouhi, *Waging Peace on Islam* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 13.

controversial discussions but indulge in friendly discussions – not accusing or blaming their religion.

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

Creating bridge of commonalities is the best way to start. But, indeed, we should not stay on the bridge. We should move on to evangelize them. We should be ready to sacrifice.

FORERUNNERS OF THE REFORMATION⁵⁰

At the end of the Middle Ages, the church became more and more corrupt and more and more unbiblical. The average people were not taught to know God in Christ through the Holy Scriptures. Instead, priests, popes, and other church leaders promoted a kind of Christianity that contradicted the Bible and replaced true biblical faith with rituals that were devoid of personal repentance and faith. As a result, much of the visible Church during this time was not truly the Church of Christ.

The following men reacted against that corruption and false teaching. This section will discuss the influence that these each of the following men had on missions: Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, and Jan Huss. Taken together these men can be viewed as “forerunners of the Reformation.”

Peter Waldo and the Waldenses

Peter Waldo (1140-1218) was a rich merchant from Lyons, France, who lived during the 12th Century A.D. He felt led by God to sell all of his possessions, and he did. He sold everything, paid off his debts, made arrangements for his wife and children, and then he became a beggar.

Waldo then traveled around France preaching the gospel in towns and villages. He memorized long portions of the Bible, preached powerful sermons, and lived a simple lifestyle. He soon attracted followers, and they followed his example by emphasizing the Bible in their preaching and teaching and through hard work and humility.⁵¹ Waldo’s followers became known as The Waldenses or

⁵⁰ These men are listed and discussed in Terry, *Evangelism*, 57-69.

⁵¹ Terry, *Evangelism*, 60.

“The Poor Men of Lyons.”⁵² The Pope forbade them to preach and teach. However, following the example of the Apostles in the New Testament, the Waldenses decided that they should obey God rather than man, so they ignored the Pope’s command. They continued to preach and teach and serve the poor.

Terry lists five reasons that the Waldenses are important to missions.⁵³ First, they preached to anyone who would listen. We might say that they preached “indiscriminately.” This means that they did not discriminate among the people to whom they preached. They did not preach only to people whom they thought might respond to their message or to the “elites” of society. Anyone who would listen to their preaching was their audience. Second, they emphasized the Bible. This may seem like a simple thing, but in Waldo’s time people often preached a false gospel of works and rituals. In today’s world, we need to remember that the Bible, not rituals or “new revelations” from “men of God,” is our only firm foundation. Third, the Waldenses preached to the people in the local language. We are living in an increasingly globalized world where many people speak many different languages. However, every individual (and groups of individuals) has a language that they prefer. Reaching individuals and groups in their preferred language should always be the goal of missions and will also remain a challenge to missionaries. The Waldenses have pointed us in the correct direction. Finally, their simple lifestyle attracted many people because this simple lifestyle proved their sincerity and dedication. This group influenced later reforming groups – like the Hussites, Taborites, and Bohemian Brethren.

John Wycliffe and the Lollards

Englishman John Wycliffe (1320-1384) has been called the Morning Star of the Reformation. Just as the morning star signals the coming of the morning every day, Terry writes that Wycliffe’s life and writings “signaled the coming of the Reformation.”⁵⁴ Wycliffe’s central principle was that ordinary people needed to hear the gospel in their own language.⁵⁵ In the last eight to nine years of his life Wycliffe started writing and became more and more radical in his views. He came to believe that “the true Church is made up only of those elected by God and is invisible, and . . . no visible church or its officers can control entrance or

⁵² Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 452.

⁵³ Terry, *Evangelism*, 60.

⁵⁴ Terry, *Evangelism*, 61.

⁵⁵ Terry, *Evangelism*, 63.

can exclude from membership.”⁵⁶ One of Wycliffe’s most lasting contributions was the idea that the Bible should be translated into the language of the people.

Wycliffe’s followers came to be called “Lollards.” Their name was derived from the medieval Dutch word for “mumble.” The Lollards were often heard mumbling to themselves as they recited Bible verses and prayers. Much like the Waldenses before them, they were known as “poor priests that preach.”⁵⁷ They travelled around England preaching and teaching the ideas that Wycliffe promoted.

According to Terry, Wycliffe’s contributions to missions are as follows. First, he emphasized the importance of the Bible. This emphasis on the Bible is one of the central reasons that he is known as the Morning Star of the Reformation. The Reformation emphasized *Sola Scriptura* – that Scripture alone is the foundation of our faith. Second, Wycliffe emphasized the importance of the laity in church life. Once again, one of the principles of the Reformation was the priesthood of believers. Wycliffe’s doctrine foreshadowed this important doctrine. Finally, Wycliffe wanted all people to hear the good news in English rather than Latin. His emphasis on Bible translation is reflected in the contemporary missions organization that bears his name – Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Jan Huss and the Hussites

Following in the footsteps of Waldo and Wycliffe, Jan Huss (1373-1415) put a great deal of emphasis on the Scriptures and believed that many practices in the church were corrupt.⁵⁸ Hus was from Bohemia – modern-day Czechoslovakia. He influenced both academic circles and the church. His followers eventually grew into a group known as the Moravians. One article on the history of the Moravian church refers to Hus the “grandfather of the church.”⁵⁹ The Moravians, under the leadership of Count Nicolas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, would radically impact the world with their efforts at world evangelization.⁶⁰

As Hus was being burned, he “is said to have uttered the words ‘You may roast this goose [‘Hus’ means ‘goose’ in Czech], but a hundred years from now a

⁵⁶ Latourette, *A History*, 663

⁵⁷ Latourette, *A History*, 664.

⁵⁸ Terry, *Evangelism*, 66.

⁵⁹ “Jan Hus and the Moravian Church,” *The Moravian Church* website; accessed 29 July 2020; available from www.moravian.org/2019/07/jan-hus-and-the-moravian-church/

⁶⁰ “A Brief History of the Moravian Church,” *The Moravian Church* website; accessed 29 July 2020; available from www.moravian.org/2018/07/a-brief-history-of-the-moravian-church/

swan will arise whose singing you will not be able to silence.”⁶¹ In our next section, we will hear about Martin Luther – who came almost exactly 100 years later.

Hus’ significance for missions can be summarized in three points. First, he emphasized preaching. Second, not only did he emphasize preaching, he insisted on preaching in the language of the people. Finally, he promoted the singing of hymns and spiritual songs.

As we look back at all three of these men, we can notice four common concerns:

- The central place of the Bible in Christian life and worship;
- The importance of the spiritual welfare of the common people;
- The value of preaching rather than sacramentalism; and
- Communication of the gospel in the language of the people.

IMPACT OF THE REFORMATION⁶²

The men mentioned above helped to set the stage for the Protestant Reformation. Taking place during the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation was initially an attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church from within. In the end, of course, the Reformers broke away from the Church.

The Reformation began on October 31, 1517, when a professor of theology named Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the university chapel in Wittenberg, Germany. These theses recounted Luther’s questions and complaints about some of the problems that he saw within the Church. The remaining details of this movement are beyond the scope of this book. We will just try to evaluate how the Reformation impacted missions. We will start by looking at some key Reformation doctrines.

The doctrines of the Reformation are sometimes summarized as “The Five *Solas*.” The word *sola* is Latin for “only.” All of these doctrines were specifically in response to false doctrine being taught by the Roman Catholic Church during this time. Let’s look at them one by one.

⁶¹ Michael Reeves, *The Unquenchable Flame: Discovering the Heart of the Reformation* (Nashville, TN, USA: B&H Academic, 2009), 31.

⁶² Taken from Dr. John Mark Terry’s lecture on Missions History at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Sola Gratia

Christians are saved by grace alone. God's grace is free, and nothing else contributes anything to our salvation.

Sola Fides

Christians are saved by grace through faith alone. Our works do not save us or contribute at all to our salvation.

Solus Christus

Christians are saved by Christ alone – not by the Church nor by any other saints nor Mary.

Sola Scriptura

The Christian's faith is based on Scripture alone – not on Church councils, creeds, confessions, or Popes.

Soli Deo Gloria

All Christians lives and doctrines are for the glory of God alone.

In addition to the Five *Solas*, I want to look at two more key Reformation doctrines. First, the Reformation restored the idea of the Priesthood of all Believers. This doctrine corrects the idea that people must access God through a priest. This doctrine also taught that all believers have access to God through Christ as The Great High Priest, as taught in the book of Hebrews. One of the key results of this important doctrine is that leaders in churches are held accountable to all believers.⁶³

The second Reformation doctrine was the restoration of preaching to a primary place in Christian worship. Expository preaching of the Bible is central and primary to all that the church and Christians do and teach.

So, the Reformation's main contribution to the cause of missions was to restore biblical doctrine. By refuting false doctrine, the Reformation gave back

⁶³ "Luther's fundamental principle is that all Christians share the same priestly status on account of their baptism; they may, however, exercise different functions within the community of faith and the community at large, reflecting their individual God-given gifts and abilities." Alister E. McGrath, "A Better Way: The Priesthood of All Believers," in *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelicals Church?* ed. Michael Scott Horton (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 309.

to the Church and individual believers correct biblical teaching to be taken to the nations.

So, while the Reformers contributed *indirectly* to the history of missions by ensuring that true biblical doctrine was restored, most people accuse them of not being *directly* involved in missions. They also did not write a great deal about missions. So, why did the Reformers say and do so little about missions? Mark Terry gives us several reasons.⁶⁴

First, some of the Reformers had certain aspects of theology that limited them. For instance, some of them believed the Great Commission applied only to the original Apostles who were directly commissioned by Jesus. Not all of the Reformers thought this, but some did. As such, some Reformers did not see the Great Commission as binding upon them and their followers.

Second, on the whole, the Reformers were only concerned with doctrinal issues. Given the gross distortions of Christianity by the Roman Catholic Church of the time, this preoccupation was justified. After all, these were essential doctrinal issues that had to be resolved. However, studying, debating, and writing about these issues certainly did take up a lot of time and energy. Without this obsession, however, the Reformation would not have recovered the gospel and would not have been able to participate in true missions because the true Church needed to be recovered.⁶⁵

Third, they were engaged in a life or death struggle with the Roman Catholic Church. In many cases, this was literal. Luther lived under a constant threat to his life from the Pope. It was not only Luther who faced life and death. Those who tried to help Luther were also risking their lives. Luther was excommunicated and declared to be “an obstinate schismatic and manifest heretic who should be harboured by none and read by none, on pain of the direst punishment.”⁶⁶ Similarly, both Calvin and the churches that he and his followers planted were under constant threats.⁶⁷

Fourth, the Reformers had limited geographic knowledge. Christopher Columbus had “discovered the New World” in 1492 – just a few years before the beginning of the Reformation. None of the Reformers truly understood how vast the world was. The Reformers also did not understand how many

⁶⁴ John Mark Terry, History of Missions course, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

⁶⁵ Michael A.G. Haykin, *To the Ends of the Earth: Calvin's Missional Vision and Legacy*, Kindle ebook ed. (Wheaton, IL, USA: Crossway, 2014), location 261.

⁶⁶ Reeves, *The Unquenchable Flame*, 53.

⁶⁷ Haykin, *To the Ends of the Earth*, location 1201.

people were living on earth during their time. They, likewise, did not understand the massive ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of those people.

Fifth, the Reformers did not have missionary orders of monks. The Roman Catholic Church had historically utilized monks as their primary missionary method. Without monks, the young Protestant Church did not know *how* to carry out the task of taking the gospel to the nations.

Despite all of the above, it should be noted that the Reformers *did* participate in some missionary activities. First, Michael Agricola, a Swedish man, preached the gospel and planted the Lutheran church in Finland. Second, John Calvin, believing that the true gospel had been lost there, sent missionary evangelists all over France. Third, in 1555, Calvin sent a missionary team to Brazil, but the project failed tragically. In spite of this failure, the attempt does “illustrate Calvin’s global vision for the spread of the gospel.”⁶⁸

As mentioned earlier, the Reformers’ main contribution to the cause of missions was doctrinal/theological and not missiological. Terry lists four doctrines as being the Reformers’ key contributions to missions.⁶⁹ The first key doctrine was the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. Without this crucial biblical doctrine, missionaries and missions organizations would have no gospel to preach. The second key doctrine was the Reformation’s emphasis on biblical authority. The question of biblical authority continues to be a key component in distinguishing *true* biblical missions and those efforts that are merely humanitarian in nature. Without a clear mandate for the authoritative Word of God, missions would have no foundation. Third, like the forerunners to the Reformation mentioned earlier, the Reformers’ practice of Bible translation spanned several languages. This practice helped to bring the Bible into the hands of the ordinary and everyday believers. It also set a pattern for translating the Bible into local languages and making sure that ordinary people had access to the Word of God. Finally, as mentioned above, the Reformers also placed a great deal of emphasis on biblical preaching. Romans 10 clearly teaches that people are saved through hearing the message preached to them. Without biblically-based gospel-centered preaching missions would be futile.

In addition to these doctrines, the Reformers also made effective use of the printing press. The printing press was used to print copies of the Bible as well as commentaries and tracts written by the Reformers. In the sixteenth century,

⁶⁸ Haykin, *To the Ends of the Earth*, location 1205.

⁶⁹ These four points are taken from Terry, History of Missions course.

the printing press was considered the most advanced form of media available. As such, when missionaries today use various forms of media, they are following in the footsteps of the Reformers.

I want to close this section on the Reformers' impact on missions with a quote from Calvin's commentary on Matthew 28:19.

“This is the point of the word ‘go’ (exeundi): the boundaries of Judea were prescribed to the prophets under the law, but now the wall is pulled down and the Lord orders the ministers of the gospel to go far out to scatter the teachings of salvation throughout all the regions of the earth.”⁷⁰

How are the Reformation doctrines described above relevant for missions today?

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

These Reformation doctrines are relevant for missions today in the sense that they are still essential doctrines until now. Any mission work is dependent on the authenticity and legitimacy of the Scripture. The idea of biblical or expositional preaching is recommended even today when we embark on mission work. We should not preach from our head but the exact things that the Scripture is saying and apply that in our day-to-day Christian life. The quotation of Calvin has just taught me that the ministry of come and see is no longer in existence. We are in the times of going as mandated in Mathew 28:18-20.

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

There is not much difference even today some churches are preoccupied with other things like church administration, charity, TV programs etc. In Zambian churches, very few have priorities on missions.

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

Well, these Reformations doctrines are relevant in the sense that the *Sola Gratia* opens the eyes of people to understand that salvation is by grace not by works. In so many places, Africa and other places, people are preoccupied with the

⁷⁰ *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, eds. D.W. Torrance and T.F. Torrance (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Eerdmans, 1972), 251.

works to gain favor of salvation in the eyes of God. Such belief and heretical teaching must be combated and condemned. People need to be taught the truth about the salvation by grace.

Sola Fides is also relevant when doing missions because missions is to bring the gospel to the people, telling them to have faith in Christ. Faith is necessary for us in order to understand the grace of God for our salvation. That teaching of faith, will help those who are in missions to drive people to see Christ the only Saviour. In our African context, many people lack the truth that only Christ is the Saviour. We still have people who believe in magic and believe that the forefathers will help a person when he dies to live a better life. So, bringing such doctrines into missions today is really needed. However, they will need to be brought into the context and real situation at particular area.

I believe that if you miss these doctrines, you are missing the right direction for missions. Even when we miss one aspect of true biblical faith, we have missed all the truth. These doctrines are relevant because they are the truth, and truth never ends.

THE GREAT CENTURY

What was “The Great Century” of Protestant Missions? This title was first used by the great historian of missions, Dr. Kenneth Scott Latourette of Yale University. The era was actually a little longer than 100 years. It lasted from 1792—the year that William Carey first came on the scene—until 1910 and the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Historians study history using different methods. Some prefer to simply go year by year in a chronological approach to history. Others prefer to study history by looking at history geographically – or region by region. One can also look at different individuals throughout history. As we study the Great Century, we will look at the history of missions this way – biographically. Ruth Tucker’s book, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, is a wonderful book that looks at missions history through short biographies.

William Carey (1761-1834)

The first missionary of the Great Century that we will look at is the one whom Latourette used to mark the beginning of the era. He was called William Carey.

Carey was born in Paulerspury, England, on 17 August 1761 and died on 9 June 1834. He is considered the Father of the Modern Protestant Missions Movement. Carey was raised in the Anglican Church. He became a Baptist through the influence of Andrew Fuller, a Baptist theologian and pastor. As Carey was considering his call to missions, Fuller told Carey, “If you go down into the well, then I shall hold the rope!”

Growing up in an ordinary and modest family, Carey had little formal education. He was a cobbler, a shoe repairman, by trade. However, he had a tremendously gifted mind and a great amount of intellectual ability. He taught himself to read and understand several languages including Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, and Dutch. Carey was also influenced by reading Captain Cook’s *Voyages Around the World* and Jonathan Edwards’ *Life and Diary of David Brainerd*. Carey represents what one author has called a “virtuous mind” and someone who had a great deal of “intellectual curiosity.”⁷¹

In 1791 Carey published a pamphlet, “An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen,” which was widely distributed. Carey wrote this pamphlet in response an anti-missionary spirit that he encountered as a young pastor. During an associational meeting, Carey proposed that the pastors gathered there should discuss the topic of whether the Great Commission still applied to the Church. The moderator responded, “Sit down young man. You are a miserable enthusiast to ask such a question. When God wants to convert the world He can do it without your help . . .”⁷²

In 1792, Carey preached his famous sermon to the Northampton Baptist Association on Isaiah 54:2-3. The theme of the sermon was “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.” The order of those two clauses was very important to Carey. God is the Great Initiator. We attempt great things for God *because* we expect God to already be at work as we attempt these great things. Later in 1792, Carey led in organizing the Baptist Missionary Society – originally called “The Particular Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathen.”⁷³

The following year, in 1793, Carey sailed for India with his family. Carey’s wife Dorothy did not want to go at first. When she initially refused to go, Carey

⁷¹ Philip E. Dow, *Virtuous Minds: Intellectual Character Development for Students, Educators, and Parents* (Downers Grove, IL, USA: IVP Academic, 2013).

⁷² Carver, *The Course of Christian Missions*, 139.

⁷³ Carver, *The Course of Christian Missions*, 140.

was going to go without her, but in the end, she went. However, she had a very difficult time emotionally and psychologically and seems to have gone insane on the mission field.

How would you advise a church member who felt God was calling him to missions but his wife did not want to go?

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

This is a tricky situation especially if the couple has children. A wife who resists the call of her husband asks for her own personal trouble. The wife should understand she is under the husband's authority and protection. She should therefore submit. She should realize that a family is a unit, and this means what affects one, affects all.

Imagine if Sarah resisted Abraham. Couples should seek mutual understanding while the husband makes the final decision. The call for missions does not come out easily. There are always fears and concerns out of it, but all those concerns should not thwart the call.

This call to missions goes with deep conviction and discernment.

From Tapiwa Ngwira (Malawi)

I would tell him that his first and important mission field is one at home. A man cannot be an effective missionary of the gospel if he is anyway neglecting his own bride.

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

This question is very crucial. I have heard a certain woman, who is wife to a pastor. She told her husband that God called him, not her, to pastoral work. Some women say, "You are a pastor at church, but here home you are not pastor." Such things happen because the woman does not understand her husband's calling, or her husband did not share the calling.

Therefore, for such a member, I could tell him not to go if his wife is not willing to go. I believe that man is given privilege to be a leader of his family first, to provide for the wife and the rest of the family. Paul is clear that man (husband) should give to his wife her conjugal rights and the same way the wife to the husband. So, I would say that he should keep praying to God and asking God to enlighten his wife so that she should understand the calling of the hus-

band.. In the same way, it is very dangerous when you leave your wife and go alone for missions. I could never advise that.

Carey laboured alone with his family for a number of years. However, in 1799, Carey, who had been joined by Joshua Marshman and William Ward, established a mission station in the town of Serampore, India. These three men became known as the Serampore Trio. The town of Serampore was actually Danish territory, so these English families were under the protection of the Danish king.

Carey's missionary strategy was marked by several key characteristics. We should first mention that Carey persevered in physically and spiritually difficult circumstances. Carey was on the field for seven years before he saw his first convert. Second, following in the footsteps of Waldo, Tyndale, and the Reformers, Carey promoted the idea of biblical preaching and preached whenever and wherever he had the opportunity. Also following the example of people like Wycliffe, Luther, and others, Carey promoted the idea of the translation and distribution of the Bible in the local languages of India. India is a land of great linguistic diversity. Carey is credited with having translated the Bible (or portions of the Bible) into *thirty-five* languages!

The fourth characteristic of Carey's strategy was the early establishment of a local church. He also made a careful study of the culture. Finally, Carey believed that it was vitally important to train national pastors as soon as possible.

What were the keys to Carey's success?⁷⁴ First, Carey had a great appreciation for predecessors. While Carey is known as the Father of Modern Day Missions, he clearly understood that he was not the first missionary. He had studied the life David Brainerd – a missionary who served among the Native American Indians. He also knew and appreciated the work of the Moravian missionaries. The Moravians were a group of missionaries who had been inspired by the work of Jan Hus. Second, Carey had a global view of missions. Third, as indicated by the fact that he toiled to translate the Bible into more than thirty languages, Carey held a very high view of Scripture. Carey understood that the only hope for people to come to know Christ as their Saviour was for them to be able to understand the Scriptures in their own language. Next, Carey had a high view of culture. This high view of culture did not mean that Carey put culture and Scripture in the same category. He knew that the Bible was the final authori-

⁷⁴ According to John Mark Terry in class lecture on the History of Missions at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

ty, but he had a great deal of respect for culture and sought to contextualize the message whenever possible.

Carey also had a strong commitment and ability in correspondence. In fact, some missions historians credit Carey's commitment to correspondence with his missions sending agency in Great Britain for making him the Father of the Modern Protestant Missions Movement.⁷⁵ We must remember that Carey lived in a day before the Internet, the mobile phone, or even landline phones. Instead, Carey wrote letters that were taken by ship from India to England and back again. These letters back to his family, friends, and supporters in England produced many positive results.

There were many encouraging outcomes of Carey's movement in England. First, in addition to the Baptist Missions Society started to support Carey, Ward, and Marshman, two more missions societies were formed. First, the London Missionary Society was started in 1795 to support English Congregationalist missionaries. Then, in 1799, the Church Missionary Society was started. This second missions society support missionaries from the Church of England.

Several home missions societies were also formed in England as a result of Carey's movement. New churches were planted, and many churches increased dramatically in size. Some even tripled in size.

The results of Carey's movement extended across the Atlantic Ocean to a newly formed country – The United States of America (USA). Despite having won its independence from Great Britain only a few years earlier, denominational groups across the USA formed several local missions societies. In 1810, the Congregational churches in the USA formed the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. This mission board sent Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice to India in 1812. We will return to a discussion of Judson below.

Just two years later, in 1814, the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions was organized. This board was organized by what became known as the Triennial Convention (because it met every three years). This convention was the forerunner to the Southern Baptist Convention. The next missionary I want us to look at was a man by the name Adoniram Judson, and he was the first missionary to be supported by this Baptist missions society.

However, before leaving a discussion of Carey, we want to mention a movie about Carey's life called, *A Candle in the Dark*. It is available on YouTube

⁷⁵ Terry, History of Missions course.

and other places online. We recommend this film to anyone interested in learning more about Carey's life and ministry in India.

Adoniram Judson (1788-1850)

One of our favorite missionary biographies is *To the Golden Shore* by Courtney Anderson. It narrates the life and ministry of Adoniram Judson.⁷⁶ While the book is a biography of Judson, the book reads more like novel with interesting characters, colourful images, and intense dialogue. Judson was one of the first American international missionaries, and the impact of his life and ministry on the USA is similar to Carey's impact on England.

While Judson was the first Baptist missionary from the United States, he did not begin his missionary career as a Baptist. In fact, Adoniram and his wife Ann were sent in 1812 with Luther Rice and others by American Congregationalist churches just a few weeks after the Judsons had gotten married. Judson initially sailed for India to visit William Carey. Some sources suggest that the Judsons and Rice became Baptists onboard the boat on the way to India. Other sources say that their conversion happened after they arrived in India, but all the sources indicate that this change came about after reading the New Testament in the original Greek. All of them became convinced that true biblical baptism is believer's baptism – not infant baptism. This change created a problem. The Judsons and Rice were supported by the Congregationalists. The Congregationalists believed in and practiced infant baptism. Luther Rice returned to the US to raise funds from among Baptists.

Just one year later in 1813, the Judsons were driven out of India by the East India Company. The East India Company was a British trading company that believed that missionary work was disruptive to their ability to make money. In fact, the East India Company had unsuccessfully tried to stop Carey from operating in India. This attempt had contributed to formation of the Serampore Trio mentioned earlier. The Judsons went to Burma. Once again, the sources do not agree with one another on this move. Some sources indicate that the Judsons had always intended to go to Burma. Others seem to imply that they had originally planned to stay in India but felt forced out by the East India Compa-

⁷⁶ Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Valley Forge, PA, USA: Judson Press, 1987).

ny. Upon arrival in Burma, the Judsons met with Felix Carey – the son of William who was working as a diplomat in Burma.

Judson's life and ministry in Burma was marked by perseverance, hard work, wisdom, and determination. When the Judsons first arrived in Burma, they had very little success. Despite this lack of success, the Judsons studied the Burmese language and culture as well as the Buddhist religion that most Burmese followed. One area that they studied was the method by which the Burmese people learned. Traditionally, Buddhist teachers would sit in a building called a *zayat*. From that building, Buddhist teachers would answer spiritual questions of those passing by. In an example of contextualization, Adoniram and Ann constructed a "Baptist *zayat*," and in April 1819, Adoniram began teaching from it.⁷⁷ This approach to ministry had its desired results. The first Burmese convert, a man named Maung Nau, was baptized – six years after the Judsons had arrived in Burma – and seven years after they left the USA.

In 1824, Judson became a prisoner of war. Judson was imprisoned by the Burmese military, because the Burmese were at war with the British at this time. Despite both Adoniram and Ann's protests, the Burmese did not distinguish between Judson – an American – and their British foes. In a tragic turn of events, while Adoniram was imprisoned, Ann and their newborn baby died.

After a period of intense grief, Adoniram heard about the death of fellow missionary George Boardman. Boardman had left behind his widow named Sarah. Upon hearing about the death of her husband, Judson wrote Sarah the following letter,

You are now drinking the bitter cup whose dregs I am somewhat acquainted with. And though, for some time, you have been aware of its approach, I venture to say that is far bitterer [sic] than you expected. It is common for persons in your situation to refuse all consolation, to cling to the dead, and to fear that they shall too forget the dear object of their affections. But don't be concerned. I can assure you that months and months of heart-rending anguish are before you, whether you will or not. Yet take the bitter cup with both hands, and sit down to your repast. You will soon learn a secret, that there is sweetness at the bottom . . .⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Anderson, *To the Golden Shore*, 219-220.

⁷⁸ Anderson, *To the Golden Shore*, 400-401.

Unlike many other widows, Sarah did not leave the mission field after her husband's death. Instead, she continued to work and labour. They corresponded, and in 1834, ten years after Ann's death, Adoniram and Sarah were married. After they got married, Judson continued the work of translating the Bible into Burmese that he had begun many years earlier. Judson was totally committed to this task. He was not content for the translation to be completed quickly. Instead, he wanted the translation "should need as little revision as possible by his successors."⁷⁹ The full Bible was completed in 1840 – 27 years after he had arrived in Burma.

Judson's second wife Sarah died in 1845. Judson returned to the USA with their children. Once again, Judson remarried. This time in 1846 he married a young lady named Emily. After four years of happiness together with Emily and the publication of a Burmese dictionary, Judson died in 1850.

In a letter dated 25 June 1832, Judson wrote some advice to those contemplating the life of missions.⁸⁰ Please note that this is Judson's advice – not biblical advice. While we should always listen to the advice of those who go before us, it is NOT the same as Scripture.

Be a missionary for life, not a limited term

We will discuss "the missionary call" later. For now, let's remember that the idea of "short-term" missionaries had not been established during Judson's time.

Select a healthy and good-natured spouse

One has to wonder if he had his friend William Carey's unhealthy wife and the death of his first and second wife in mind when we wrote this advice.

Don't be overzealous to "do good" on board ship and thereby get in the way

I'm not sure what the modern-day application of this advice is today, but it might be something about knowing your role and not trying to work in areas that you have not been asked to help in.

⁷⁹ Francis Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, D.D.*, vol. 2, The Michigan Historical Reprint Series (Boston, MA, USA: Phillips, Sampson, and Company, 1854), 165.

⁸⁰ This list is taken from Francis Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, D.D.*, vol. 2, The Michigan Historical Reprint Series (Boston, MA, USA: Phillips, Sampson, and Company, 1854), 38-41. Paraphrases of Judson's advice are in *italics*. My notes are in regular font.

Take care that you are not weakened by the hardships you will face during the preparation and travel to your destination

Judson was cautioning potential candidates that missionary life is hard. He reminded them that “a large portion of those who come out on a mission to the East die within five years after leaving their native land.”⁸¹

Don't judge the local Christians in your field of labor before you know their language and understand their culture

You will undoubtedly be disappointed when you first arrive and may regret that you came, but don't let first impressions dishearten or embitter you. This is the idea of being aware of and trying to avoid ethnocentrism. We will return to this concept below.

Don't let fatigue and frustration tempt you into seeking retreat or focusing on tasks that distract from real missionary work

Necessary rest is needed. Judson is not advocating workaholism. Instead, he was advising against avoiding excessive retreat and rest. He was warning against laziness.

Beware of pride arising from your good reputation and guard against it by openly confessing your shortcomings

Be an honest and humble human. Do not try to be “the man of God” or “the woman of God” who some people will tell you that you are. Stay humble.

Trust God in all things; don't lay up money for yourselves

Judson did understand the necessity of having support. After all, Rice went back to the USA to raise funds for missionary work. Judson was warning about becoming obsessed with finances and placing your trust in your bank account rather than the Lord.

Exercise to maintain your good health

Our physical well-being can impact our spiritual/emotional/psychological well-being. Making time to exercise your body will positively impact your mind and spirit.

⁸¹ Wayland, *A Memoir*, 39.

Don't try to keep up a fashionable lifestyle that will separate you from the people you are there to serve
Again, Judson maintained an American home and even made trips to the USA during his time as a missionary, so he is not saying that you should not maintain any contact with home or your home culture. The question that I ask is, “Who am I in this place/culture?” and then try to adapt as much as possible to that answer. Here in Africa we should remember that how we dress is not a solely personal decision. As one author has written, “Being properly clothed honors the other persons, and they feel dishonored if someone is improperly dressed in relation to his status and position.”⁸²

Judson closed this letter of advice by appealing for more missionaries to come. He wrote, “Praying that you may be guided in all your deliberations, and that I may yet have the pleasure of welcoming some of you to these heathen shores.”⁸³

Robert Morrison (1782-1834)

Robert Morrison was the first Protestant missionary to China. He is considered the Father of Protestant Missions in China. He served from 1807 to 1834 as a Congregationalist missionary under the London Missionary Society. However, Morrison supported financially himself by working as a translator for the East India Company. We will return to this concept later, but in contemporary missiological language, we would call Morrison a tentmaker – a missionary who supports himself financially by working a profit-making job.

In 1823 after sixteen years working in China, Morrison published a Chinese dictionary and finished translating the Bible into Chinese. Morrison must have spent an extraordinary amount of time sitting at a desk as he worked tirelessly to translate the Bible. Morrison learned from Carey’s efforts in India and saw Bible translation as an essential component of the missionary task.

Meanwhile, in his work as an evangelist, Morrison only baptized twelve converts in his entire twenty-seven-year career. As with Carey and Judson, it took seven years to win the first one. Perseverance in the work of missions was one mark of Morrison – as it was with Carey and Judson.

⁸² Maranz, *African Friends*, 173.

⁸³ Wayland, *A Memoir*, 41.

The Englishman Morrison had to pass through America on his way to China. An American ship owner asked him, “So then, Mr. Morrison, do you really expect to make an impression on the idolatry of the great Chinese empire?” To which Morrison replied, “No, sir, but I expect God will.”⁸⁴ God confidence, not self-confidence, is a key to missionary success. Like Carey, Morrison seemed to have found his calling in translation work. Morrison’s legacy lives on in an organization that bears his name.

The Robert Morrison Project is a non-profit, non-denominational organization dedicated to legally translating and publishing reformed literature in Asia. Our aim is to focus on areas of the world where the church faces great hardship and often has no access to quality Christian literature.⁸⁵

Robert Moffat (1795-1883)

Englishman Robert Moffat was pioneer missionary to South Africa. He is known as the Apostle of Bechuanaland – modern day Botswana. Moffat was appointed by the London Missionary Society. He arrived in Africa in 1816. Much of Africa was completely unknown to Europeans at this time. Morrison developed a model mission station at Kuruman, where he served for about fifty years!

Moffat set up a printing press and completed a translation of the Bible into Sechuana in 1857. Notice that Moffat stands in the line of literature as a means of evangelism that extends back to the First Century A.D. He also introduced some farming techniques that helped improve the livelihood of local people. His daughter Mary married David Livingstone.

David Livingstone (1813-1873)

David Livingstone was born on 19 March 1813 in the town of Blantyre, Scotland. His father was a tea merchant and a committed Christian. As a child Livingstone loved to read and had a great deal of interest in learning about science. While initially not interested in religious matters, he came to see the free offer of salvation in Christ as precious, and this free offer “drew forth feelings of

⁸⁴ Sherwood Eddy, *Pathfinders of the World Missionary Crusade* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1945), 34 quoted in Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 167.

⁸⁵ <http://www.robertmorrisonproject.org/en/home>

affectionate love to Him who bought us with His blood.”⁸⁶ From this point forward Livingstone’s life could be summarized by the following phrase, “In the glow of love that Christianity inspired I resolved to devote my life to the alleviation of human misery.”⁸⁷ Before going to Africa as a missionary, Livingstone trained as a physician. At that time training as a physician was pretty limited. They did not have the extensive knowledge of modern medicine that we have today. Once he arrived on the mission field in Africa, he did not show much interest in medicine during his missionary work and instead focused on exploring this vast continent.

In 1841, the London Missionary Society appointed Livingstone to work in Southern Africa. When he first arrived, Livingstone worked with Robert Moffat at his mission station in Kuruman. As we look back on his career, some might conclude that Livingstone was a better explorer than missionary: “Although Livingstone’s career as a missionary in Africa was largely a failure, his subsequent explorations of the interior made a significant impact abroad.”⁸⁸ Livingstone did not show a great deal of interest or aptitude in evangelism and church planting. However, we should probably think of Livingstone’s career differently. He traversed and surveyed Southern and Central Africa in order to open it for missionary work. Robert Bruce, another pioneer missionary who worked among Muslims in the Punjab of India, reflecting on his own work, captured the spirit of Livingstone’s work when he wrote,

I am not reaping the harvest; I scarcely claim to be sowing the seed; I am hardly ploughing the soil; *but I am gathering out the stones.* *That, too, is missionary work; let it be supported by loving sympathy and fervent prayer.*⁸⁹

Others came behind him and built a foundation that Livingstone had helped to prepare for.

Many of the churches in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi trace their origins to the work of Livingstone. His name is retained in the names

⁸⁶ Rob Mackenzie, *David Livingstone: The Truth Behind the Legend* (Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe: Fig Tree Publications, 1993), 28.

⁸⁷ Mackenzie, *David Livingstone*, 28.

⁸⁸ Martin Meredith, *The Fortunes of Africa: A 5,000-Year History of Wealth, and Endeavor* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014), 262.

⁸⁹ Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 311, emphasis original.

of towns, villages, churches, and landmarks across those beautiful countries. Even the town closest to the mighty Victoria Falls in Zambia is called Livingstone, since Livingstone was the first European to see the Falls and is often said to have “discovered” it.⁹⁰

From 1852-56, Livingstone traveled across Africa (Mozambique to Angola). Much of his exploration was motivated by the fact that Livingstone hated and fought the slave trade and sought ways to bring it to an end:

Although he was considered a failure for not locating the source of the Nile, his motives in searching for it were to gain a platform from which to denounce the slave-trade. . . Thus, Livingstone’s *ultimate goal* to bring to the world’s attention the plight of the African slave-trade was achieved . . .⁹¹

Some time after this, Livingstone was out of contact with his missions organization and family for a period of four years. Many presumed that he had died of some tropical disease or been killed by a wild animal. He had, after all, been attacked by a lion earlier in his life. However, in 1871, the reporter Henry Stanley found him and uttered the now famous quote, “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?” Livingstone died just two years later in 1873 in his beloved Africa. His African companions buried his heart in Africa, but the rest of his body was sent back to Great Britain. His body is buried in the graveyard at Westminster Abbey alongside many of Britain’s most famous heroes. As we look back on his life, we must recognize the important role that Livingstone played in the history of missions. In short, he made missions popular and exciting. His tales of exotic peoples, wild animals, and astonishing scenery fascinated his Western audience and created a great deal of interest in missions in the West.

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)

Hudson Taylor was born on 21 May 1832 in Barnsley, England. Taylor came from a Methodist background. While he was still a teenager, Taylor felt a call to

⁹⁰ Livingstone did not, of course, discover the Falls. Africans had been living in the area around the Falls for many years. The claim that he discovered the Falls is from a purely European/Western perspective.

⁹¹ Mackenzie, *David Livingstone*, 17-18, emphasis mine.

serve Christ in China and began to prepare himself for such a work.⁹² Like Livingstone, Taylor trained as a physician. In 1854, the China Evangelization Society (CES) appointed Taylor as a missionary, and he set sail for China. Before he left, he wrote a letter to his sister Amelia:

Pray for me, dear Amelia, that He who has promised to meet all our need may be with me in this painful though long-expected hour. When we look at ourselves, at the littleness of our love, the barrenness of our service and the small progress we make toward perfection, how soul-refreshing it is to turn away to Him; to plunge afresh in “the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness;” . . . “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Oh! The fulness of Christ, the fulness of Christ.⁹³

After only a few years in China, Taylor became dissatisfied with the way that the CES operated in China. He resigned in 1857 and went back to England. Before leaving China, however, Taylor met and married Maria Dyer in 1858. Maria had been born in China where her parents served as missionaries.⁹⁴ In 1860, the Taylors returned to England, and they began making plans to establish the China Inland Mission (now called the Overseas Missions Fellowship or OMF). In 1865, the China Inland Mission was founded as the first “Faith Mission.”

The China Inland Mission was characterized by several distinctions. The first and central characteristic is that no appeals for funds would be made. Instead these missionaries have faith that God will provide for their financial needs.

**What do you think about not making appeals for money for missions?
Does it show more faith than those who solicit funds?**

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia):

Not soliciting funds does not show more faith than soliciting funds. In fact, it may even worsen pride. It is like putting on a t-shirt that says “I am humble.”

⁹² Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (Chicago, IL, USA: Moody Press, 1987), 21-23.

⁹³ Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*, 48.

⁹⁴ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 178

We human beings are limited in things. People may not buy into the idea of something until they get the vision. They then get interested to support financially. It is not a bad idea to share your vision in order to receive support.

From Tapiwa Ngwira (Malawi)

This is just a statement that soliciting money is not the primary purpose of mission work. Andrew Fuller told William Carey that he would hold the rope for Carey as he went in the mission field. The concept of holding the rope may have two meanings, which include financial and spiritual support.

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

Looking to the African perspective, I say yes and no. Yes, it shows more faith than those who solicit funds in the sense that God Himself provides. There are a number of Scriptures that help us to understand that God provides. Jesus said in Matthew 6:31-33, “Therefore, do not be anxious saying, what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” This Scripture and others give us the big picture of putting faith in Jesus Christ in first place. God blesses people who wait upon Him.

One day Peter began to be worried about what he left behind to follow Jesus. Let’s see Jesus’ response in Mark 10:28-31. Jesus’ promise is to those who leave everything for His mission will be more blessed in this present age and in the future to come. When Jesus was tempted by the devil in Luke 4:4, He said that a man shall not live by bread alone.

These verses help us to understand that funds are not barriers to do missions or to go for missions. The God whom we serve is more faithful than anyone else. In fact, thinking about funds is what makes Africans to be fearful to join missions.

On other hand, the answer can be NO. Going as a “faith missionary” does not indicate more faith than others. As God’s people, we need to be organized and thinking about the consequences for the future where we go.

The second characteristic of the China Inland Mission was that they declared that there would be no requirements as to educational attainment.

Should missionaries be required to achieve certain educational levels?

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

Education is just an added advantage. Missionaries are not required to achieve a certain level of education. Anyone can be a missionary.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

Absolutely not! Other than knowing the Word of God, there is no other biblical qualities needed. Andrew Fuller was a great theologian but never underwent formal training. Some of the disciples of Jesus Christ were unschooled people but did a lot of mission work. Formal theological training is another added advantage when it comes to mission work. For example, because some countries that are dominated by Islam will not issue you a visa if you say you are missionary, having other educational attainments and credentials can be useful.

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

The level of education is not the first priority for the missionaries, yet education is necessary.

The third characteristic of the China Inland Mission is that they would go inland and evangelize every province. African Inland Mission (AIM) and Sudan Interior Mission – now SIM – picked up on this idea. They recognized that many times the only people being evangelized were those who lived close to the coast. They sought to change that.

Fourth, the mission would be interdenominational. Today OMF, SIM, and YWAM (Youth with a Mission) are all interdenominational mission boards. Next, single women were welcome to serve with the China Inland Mission. This was a radical concept in the 19th century. Sixth, the administration would be in China. They did this so that they could understand both the field and the missionaries. Finally, missionaries must identify as much as possible with the Chinese people. For Taylor this identification was reflected in the way that he dressed, wore his hair, and in his commitment to learning the Chinese language.

Lottie Moon (1840-1912)

Born Charlotte Diggs Moon in 1840, Miss Moon is affectionately called “Lottie.” She and her sister, Edmonia (who did not stay on the mission field for

very long), were appointed as the first single women missionaries to China by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in 1873.

Lottie was being courted by a man named Crawford Toy, who served as a professor at Southern Seminary. When Lottie found out that Toy did not believe that the Old Testament recorded true history, she ended the relationship. Lottie understood that doctrine in general, and the inerrancy, inspiration, and authority of Scripture in particular, are vitally important. Ideas and doctrines will always have consequences in how churches, individuals, and missions organizations carry out the task of missions. Moon understood this reality.

Moon was a fruitful and effective missionary. When she first arrived, Moon taught at a girls' school in Tengzhou and impacted the lives of many young women in China. Later, she began a ministry of church planting in the Pingtu area that resulted in around thirty churches.

In 1888, Moon suggested to her friend Annie Armstrong that the Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention collect an annual Christmas offering to support the work of foreign by the Foreign Mission Board's Southern Baptist missionaries. This offering continues to today and funds about half of the budget for 4,000 missionaries around the world.

During a famine in 1912, almost forty years after being appointed as a missionary, Moon gave her own food to her starving Chinese friends and neighbours. The other Baptist missionaries in China discovered that she was suffering from malnutrition, but they were too late. She was sent back to the U.S. for medical care and rest, but she died on board ship in Japan.

Amy Carmichael (1867-1951)

Amy Carmichael was a native of Northern Ireland. She went to serve in India in 1895 and served there for fifty-five years. During those fifty-five years, Carmichael never returned to her earthly home in Northern Ireland. In 1901, she founded the Dohnavur Fellowship in the city of Tinnevely. The purpose of this group was to rescue girls from being forced into temple prostitution. Temple prostitution is a function of certain forms of Hinduism whereby worshippers have union with God through sexual union.⁹⁵ Eventually, Carmichael rescued boys, as well. Her Fellowship cared for 900 children at a time. In the midst

⁹⁵ R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1966), 85-87, 132-133.

of all of this work, she also wrote 35 books! She was crippled by a fall in 1931 but continued to serve. She formed the Sisters of the Common Life, a religious order for Protestant women (something like Protestant nuns).

What are some lessons from the lives of the missionaries discussed above that you can apply to missionary efforts from Africa to the world today?

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

From Moon we see that she was determined, ready to sacrifice and die for the sake of others. She selflessly served with love. I like the statement that Carmichael was crippled by the fall but continued to serve. The lesson here is that we should hold on even when life appears negative on a personal level. Continuing to serve shows deep faithfulness to God.

From Tapina Ngwira (Malawi)

The idea of having individuals, churches, and mission board responsible to support missionary work is very good. Moon did well to suggest to her friend the formulation of board that will exist to support mission work. In Malawi 2020, we need to compel and motivate churches that is their responsibility to be involved in missions. The primary purpose of the Church is missions.

From Bento Simaio (Mozambique)

Carmichael wrote 35 books! African missionaries should write books to impact the future generation to come for missions. Most of the books we have are written in western perspective and context. African missionaries should write in their context. Also, African missionaries should be ready to encounter consequences when they go for missions.

THE PRACTICE OF MISSIONS

In the following section about the practice of missions, we will discuss the how and what of missions. However, an issue that often subconsciously drives the conversation about the practice of missions is *motivation*. Why are people compelled to do missions? Having an unbiblical motivation for doing missions will inevitably lead to doing missions in an unbiblical way. Therefore, the question of motivation is important.

MOTIVATIONS FOR MISSIONS

Before we think about what *should* motivate us to be involved in missions, let's take a look at the different motivations throughout history. Historically, what has motivated people to do missions?

According to Michael Green, the early church had three distinctive motivations for being involved in missions and evangelism.¹ First, believers in the early church were motivated by a sense of gratitude. The early church Christians understood the depth of their sin and their need for a Saviour. These twin understandings led them to truly understand the beauty and preciousness of the gospel. This understanding of and love for the gospel led them to evangelize those around them. As Green writes, “the main motive for evangelism was a *theological* one.”² Green sees this theological motive as being primarily related to the “loving gratitude to the God who had saved them.”³ This sense of gratitude is expressed in Peter and John's words in Acts 4:19-20:

Peter and John answered them, “Whether it's right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”⁴

¹ These motivations come from Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970).

² Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 236, emphasis mine.

³ Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 237.

⁴ Acts 4:19-20, CSB.

Early church tradition reports that Peter refused to be disloyal to Jesus. As Peter reflected on the cross, he went to Rome despite the apparent dangers and was martyred there.⁵ John Foxe wrote, “Everyone who had experienced the joys of believing tried to bring others to the faith.”⁶

As much as gratitude clearly played a role in the early church’s evangelism, I also want to add that faith in future grace also played a major role in the early church’s motivation for evangelism and missions. John Piper has insisted that instead of seeking to use gratitude as a motive for obedience, God “lures us into obedience with irresistibly desirable promises of enablement and divine reward.”⁷

As we think about the theological component of our motivation for missions and evangelism, let us be motivated by Jesus’ promise to be with us – even to the end of the age.⁸ Let us also be motivated the promise that the Holy Spirit will enable us to speak.⁹ Let us be motivated by the promise that a multitude from every tribe, tongue, people and nation will one day worship around the throne of Jesus.¹⁰ While the joy that flows from reflection upon the cross should never be diminished, let us also be motivated by faith in future grace!

The second motivation for missions and evangelism in the early church was a sense of responsibility. One only needs to look to the command of Christ in each of the four Gospels and Acts to see that the early church was motivated by a sense of responsibility given to them directly by Christ. The command of Christ in these five places can be summarized with three words: “Come;” “Follow;” and “Go.”¹¹ First, Jesus commanded people to *come* to Him. When they came to him, they found joy and peace because they found forgiveness of sins.¹² Second, Jesus’ command for his disciples to *follow* Him was a command for them to “become a carbon copy of Him.”¹³ Third, Jesus’ commanded his disciples to go. When Jesus’ disciples obey the command to go, they become *apostles*. The direct translation of the word typically translated apostle is “sent out one.”

⁵ Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 238.

⁶ Quoted in Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 27.

⁷ John Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry*, Updated and Revised Edition, Kindle edition (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), location 949.

⁸ Matthew 28:20.

⁹ Matthew 10:18.

¹⁰ Revelation 7:9-10.

¹¹ J. Herbert Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), 145.

¹² Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 145.

¹³ Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 147.

Those who are sent out have a central task, which is to share the message of the One who sent them.¹⁴

The final motivation that Green lists and that we want to discuss is a sense of concern. Jesus said that he came to seek and to save the lost.¹⁵ The very use of the word “lost” indicates a concern for others. We will return to this discussion of lostness later. In the same way the New Testament writers show a concern for the lost as a motivation for evangelism. Green writes, “This lively awareness of the peril of those without Christ persisted as a major evangelistic motive in the second century.”¹⁶ Green points to the writings of the early church fathers such as Tertullian, Clement, and Origen as examples of the early church father’s concern for the lost. Green quotes Origen who in his commentary on Romans 9:1 wrote, “Do you have sorrow and grief for the lost? Do you care enough to be separated for them?”¹⁷

So, these three motives were the three major reasons for evangelism in the early church – a sense of gratitude, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of concern.

With the rise of Emperor Constantine in 313 A.D., the environment in which church operated changed. Within a few years, Christianity went from being a persecuted minority to the official religion of the Roman Empire.¹⁸ As F.F. Bruce writes, “Christianity thus became fashionable, which was not really a good thing.”¹⁹ Bruce’s comment about the fashionability of Christianity indicates the biblical reality that when the gospel is correctly understood, it is considered foolishness to the world.²⁰ This period of Christianity becoming favoured by the government and by most people is known as Christendom.

As Christendom expanded throughout Europe and beyond, the spiritual and political aspects of life became inseparable. As a result, governments were able to impose religion upon individuals, families, towns, cities, and whole populations. This kind of imposition is not biblical evangelism and discipleship. As a result, many people became “Christians” without actually becoming disciples of Jesus.

While, as we saw earlier in this book, the Protestant Reformation was a good and necessary corrective to the erroneous teachings of the Roman

¹⁴ Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 149.

¹⁵ Luke 19:10

¹⁶ Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 251.

¹⁷ Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 253.

¹⁸ Van Rheenen, “Changing Motivations,” 164-71.

¹⁹ Bruce, *The Spreading Flame*, 295.

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:18

Catholic Church, motivations continued to be a mix of political and spiritual. At times, some colonial powers sent missionaries along with their explorers, slave traders, and conquerors. They hoped that Christianity would pacify and subjugate the people whose land they were seeking to colonize. However, we should recognize that the aims of missionaries and governments are never the same. As Neill writes, “The government wishes to have orderly and intelligent citizens; the mission aims to produce educated and thoughtful Christian men and women.”²¹ Many missionaries were not dependent upon colonial powers. For many missionaries, the colonial powers were a useful tool for their central purpose of making disciples. Instead of depending upon the colonial powers to help them accomplish their spiritual goals, these governments were “at best something to be ignored or rejected if it failed to server their purpose.”²²

The modern missionary movement, beginning with William Carey, has largely been marked by a concern for the lostness of individuals who are far from God. This desire was motivated by love and compassion to see the lost found and brought to salvation. Based on this love for one’s neighbor and a belief in hell as a real and eternal place that is the destination of all those who are not in Christ has also been a motivating factor. As mentioned earlier, David Livingstone was motivated by love for those in misery. In fact, Livingstone worked contrary to the slave-trading purposes of colonizing powers. Livingstone believed that “the only way ultimately to root out the slave-trade was . . . to make an open path for commerce and Christianity.”²³

While the history of motivations for missions is interesting and helpful for understanding where we are today, the question remains, “What is *your* motivation?” There are a few motivations for missions that we believe to be unhealthy, small, and, ultimately, just not good enough. Only by eliminating these motivations can we get to a healthy biblical motivation for doing missions.

If you talk to young people about why they want to be involved in missions, many young people will respond by saying, “I love to travel! And I really love trying new foods and hearing new sounds and seeing new sites! I think I’ll be a missionary!” While a healthy view of “others” certainly helps missionaries deal with culture shock and a willingness to try new things is essential to missions work, missions is not tourism. Enthusiasm is not enough Eventually, the

²¹ Stephen Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 332.

²² Andrew Porter, “An Overview, 1700-1914,” in *Missions and Empire*, edited by Norman Etherington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 51.

²³ Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions*, 277.

newness wears off, the new foods that were once interesting start to taste repellant, and the constant Muslim call to prayer becomes annoying. In short, the honeymoon phase of missions will pass. Long-term missionaries will need to find another motivation if they are going to have a lasting ministry.

Some individuals tend to treat missions like a to-do list with a series of check boxes. You might have been encouraged to be involved in missions by a statement like this one, “There are 99 (or 1,000 or whatever) people groups that need to be reached so we can get Jesus to come back. So let’s do it.” A strong drive to “get it done” can be a great motivator and driving force against complacency, but the missionary task is NOT a series of check boxes to be ticked off. Obedience to God’s command to reach the nations is making *disciples*. Disciple making and the missionary task cannot be reduced to checking boxes off a to-do list.

An adventurous spirit, a “get-it-done” drive, and compassion for the hurting are all great motivators, but none of them are good enough on their own. Christian missionaries must have a passionate desire for seeing God’s glory made manifest among the nations. The Bible is replete with passages declaring God’s passion for his Name and fame.²⁴ So, our motivation for doing missions must be God’s fame! God’s fame is manifested most gloriously when the lost are found and sinners are saved through repentance and faith. The task of Christian missions must be done for the glory of God through the salvation of the lost. *That* is a motivation that will keep you on the field.

THE MISSIONARY CALL

Earlier in this book, we asked ourselves the question, “What is a missionary?” Now, we want to think about the call to be a missionary. In trying to answer both of those questions together, one author has wrote, “A missionary is someone who never gets used to the sound of pagan footsteps on their way to a Christ-less eternity.”²⁵ So, how does one receive the “missionary call,” which results in this status? Contrary to popular belief, the missionary call is rarely

²⁴ Isaiah 44:6; 48:11-12; 1 Samuel 12:22; Psalm 23:3; Romans 11:36; Revelation 1:8, 11, 17; 21:6; 22:13. For exposition of these verses and an explanation of this idea see John Piper *God’s Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, IL, USA: Crossway Books, 1998).

²⁵ M. David Sills, *The Missionary Call: Find Your Place in God’s Plan for the World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 15.

mystical like the call of Patrick that we read about earlier. Instead, the missionary call usually consists of the following factors.²⁶

First, the need is a factor in the missionary call. Two billion people have never heard the gospel. Fifty thousand (50,000) of those people die each day.²⁷ While, as we saw earlier, the need for the unreached to hear the gospel is not sufficient alone for a call to missions, it is a good “starting place.”²⁸ Some missionaries and missionary leaders say that God cannot lead you on information that you do not have. Therefore, gathering information about lostness in the world and the need for missionaries in various places and among various people groups is one way that people *begin* to feel a call to missions.

The commands of Christ are the second factor in the missionary call. When asked about his call into missions, an American missionary to Africa and the Middle East responded, “I read Matthew 28:18-20.” Many missionaries need go no further than the Bible to find their missionary call. Saying, “No, Lord,” is not an option. If someone has a “Lord” (the old English word for Boss or Master), then he or she cannot tell the person, “No.” When our Lord calls us, we have no other option than to obey.²⁹ As American missionary and theologian Robertson McQuilkin says, “Acknowledging Christ as Lord must be more than a transient stirring of emotions or a passive acknowledgment that we are not the owners and operators of our lives. . . . This unconditional ‘yes’ to God is the basic definition of what discipleship is.”³⁰

In addition to the need and the commands of Christ, the missionary call requires susceptibility to the leading of the Holy Spirit. While no two people will hear from the Holy Spirit in the same way, we must each work to develop our ability to hear from the Holy Spirit and to respond. Prayer, meditation, fasting, and other spiritual disciplines help us to hear the voice of God, the Holy Spirit. Most crucially, we should remember that the Holy Spirit is the Author of Holy Scripture. The more familiar we are with the Bible the more likely we are to be able to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit when He calls.

²⁶ These aspects come from Sills, *The Missionary Call*, 23-30 and J. Herbert Kane, *The Making of a Missionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975), 28-31.

²⁷ These numbers are approximate and imprecise, but they do represent a reasonable place to start when discussing the need for missionaries to go to unreached people and places.

²⁸ Sills, *The Missionary Call*, 23.

²⁹ Kane, *The Making of a Missionary*, 29.

³⁰ Robertson McQuilkin, *The Great Omission: A Biblical Basis for World Evangelism* (Waynesboro, GA, USA: Gabriel Publishing, 1984), 71.

The final factor in the missionary call is church support. A potential missionary candidate should have the support of his local church. The church “should be able to see a desire to share the gospel, an interest in internationals, a willingness to learn new languages, and an unceasing burden for the lost around the world.”³¹

In addition to the above, another author has tried to answer the question, “How does one receive the missionary call?”³² He understands that there are several aspects. First, a person must have an open mind. In order to hear the call to missions, individuals must be able to overcome prejudices. In today’s world, many Christians have such a negative view of Islam that they would never consider a call to be a missionary among Muslims. Other Christians find the rituals of Buddhists and Hindus to be primitive and unsophisticated. Still other Christians mock atheists and agnostics as cowardly and unprincipled. Those kinds of prejudices and stereotypes must be overcome and set aside.

Second, according to Kane, receiving the missionary call requires one to have an attentive ear. As we mentioned earlier the ability to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit is a skill that must be worked on and trained. Kane wrote that some people miss the missionary call on their lives due to inattentiveness, “It may be that God did speak, not once but many times, but they were not listening.”³³ Please note that when God speaks or gives impressions to individuals, that communication is not on the level of Scripture. We can never substitute hearing from God through the Bible. The Bible is the final authority in our faith and in our practice – including the missionary call.

The third requirement for hearing the missionary call according to Kane is a pure heart. Being a Bible-believing Christian, Kane did not believe that anyone could have a *sinless* heart. He understood that all have sinned³⁴ and that “the heart is more deceitful than anything else.”³⁵ Instead of referring to sinless perfection, Kane meant that an individual needs to be in proper relationship with God for God to lead him or her in a call to missionary service. Ongoing and persistent sin grieves the Holy Spirit. Our daily lives must be marked by killing sins by the grace of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁶ When one

³¹ Sills, *The Missionary Call*, 29.

³² Kane, *The Making of a Missionary*, 32-5.

³³ Kane, *The Making of a Missionary*, 33.

³⁴ Romans 3:23.

³⁵ Jeremiah 17:9, *CSB*.

³⁶ John Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, ed. by Kelly M. Kopic and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL, USA: Crossway Books, 2006), 62

persists in sin, he or she breaks fellowship with God. In such a position, a person cannot hear God's call to missionary service.

Next, an individual needs busy hands in order to hear God's call. I have heard someone say that God cannot steer a parked car. Kane writes, "Any person contemplating even the possibility of a call should begin by getting involved in some kind of work for the Lord."³⁷ Get to work, and then He will guide your steps. For those exploring a call to missions, we recommend looking for and taking opportunities to be involved in missions work – whether close to your home or far away. Individuals should take opportunities to be involved in entering new mission fields, evangelism, discipleship, and, when biblically appropriate, teaching and preaching.

Finally, one needs to have ready feet if one wishes to hear the missionary call. We should be ready to go wherever God calls whenever God calls. As mentioned above, we should also be aware that the missionary call is rarely as clear as Paul's call was in the book of Acts. The missionary call of Patrick is not one that others should expect to have. Instead, individuals should have a spirit of eagerness to take opportunities when they present themselves.

Upon investigation of all above factors and ways to receive the missionary call, we can see that the missionary call is both objective and subjective. The missionary call is objectively related to God's revealed will in the Bible. Jesus has commanded the church to make disciples of all nations. The missionary call is subjectively related to the Holy Spirit's call on each one person's life. We concur with Kane who wrote, "If one waits until he is *absolutely sure* of the Lord's leading, he will wait forever."³⁸

WHICH ROLE WILL YOU FILL?

Based on the missions emphasis in the entire Bible and God's desire to be glorified by all peoples, we can conclude that ALL Christians are called to be a part of God's call to reach the nations for His glory. The only question is what role *you* will fill.

The first possibility is that of "goer." This is the most obvious role and the one that people normally think of when contemplating the "missionary call." It is the role of a sent out one – a missionary. These are the people who actually leave their homeland and go into a new setting. As mentioned earlier, a mission-

³⁷ Kane, *The Making of a Missionary*, 34.

³⁸ Kane, *The Making of a Missionary*, 35, emphasis ours.

ary is someone who crosses geographic, cultural, or linguistic borders to complete the mission of God. Later in this book we will see that this role may not always be the traditional fully funded missionary role. However, anyone who intentionally and deliberately leaves his or her home and crosses these various kinds of borders to evangelize, disciple, plant churches, and train leaders should be thought of as a “goer.”

The second possible role is “sender.” A sender is someone who is called to send missionaries to the field. He or she actively sends missionaries. Two historical examples of senders that we have looked at are Andrew Fuller and Luther Rice. These men worked tirelessly to support William Carey and Adoniram Judson, respectively. A modern-day example of a sender is someone who works full-time in the home office for a missions agency or denominational office to send the goers who have gone into various mission fields.

The third possible role is related to and often overlaps the second role. We call this role the “supporter” role. What we have in mind here is *not* someone who works full-time at a missions agency but instead supports the work of missions while working at another job. This support is both financial and prayer support.

The fourth and final role is “mobilizers.” This role is someone who actively recruits missionaries to serve overseas. This fourth role should also be a sender and/or supporter.

It should also be noted that many individuals pass through different stages of their lives where God calls them to be involved as a mobilizer and then a goer or a goer and then a supporter. These various calls are not always lifetime calls. Instead, we should think of them as assignments for a season of one’s life.

It is our passionate conviction that Africa will soon be a missions force instead of only a mission field. We are praying that individuals and churches in Africa will hear God’s call to reach the Christ-haunted cities of Europe and North America. We are praying that they will also be called to North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the rest of the Muslim world. We are also pleading with Christ to send African missionaries to the hordes of Hindus, Buddhists, and atheistic materialists of Asia. By the grace of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit, an African “William Carey” might ignite the beginning of the next “Great Century of Missions.”

THE MISSIONARY TASK

Now that we have discussed the motivation for missions and the missionary call, it is appropriate to discuss “How” of missions. What is that missionaries and missions organizations do.³⁹ Recently, the International Mission Board has published a document called *Foundations*. This document “describes who we are and what we do.” It is beyond the scope of this volume to review all of *Foundations*, but we will use that document’s framework of “the missionary task” to discuss the practice of missions. There are six “core components” of this task: entry, evangelism, discipleship, healthy church formation, leadership development, and exit to partnership.⁴⁰

Entry

Entry is the processing of accessing people who need to hear the gospel. This process includes research, presence, identity, and communication ability.⁴¹ This book will focus on that final element – communication ability.

*Intercultural Communication*⁴²

The heart of missions is the gospel. As we saw earlier, the gospel is best understood as good news or good tidings. It is a message. Since the gospel is a message, the ability to clearly communicate is at the core of doing missions and being a missionary. Since we have defined missions as crossing various kinds of boundaries to carry out the mission of God, we this next section will deal with the issue of intercultural communication. As with the other sections of this book, we will not be able to treat this topic exhaustively. There are a number of excellent resources on this topic and can be found in the footnotes. As we look at the topic of intercultural communication, let’s begin by looking at a word that will help us to understand how intercultural communication work. That word is contextualization.

³⁹ International Mission Board, *Foundations* (Richmond, VA, USA: International Mission Board, 2018), 6.

⁴⁰ *Foundations*, 75.

⁴¹ *Foundations*, 76-80.

⁴² We are using the word “intercultural” to mean approximately the same thing as “cross-cultural” has meant in many important and seminal works such as David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Book House, 1980); David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991).

Contextualization

The word contextualization is as widely used as it is misused and misunderstood. Some people use the word as an excuse to change the gospel to make it mean what they think others want to hear. When people change the gospel under the banner of contextualization, they are not contextualizing the gospel but committing syncretism. Syncretism results not in the clear communication of the gospel but in the twisting of the gospel.⁴³ The resultant message is no gospel at all.⁴⁴

American pastor Mark Dever defines contextualization as simply the fact that “we want to make sure they understand what we mean.”⁴⁵ He writes that words that we commonly use in evangelism are words that nonbelievers will not usually understand (justification, for instance). African theologian Byang Kato wrote, “We understand the term [contextualization] to mean making concepts of ideals relevant in a given situation.”⁴⁶ When we take these two definitions together, the idea of contextualization sums up the idea of intercultural communication. We will return to basic communication theory later. For now, let us look at some of the challenges that come with communicating across cultures.

Problems in Communicating Across Cultures

Paul Hiebert, in his article “Cultural Differences and the Communication of the Gospel,” argues that there are three types of lifelong problems that missionaries face.⁴⁷ He classifies the first type as “misunderstandings.” This category of problem is primarily cognitive – mental or intellectual. It deals with how individuals and cultures *think* about things. Hiebert gives the following example:⁴⁸

⁴³ Gailyn Van Rheenen, “*Syncretism and Contextualization: The Church on a Journey Defining Itself*,” in *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents*, in Evangelical Missiological Society Series, no. 13 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006), 8.

⁴⁴ Galatians 1:7.

⁴⁵ Mark E. Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL, USA: Crossway Books, 2007), 63.

⁴⁶ Byang H. Kato, “The Gospel, Cultural Context, and Religious Syncretism,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Minneapolis, MN, USA: World Wide, 1975), 1217; quoted in David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Pasadena, CA, USA: William Carey Library), 33.

⁴⁷ Paul G. Hiebert, “Cultural Differences and the Communication of the Gospel” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 3rd ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 373-383.

⁴⁸ All of the following stories were told by Hiebert but are paraphrased by us.

There was a missionary serving among a tribe who had never seen food from cans before. These tribal people observed the missionary eating cans of food with pictures on it and began to make some observations. From what they could tell, whatever picture was on the can was a picture of what was in the can. They marveled at the complete disrespect and immorality of the missionaries. Why? Well, the first time the nationals saw the missionary eat from a can, there was a picture of corn. So, the people knew that missionaries ate corn. Second, there was a picture of a chicken on a can. So, the missionaries ate the meat of a chicken. Then, the nationals saw a can with a picture of a baby. So . . . the missionaries . . . experienced a communication problem.

What is the lesson learned? In the absence of information, people often draw false conclusions based on their assumptions. Ignorance of beliefs, values, feelings, and practices of another culture can often lead to false conclusions. What is the solution to these kinds of problems? Since this type of problem is primarily cognitive, the solution is also cognitive. One needs to learn how the other culture thinks. In some ways, this category of problem is the easiest to solve. By gathering information and learning how other individuals and groups of individuals process information, misunderstandings can be reduced – but probably never completely avoided.

The second category of problem can be classified as “ethnocentrism.” This type of problem is primarily affective – or related to the affections/emotions. Ethnocentrism deals with how individuals and cultures *feel* about things. The word ethnocentrism is one of those words that is made up of two words – “ethnic” and “central.” Ethnocentrism is the concept that people tend to look at their own ethnicity and culture as being the center. This view causes us to believe the way that we think, feel, and do is “normal.” Therefore, when we encounter a person or a group of people who think, feel, and do things differently than we do them, we feel that what they are thinking, feeling, or doing is wrong.

So, ethnocentrism is simply the idea that people have a tendency to respond to other people’s beliefs, behaviours, and values by using their own affective (emotional) assumptions. They also tend to reinforce these responses with deep feelings of approval or disapproval. This problem of ethnocentrism occurs on both sides. In other words, the missionary is often ethnocentric towards his host culture.

Additionally, his host culture is often ethnocentric toward the missionary and his culture. Once again, Hiebert provides an illustration for this type of problem.

An American goes out to eat at an Indian restaurant with someone from India. The American, disgusted by the typical Indian eating practice of using one’s hands says, “You’re not going to eat with your hands are you?” The Indian, disgusted by the American eating practice of using utensils like forks and spoons, responds, “You’re not going to eat with that fork, are you? I wash my hands constantly, and I’ve never put them in anyone else’s mouth. That fork you are using, who knows where it has been?!?!?”

What is the solution to ethnocentrism and ethnocentric behaviour? The solution is to learn to sympathize and empathize with people from different cultures. In practicing sympathy and empathy, we learn to appreciate other cultures and their ways of feeling about different aspects of life.

Hiebert calls the final type of problem “premature judgments.” This category of problem flows out of the first two and is evaluative. This type of problem happens when one person judges another culture before having come to understand and appreciate that culture. Hiebert does not provide an illustration for this problem. However, both of the above illustrations are examples of premature judgments, because judgments and behaviour flow out of our thoughts and feelings. The solution to this type of problem is a modified form of cultural relativism. Marvin Mayers in *Christianity Confronts Culture* wrote that we must combine biblical absolutism with cultural relativism when evaluating cultural differences.⁴⁹ The cultural relativism that we are promoting is a combination of biblical absolutism, the belief that the Bible teaches values, ethics, moral, norms, etc. that are absolute across time and culture, and cultural relativism, the belief that no single culture has all of the absolutely correct ethical and moral answers.

	Biblical Relativism	Biblical Absolutism
Cultural Absolutism	Situational Ethics	Traditionalist
Cultural Relativism	Antinomianism	<u>Mutual Respect</u>

⁴⁹ Marvin K. Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Crosscultural Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan Academic, 1987).

The above table indicates the four different options for making judgments in an intercultural setting. Situational ethics is the idea that culture is absolute. In this position the Bible is not seen as authoritative. Instead, cultural norms and values are seen as more important than the Bible. In this approach to ethics and decision-making, culture is in charge. This is clearly not an option for Bible-believing people.

The second option is called the “Traditionalist” position. In this position, people believe that the Bible is authoritative. They also believe that their cultural understanding and position provide the only valid biblical way to make judgments. This position is probably the most common for all Christians – not just missionaries. We tend to make judgments based on the way that we have always done things and think about things the way that we have always thought about them. However, when we are truly biblical in our approach to others, we will realize that this option is also not an option for those of us who hold the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God because it puts our culture on equal standing with the Bible.

The third option is “Antinomianism.” This option combines the ideas of cultural relativism and biblical relativism. The word antinomianism simply means “no (or against) law.” Antinomianism is the idea that all things are permissible and that there is no standard for making judgments and decisions. Once again, this is not an option for Bible-believing people.

The final option is called “Mutual Respect.” In this option, the Bible is the authority for all judgments. However, our individual and cultural interpretations, evaluations, and judgements of the absolute biblical values, norms, and ethics should always be open to hearing from others. We should be willing to admit that we might be wrong and that all of our theologizing is done in and from a certain context – even when rooted in Scripture. We must affirm what Paul Hiebert wrote, “Christians reject religious relativism and affirm the uniqueness of Christ and the authority of Scripture, and they do so not in arrogance because they are in some way superior to other people, but in love, seeking to extend the Good News of salvation to all who suffer under the tyranny of sin.”⁵⁰

As we continue to think about intercultural communication, let’s look at the two words that make up this phrase – culture and communication.

In his final book, published after his death, Hiebert’s definition of culture is “the partially integrated system of ideas, feelings, and values encoded in learned patterns of behavior, signs, products, rituals, and worldviews shared by a community

⁵⁰ Paul G. Hiebert, *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 115.

of people.”⁵¹ This definition indicates that cultures are made up of three dimensions, which we have already discussed and seen in the three problems for missionary communication. Those three dimensions are cognitive, affective, and evaluative.⁵²

Communication is the process through which participants create and share information as they move toward reaching mutual understanding. Our goal should be to be the best sender and receiver we can be, and that means honing our communication skills by understanding the basics of communication theory as well as understanding how to evaluate culture and its influence on communication.

There are four essential factors to any communication. Those four factors are source, message, receptor, and medium. The source is also known as the sender. So, in our case, the authors of this textbook are the source. The message is the content of this textbook – the ideas, stories, illustrations, recommendations, exhortations, etc. The receptors are the readers. If you are reading this textbook, then you are the receptor. Finally, the medium is way that you are receiving this content. If you are reading a paper copy of this book, then the book itself is the medium. If you are reading this on your computer, then the computer is the medium. If someone is reading this book to you, then that person’s voice is the medium. The Internet is also a medium. WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and other online sites are different forms of media.⁵³ A sound understanding of each of these four components of communication is essential for effective communication.

Communication also presupposes two conditions. First, communication presupposes that the source has an intent. Every source, or sender, has a reason for communicating. The sender might intend to inform, persuade, convict, or entertain. Second, communication presupposes that there is a response from the receptor. The source’s desire is for their intent to be fulfilled, but they are not in complete control of the outcome. The receptor may misunderstand. He may be unpersuaded. He may be unconvinced. He may not be as entertained as the sender had hoped. In any case, the receptor will have a response. Even no response is an indication that something went wrong in the communication process. We should also recognize that communication always occurs within a setting or context. Communication takes place at a particular time and place,

⁵¹ Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*, 18n. Hiebert’s daughter, Eloise Meneses, worked to get this book published after Hiebert’s death in 2007.

⁵² Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights*, 30-35. These three dimensions are noted in the problems we discussed earlier.

⁵³ Media is the plural form of the word medium.

and it takes place between two or more individuals or groups. In other words, communication is essentially part of a larger framework that we call culture.

American missiologist Gailyn Van Rheenen stresses two additional components in communication: feedback and noise.⁵⁴ Feedback is verbal and/or non-verbal cues that the receptor uses to inform the sender or source that the message has been received and understood. Of course, feedback can also tell the source the opposite. Feedback can tell the source that the message has *not* be understood and/or has misunderstood. Thus, when feedback is given, the process is reversed. The sender or source is now the receiver and the receiver is now the sender or source. The sender may improve their effectiveness by asking for feedback. Through evaluating feedback, the sender learns of mistakes and successes and can make adjustments in order to improve the likelihood of the communication process being successful.

Noise is “any disruption in the communication event.”⁵⁵ Noise is unavoidable at times. Sometimes this noise is literal noise. For example, an ambulance passing by a school classroom may cause pupils to be unable to hear their teacher delivering her lecture. A monkey swinging on the trees outside the classroom window might cause pupils to be distracted. Sometimes the concept of noise is metaphorical. For example, if the receiver is thinking about his sick child at home, he may not receive the preacher’s message at a church service on Sunday morning. As you are reading this book, you may be hungry and unable to concentrate. While the sender can seek to reduce both literal and metaphorical noise in the communication process, noise is, at times, unavoidable.

Pioneer Bible translator Eugene Nida wrote that missionary communication must be tri-cultural. It encompasses three cultures. The three cultures are biblical culture, the missionary’s culture, and the respondent’s culture. Nida presented the idea of two stages of communication in a tri-cultural model. The first stage is to decode the biblical message through proper exegesis of the Scripture. This stage will require knowledge of the Bible, hermeneutics, grammar, and the like. Your study of hermeneutics and biblical studies will aid you in this stage. The second stage, according to Nida, is to encode the biblical message into language and forms that are meaningful to the respondent culture (with as little intrusion of influences from one’s own culture as possible). As

⁵⁴ Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 116.

⁵⁵ Van Rheenen, *Missions*, 116.

indicated earlier, the intercultural communication process demands that the source knows something about the culture in which he or she wishes to communicate.

Many anthropologists, missionaries, and businesspeople have developed models for analyzing, understanding, and communicating how cultures work. In this section, we will look at a few of those different models put forward by various researchers and authors. First, Marvin Mayers and Sherwood Lingenfelter developed six matrices that seek to understand and explain how cultures relate to one another.⁵⁶

1. Time (time vs. event)
2. Judgement (dichotomistic vs. holistic)
3. Handling Crisis (crisis vs. non-crisis)
4. Goals (person vs. task)
5. Self-Worth (status vs. achievement)
6. Vulnerability (concealment vs. willing to expose)

Another model was developed by Hofstede, Pedersen, and Hofstede.⁵⁷ Hofstede, Pedersen, and Hofstede organize their analysis of culture by comparing and contrasting how cultures “all meet the same five basic problems of social life.”⁵⁸ They go on to write,

If you were to compare a large number of cultures around the world, you would see that although each is different, they all meet the same five basic problems of social life. Each culture has developed its own answers to each problem.⁵⁹

The final model that I want to present was created by Sarah Lanier. Lanier categorizes the world into two types of cultures: hot vs. cold climate cultures.⁶⁰ Lanier argues that the world’s cultures are impacted by the climate. The result is

⁵⁶ Sherwood Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003)

⁵⁷ Gert Jan Hofstede, Paul B. Pedersen, Geert Hofstede, *Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Cultures* (Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2002)

⁵⁸ Hofstede, *Exploring Culture*, 34.

⁵⁹ Hofstede, *Exploring Culture*, 34.

⁶⁰ Sarah A. Lanier, *Foreign to Familiar: A Guide to Understanding Hot- and Cold-Climate Cultures* (Hagerstown: McDougal Publishing, 2000)

that countries in hot climates tend to have a lot in common with one another. Similarly, people who live in cold climates also tend to have a lot in common with one another.

A thorough analysis and evaluation of these different models is beyond the scope of this textbook. Anyone interested in pursuing further understanding of these models should consult those works. None of them are perfect. All of them have flaws and are written from a certain perspective. However, anyone who wishes to improve his or her intercultural communication skills would be well served to understand one or more of these models. We recommend choosing one model and using it as a general tool for understanding and analyzing cultures.

Nonverbal Communication

“Nonverbal communication is an elaborate code that is written nowhere, known by none, and understood by all.” Edward Sapir

The final aspect of communication that we want to address is nonverbal communication. There are at least five reasons that nonverbal communication is important. First, nonverbal communication is present everywhere. It is impossible to avoid nonverbal communication. Whether it is your body language, your tone, your rate of speech, or something else, you are always communicating non-verbally.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this truth – that nonverbal communication is present everywhere?

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

Nonverbal communication has several advantages. Before one could utter a word, you could be able to interpret the meaning from his voice or posture. Nonverbal communication is often used among married couples more. I use nonverbal communication more than verbal with my wife, and she knows when am happy or not. Nonverbal communication can be easy to let one know if a person is lying or telling the truth. Disadvantages could be that sometimes nonverbal communication can be very misleading and can cause misunderstanding. Nonverbal communication can differ from culture to culture. In our culture when food is served, it is rude to stop eating when the elders are still eating.

Second, nonverbal communication usually comes first. Whether it is how someone looks or the context of the conversation, nonverbal communication most often precedes verbal communication. The one possible exception is when someone calls you on the phone, but even a phone call indicates some sort of context. The person calling you has a phone, knows how to use a phone, and probably knows who they are calling (unless it is a wrong number).

Third, nonverbal communication is especially likely to be trusted. For married people, pretend that you return home and your spouse looks upset. You ask him or her, “Are you upset?” and he or she replies, “No, I’m fine,” but does so with a certain tone and a certain facial expression that indicates otherwise. Which will you trust—the words or the facial expression? If you are like most people, you will trust the nonverbal communication. The frown or the tears will indicate that everything is not “fine” even if the words say things are “fine.”

Fourth, nonverbal communication can lead to misunderstanding, especially when verbal messages are missing or limited. For instance, hand gestures can be misunderstood. For example, using one’s index finger to point is considered rude in some cultures.

Finally, Nonverbal communication is especially important in intercultural communication situations. We will see how culture impacts communication as we proceed with our discussion of nonverbal communication by looking at four characteristics of nonverbal communication.

*Four Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication*⁶¹

First, nonverbal communication is commonplace. This means that every culture has many nonverbal cues and norms. Second, nonverbal communication is an important part of social interaction. Some experts in communication claim that hiding deception is nearly impossible because certain non-verbal markers will reveal that the individual is lying. Even these attempts to conceal deception are culturally learned, however. Third, nonverbal communication is NOT pancultural. In other words, the forms of nonverbal communication differ from one culture to another. The meaning of a nonverbal cue varies from culture to culture. For example, standing in someone’s presence conveys respect in one culture and disrespect in another culture. However, there are *some* nonverbals that seem to be pancultural. For example, the smile, the frown, laughing, and crying

⁶¹ Donald Klopff in his book, *Intercultural Encounters*, introduces and explains these four characteristics of non-verbal communication.

all seem to express the same thing in every culture. However, even within a given culture, these cues can be misunderstood. If someone is crying, they might be sad, or they may be overcome with joy. The final characteristic is that nonverbal communication is culturally acquired. Members of the culture learn the how, when, where, and why to using the various forms of nonverbal communication. For the most part, this learning happens tacitly – or unconsciously. One is not taught nonverbal communication in the same way that he or she is taught mathematics. Normally, this learning happens indirectly as children watch and imitate how their parents and other elders act.

Five Functions of Nonverbal Communication

In addition to these four characteristics of nonverbal communication, we want to see five functions of nonverbal communication. This paragraph will show us how nonverbal communication actually works. First, nonverbal communication may complement a verbal message such as a “Hi” with a smile. In this function, the nonverbal cue adds to the verbal communication. In our example, the smile that accompanies the greeting communicates that the greeting is sincere and welcoming. Second, nonverbal communication may contradict a verbal message. As we saw earlier, when someone says, “I love you” or “congratulations” with a frown, the nonverbal cue is the opposite of the verbal communication. Third, nonverbal communication may repeat a verbal message such as a “Shh” with finger to lips. Next, it serves to regulate communication – eye contact, vocal inflection, body lean, head nods. Finally, nonverbal communication also serves to substitute at times. You might communicate, “I want that” while pointing to an object.

*Eight Behavior Sets in Nonverbal Communication*⁶²

The final aspect of nonverbal communication that we will discuss are eight behaviour sets in nonverbal communication. Due to the brief nature of this work, we will only be able to briefly mention those sets. For those interested, we recommend any of the works mentioned in the footnotes.

The first set is body or kinesic behavior. This category includes gestures, body movements, facial expressions, eye behavior, and body posture. The second set is known as sensorics. These are physical qualities. This category includes body shapes, general attractiveness, breath or body odors, height, weight,

⁶² Knapp, in his classic text, *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*, explains these distinctive behavior sets to nonverbal communication, and these are expounded upon in Dodd's *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication*.

hair, and skin color or tone. The third set is known as haptics or touching behavior. This category includes stroking, hitting, holding, and guiding others. The fourth set is known as paralanguage. This category includes vocal volumes, qualities, and vocalizations.

The fifth set is known as proxemics. This category includes space, territory, seating arrangements, conversational distance, and architectural influences. The sixth set is called artifacts. While we normally think about artifacts as items that are dug out of the sand by archeologists, those items are *ancient* artifacts. The broader category of artifacts includes perfume, clothing, lipstick, jewelry, beauty aids, wedding ring, and personal possessions, etc. In some ways, this is the most obvious aspect of culture and is often the one that many people think of when thinking about culture. This category includes the way people dress. The seventh set is environmental factors. This category includes furniture, interior decorating, lighting, color, temperature, and noise. Finally, the last category is chronemics. This category concerns time and includes meeting time, arrival, departure time, waiting time, speaking time.

As you have seen, nonverbal communication plays an essential function in the overall communication process. Becoming familiar with nonverbal language in one's target culture can often be as important as learning the verbal and written forms of communication that are used in that culture.

Evangelism

The second core component of the missionary task is evangelism. We have already discussed the definition and practice of evangelism in the introduction to this work, so we will not repeat that material here. We mention again here to emphasize that presenting the gospel to those who have never heard is the irreducible minimum of the missionary task. In our evangelism efforts, we must take into account the elements of contextualization and intercultural communication mentioned above. We must also rely on the power of the Holy Spirit who alone “can change a person's heart.”⁶³

Orality

As we go about the task of evangelism we must recognize that about 70% of the world (or 5.7 billion people) – including unreached people groups – are pri-

⁶³ *Foundations*, 81.

mary oral learners. The category of “primary oral learners” is not limited to people who cannot read and write due to lack of education. This category includes those whose language has no system of writing, those people who cannot read or write in any language, and those who simply *prefer* to communicate in an oral fashion.

Communication with oral people needs to understand more than the mere fact that they cannot or do not prefer to read and write. While this truth is significant and very important to remember, we also need to remember that oral people also process information differently. Literate people tend to communicate using lists, tables, outlines, diagrams, graphs, steps, and abstract concepts.

Meanwhile, oral people communicate using stories, repetition, proverbs, traditional sayings, legends, songs, chanting, poetry, and drama. Stories change worldviews. Unfortunately, some approaches to evangelism often just changes ideas or behaviors. It has been estimated that 90% of the time that the gospel is presented it is presented in a Western linear fashion that does not consider the ways that oral people learn.⁶⁴ Everyone who has ever preached or taught knows this. You know this even if you have only ever listened to sermons, because what we remember are usually the personal stories and illustrations rather than the abstract theological points. It has also been demonstrated that points are also easier to remember when they are alliterative.

One of the most effective ways to reach primary oral learners is called Chronological Bible Storying (CBS), which is defined simply as “the process of encountering God by telling the stories of the Bible.”⁶⁵ In traditional CBS, this encountering of God was most often facilitated by starting at the beginning of the Bible (the book of Genesis) and telling all of the stories from the OT and NT in chronological order in order to give people an “oral Bible” and thereby give them access to God’s Word, and to evangelize them.

Over time, different missionaries and evangelists have begun to develop different approaches to orality and have begun developing different “storying sets” based on what they believe the people need to hear. For instance, some missionaries have developed evangelism sets, discipleship sets, sets for marriage, sets for missions, etc.

⁶⁴ Orality is changing the face of missions around the world,” *Christianity Today* online, (27 October 2012), accessed 4 March 2014; available from <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/orality.is.changing.the.face.of.missions.around.the.world/30904.htm?print=1>.

⁶⁵ “Chronological Bible Storying,” *Orality Strategies*; accessed 4 March 2014; available from <https://oralitystrategies.org//strategies.cfm?st=1&id=49>.

So, how does one develop a set of stories? One missionary has written the following ten steps to help:⁶⁶

1. Select a biblical principle, and make sure it is clear and simple. This step is similar to developing a sermon series.
2. Consider the worldview issues of a chosen people group so that we know how to choose the correct stories and how to tell those stories. This step considers how the people whom you are trying to reach think and feel about the world. In other words, it is seeking to know and understand the culture and worldview of the people whom you are trying to teach.
3. Identify the relevant bridges, barriers, and gaps in the worldview of that chosen people group so we will know how to address them. Once you know the worldview, you will identify what they do and do not know/agree with. For instance, if you are trying to communicate with an Indic (Buddhist or Hindu) culture, and you are coming from a non-Indic worldview, then a likely barrier will be the view of time. The Indic view of time is cyclical, so you will need to take this into consideration.
4. Select the biblical stories that need to be communicated to get this principle or concept across in their worldview. Obviously, a thorough knowledge of the Bible and the overarching biblical storyline will be vital in this step.
5. Craft the story and plan the dialogue that is going to follow the story so that they learn how this biblical story addresses a critical worldview issue that they have. You will want to follow up your story with some questions that sparks a dialogue about the truths that are contained in the stories. See point 7.
6. Tell the story in a culturally appropriate way. Depending on the culture, this possibly includes narrative, dance, song or object lessons.
7. Facilitate the dialogue that will help the group discover the truths and applications, usually by asking questions.
8. Guide the group to obey the biblical principle so that it can be lived out in their lives in practical ways.

⁶⁶ Mark Snowden, "Orality: The Next Wave of Missions," *Mission Frontiers* online (1 January 2004), accessed 4 March 2014; available from <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/orality-the-next-wave-of-mission-advance>.

9. Establish accountability within the group to help each other obey the biblical principle.
10. Encourage the group to reproduce all of this by modeling the principle in their own lives and then telling the stories to other people.

These steps for creating a story set for communicating the Bible are helpful and will certainly aid the Church in reaching and teaching people who are oral learners. However, as we think about the issue of orality and the use of CBS, we should ask ourselves, “Is hearing enough?” In other words, is it enough to give people an oral Bible through storytelling and other methods, or should we expect non-literate people to learn to read and write? One pastor in the US has asked some thought-provoking questions:⁶⁷

1. Will we who have the Bible in our languages and who have access to Greek and Hebrew in which the Bible was verbally inspired keep this privileged position for ourselves?
2. *Or* will we humble ourselves and labor with all our might to help other peoples and cultures have the same access we have to a full and right understanding of the Scriptures so that they do not have to depend on cultural outsiders telling them what God’s words say and what they mean and how they should be applied culturally and religiously and missiologically?
3. Will we tell pre-literate and less-literate peoples and cultures that all authoritative religious truth comes from God through a single inspired book, and that all oral communication about God and his ways, no matter where it happens anywhere in the world, depends for its final reliability on this book, the Bible?
4. Will we clarify for them that, although all other holy books may have some helpful religious insights, nevertheless they do not have any final authority from God, but only the Bible does?
5. Will we tell them that this Bible was first written in Greek and Hebrew, the languages that God used when centuries ago “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21)?

⁶⁷ John Piper, “Missions, Orality and the Bible: Thoughts on Pre-, Less-, and Post-literate Cultures” (16 November 2005), accessed 5 August 2020; available from <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/missions-orality-and-the-bible>.

6. Will we make sure they understand that if they remain only oral and do not someday raise up a generation who can read this book and study it in the original languages, they will remain dependent on outsiders for the divine truth God has given only through the Book?
7. Will we joyfully concur that access to the words of God in the Bible in one's own language is a blessing greater than health and life, and that the golden rule gives us the privilege and duty to give other people and peoples the blessing that has come to us without our deserving it or planning it?
8. Will we labor for the long-term strength of the church among all unreached and less-reached peoples, by empowering them with the ability to read and study the Bible in the original languages, in the desire that the Lord may come very soon, but in the sober possibility that he may delay his return for centuries?
9. Will we labor to reverse the Western cultural trend away from reading, in the conviction that, when one moves away from reading, one moves away from a precious, God-given, edifying, stabilizing connection with God's written word?

The above questions should lead us to think long and hard about our approach to oral learners. Most likely, the best approach will be a both/and approach rather than an either/or approach. Oral methods and attempts to promote literacy and develop literate forms of communication should be promoted and pursued side-by-side.

Interreligious Evangelism

As we think further about the practice of missions, we quickly recognize that, despite what some psychologists and philosophers have argued, the people whom we will evangelize are not blank slates. They have previous religious experiences, opinions, and backgrounds that must be taken into account in our efforts to share with them the unchanging message of the gospel. There are a number of different approaches to sharing your faith with people from other religious backgrounds. Let's look at a few of them one by one and evaluate their positives and negatives.

Argumentative/Debate

The argumentative/debate approach to interreligious evangelism uses rational and intellectual arguments and debates to try to convince others of a particular

position. In addition to debating other religions, this approach can also be used to combat heretical cults and sects who claim to be Christian. On the positive side, this model excels in assisting Christians to see the differences in their beliefs and the beliefs of other religions.⁶⁸ This approach should demonstrate the untruth of the idea that all religions teach the same thing. By clarifying both what we believe and why we believe it, the argumentative/debate approach enables the individual Christians to grow in confidence about fundamental teachings. The individual is equipped with skills to discern false beliefs.

On the negative side of things, apologists must be mindful of the fact that the critical analysis of a rival religion does not immediately establish the truth of Christianity to the person with whom you are having a debate. For instance, one may debate a Muslim and convince him that Islam is not true. However, this Muslim may, in turn, become a Hindu, an Atheist, or a Catholic instead of becoming an Evangelical Christian. We should also be aware that due to humankind's sin nature, arguments and debates can actually have the effect of pushing people deeper into their own religions.

Spiritual Warfare Approach

The approach that I have in mind here the sensationalized view of spiritual warfare where people pray against the power of various spirits, seek to know the names of various spirits, etc. This approach is sometimes called "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare."⁶⁹ Positively, the spiritual warfare approach takes the spiritual world seriously. Sometimes people have an anti-supernatural approach to evangelism and dismiss the idea that there is a spiritual element to all of life. The spiritual warfare avoids this mistake by understanding that evangelism is not, in the end, an intellectual debate over ideas but a spiritual battle for the eternal destiny of individuals. This approach is also in accordance with an Ephesians 6 view of reality.

⁶⁸ Here are two recommended resources for demonstrating that religions teach mutually exclusive ideas. Timothy C. Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Academic, 2002); Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World – and Why Their Differences Matter*, ebook Kindle Edition (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010). The first is written by an Evangelical Christian. The second is written by a secularist, but they both conclude that while respectful conversations and dialogues are possible, we should *not* conclude that all religions are the same or that they teach the same ideas.

⁶⁹ The practice of so-called strategic level spiritual warfare is one expression of the underlying belief that our works play a role in either our salvation or in the salvation of others. See R. Douglas Geivett and Holly Pivec, *A New Apostolic Reformation? A Biblical Response to a Worldwide Movement* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 150-173.

Negatively, the spiritual warfare approach to interreligious evangelism and missions is not very “academic.” Some educated and intellectually oriented people will be turned away from the gospel by this approach and will dismiss Christianity as some sort of superstition. Secondly, in the spiritual warfare approach, exorcism has a tendency to replace evangelism. Instead of seeking to share the gospel with people, this approach can see exorcism as the only way to win people to Christ. As one author has written,

“we will also remember that Ephesians 6 does not promote miracle-working as the way to do battle against Satan but instead admonishes us to be clothed with Christ’s righteousness and to be armed with ‘the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The Spirit’s weapon, therefore, is not additional revelation, not ‘power encounters,’ but the written text of Holy Scripture.”⁷⁰

Thirdly, with the spiritual warfare approach to interreligious missions and evangelism, there is often no attempt at any genuine search for meaning. The “signs” in the New Testament have a purpose. They point people to Jesus: “The miracles in the Bible never appear to serve God proving himself so much as God *showing* himself.”⁷¹ The attempted use of “signs and wonders” to evangelize others often “trivializes and cheapens the reality of spiritual warfare.”⁷²

Personal Testimonies

Personal testimonies focus on how individuals have come to Christ from different religious backgrounds. These individuals and the groups who promote them attempt to use their testimonies as a way to win people to repentance and faith in Christ. In most African cultures, as in all places and cultures where relationships are a high value, people often respond positively and relate well to real-life stories. When these stories include how people have come out of other faith backgrounds to Christ, people can often be won to Christ. A clearly told testimony can be a beautiful thing that attracts people to the splendor of Christ and the gospel. Additionally, in some cultures, one’s ethnic, tribal, family, and nation-

⁷⁰ James M. Boice, “A Better Way: The Power of the Word and the Spirit,” in *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelicals Church?* ed. Michael Scott Horton (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 123.

⁷¹ Jared C. Wilson, *The Wonder Working God: Seeing the Glory of Jesus in His Miracles* (Wheaton, IL, USA: Crossway, 2014), 13.

⁷² Boice, “A Better Way,” 129.

al identity can be very closely tied to one's religion. Personal testimonies provide new identities that some people might not think even exist. For instance, if a person from a Yao (Malawi) or Hausa (Nigeria/Niger) or even Arab background has never heard of any relatives or friends from their same cultural and ethnic background becoming a Christian, a testimony can create a category in his or her mind. In other words, a "Yao/Hausa/Arab Christian" becomes a reality instead of just an abstract idea. In most African worldviews, concrete realities are easier to see and contemplate than abstract ones. When a traditional Hausa Muslim meets a formerly Muslim Hausa Christian, the idea of becoming a Christian becomes a real possibility.

All in all, we can see that the use of personal testimonies in interreligious evangelism can be an effective path. However, using testimonies as a means of evangelism also comes with some cautions. First, testimonies can also be applied from any perspective to any other perspective. In other words, for every person a Christian evangelist presents as having come from a Muslim background, Muslims can present a Muslim as having come from a Christian background. The truthfulness of Christianity is not determined by counting the number of converts from one faith tradition to another.

When thinking about the use of personal testimonies in interreligious evangelism, there is also the possibility of fraud. Unfortunately, some people have simply lied about their backgrounds and told stories of how they have come to faith that are simply not true. Most importantly, as we discussed in the history section above, we must remember that one's testimony is not the gospel. A person's testimony is the application of the gospel to one person's life, but it is not the gospel itself. Those who use personal testimonies as a means of evangelism – particularly when evangelizing people from other faiths – must be careful to avoid fraud. They should also remember to focus their testimony on Jesus and not on the lifestyle from which they were saved.

Proclamation

The proclamation approach to interreligious evangelism takes a step away from the apologetic/polemic approach presented above by asserting that the Christian's task is to proclaim the gospel to the lost person – no matter their religious background. This approach promotes the idea that we are not called to fight falsehoods as much as we are called to proclaim the truth. However, in order to *clearly* proclaim the gospel to people, we must know something about their worldviews

(the way that they see the world and think about truth). One evangelical scholar used to say that we must know the worldviews that “they are hiding behind.”

Our presentation must be marked by the following characteristics. First, our presentation should be relevant. While the gospel is relevant to all peoples of all places throughout all time, this relevancy must be reflected in the medium that we use. Failure to do so will result in a failure to communicate clearly with the hearers. For instance, if we use words or phrases that they do not understand, such as, asking people if they have “been washed in the blood of the lamb,” “born again,” or even “accepted Jesus,” then they may not see the relevancy of the gospel for their lives.

Second, in addition to being relevant, our presentations must be true. The gospel is eternally true. It is and always will be true. Our communication of the gospel must also be true. We must not use made-up stories in order to try to convince people of the truth of the gospel. Be honest. Do not inflate or exaggerate. Speak the truth.

Third, our presentations must be persuasive. This word can sometimes be used to indicate that someone is willing to “bend the truth.” However, the idea of persuasion is not necessarily that people would be willing to do that. Instead, being persuasive is that we can use language that appeals to our hearers and tries to convince them of the truth. The Apostle Paul writes, “Therefore, since we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade people.”⁷³

Fourth, our presentations must be compassionate. People who are members of other religious groups are truly “lost.” Understanding lostness should lead us to be compassionate: “We search because our hearts leave us no option.”⁷⁴ When we are compassionate to them, we are walking in the steps of our Lord Jesus. “When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things.”⁷⁵

Fifth, our presentations must be sensitive. Similar to the idea of being compassionate, the idea of being sensitive means that we will seek not to offend people. The Apostle Paul said that, “I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some.”⁷⁶ If you are trying to reach a Muslim or

⁷³ 2 Corinthians 5:11a, *CSB*.

⁷⁴ John Kramp, *Out of Their Faces and Into Their Shoes: How to Understand Spiritually Lost People and Give Them Directions to God* (Nashville, TN, USA: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 109.

⁷⁵ Mark 6:34, *CSB*

⁷⁶ 1 Corinthians 9:23, *CSB*

Jew, and you have them over for a meal, do not serve pork. If you are trying to reach a Hindu, do not serve beef – or, to be safe, do not serve any meat at all.

Sixth, our presentations must be flexible. Many people have a standard evangelism method. Some will use the Romans Road. Others will use tracts or some other literature distribution. Whatever method one chooses, it is best to be flexible. Be willing to step outside of your normal method. Communicating the content of the gospel (see the notes on GOSPEL at the beginning of this book) is **much more important** than choosing a method by which you will deliver that content.

Dialogue

Another approach to interreligious evangelism and missions is dialogue. Dialogue, specifically religious dialogue, is a difficult concept to discuss because it seems like people have their own understanding of what it means to dialogue. Some believe that it means talking in order to demonstrate that both sides believe basically the same thing. Others view dialogue as another word for debate. For our purposes, however, we want us to see four principles for interreligious dialogue.⁷⁷

First, we need to have a temperament of grace and personal humility. Being humble and full of grace does NOT mean, however, that we abandon our commitment to our faith. As one author has written, “How can one have genuine dialogue *without* a faith commitment? . . . That is like asking salt to become temporarily saltless so that someone can discover what salt is like.”⁷⁸ Instead, being humble and full of grace means that we genuinely seek to understand what other people are saying and seek to respond in a way that demonstrates grace toward the lost.

Second, we need to be willing to expose our own shortcomings, sinfulness, and doubts. If we act like we are perfect and “have it all together,” we may communicate that Christ only accepts perfect people. Communicating the idea that Christ only accepts perfect people would be the anti-gospel. Instead, we should admit our sinfulness and our need for Christ to save us.

Third, we need to place an emphasis on the dissimilarities that exist between the gospel and other faiths. While there is value in finding bridges to

⁷⁷ These four principles are taken from David J. Hesselgrave “Traditional Religions, New Religions, and the Communication of the Christian Faith,” in *Encountering New Religious Movements: A Holistic Evangelical Approach*, ed. Irving Hexham, Stephen Rost, and John W. Morehead II (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Kregel Publications, 2004), 137-156.

⁷⁸ Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable*, 14.

cross in order to share the gospel with others, in the end, we must confess, “there are genuine points of departure among the world’s religions.”⁷⁹ Since the Christian faith is unique and distinct from all other faiths and religions, instead of trying to show how similar Christianity is to other faiths, Hesselgrave believes that we should follow Christ’s formula of “You have heard it said . . . but I say unto you . . .”⁸⁰

The fourth guideline is that “storying the gospel” is a wonderful way to communicate the Christian faith. We mentioned this method earlier when discussing the issue of orality. Even for highly literate people, communicating the gospel through a retelling of the grand narrative of Scripture – creation, fall, redemption, restoration – has many advantages. One of those advantages due to the fact that “the larger story of Scripture constitutes the ‘frame’ for understanding any and every individual part of it . . .”⁸¹

Discipleship

As we have already seen in our discussion of the biblical basis for missions, making disciples is “the central command of the Great Commission.”⁸² In many of our churches discipleship is seen as a programme. This programme might meet at the church building on Wednesday nights or in the homes of our church members throughout the week. However, the biblical understanding of discipleship is much more than that. Discipleship is “the intentional transformation of the heart, mind, affections, will, relationships, and purpose.”⁸³ The Bible, the Word of God, is the indispensable element of discipleship. All efforts to bring about transformation must be centered around and based upon the Bible.

Healthy Church Formation

As disciples are made, they should be gathered into churches. We have already defined and discussed church in the first part of this book. We mention it again, because we believe that the planting and development of healthy churches is

⁷⁹ Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable*, 15.

⁸⁰ Hesselgrave, “Traditional Religions,” 149.

⁸¹ Hesselgrave, “Traditional Religions,” 152.

⁸² *Foundations*, 85.

⁸³ *Foundations*, 85.

“the best way to spread the gospel.”⁸⁴ Writing forty year ago, David Hesselgrave wrote that “planting new congregations throughout the world”⁸⁵ was the central mission of churches. Writing over twenty years ago, in his book on church evangelism, Mark Terry writes, “It may well be that the best evangelistic method you could employ in your community is to plant a new church.”⁸⁶ Church planting is central to the missionary task. Working to ensure that these churches are biblically healthy is a non-negotiable element of church planting.

Healthy church formation and church planning relies on the Holy Spirit for wisdom, power, and transformed lives. As such, we should avoid making church planting “a set of characteristics and specific methodologies.”⁸⁷ When we seek to reproduce what only the Holy Spirit can produce, we fall into the trap of a “reductionist missiology.”⁸⁸ This reductionism reduces the place of the Holy Spirit in missions and attempts to replace Him with strategies and best practices. While seeking to learn from the past and from our contemporaries, we must always seek to avoid pragmatism when it comes to church planting and instead emphasize our reliance on God’s Word and God’s Spirit.

Leadership Development

Leadership is essential to any organization. Church leadership is absolutely critical to the health of local churches. As we think about the missionary task, we should making training pastors/elders/overseers a clear priority. Without trained men to fill these roles, churches will not be healthy, and missions will not go forward. Leadership development must seek to do more than give more information to potential leaders. Leadership development “flows out of basic discipleship” and seeks to train leaders on what they must “be, know, and do.”⁸⁹ As we saw in the definition of Christian earlier, this means that a leader’s head, heart, and hands must all be developed and trained so that he may, in turn, disciple and train others. When and where appropriate, we should seek to develop

⁸⁴ *Foundations*, 92.

⁸⁵ David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Book House, 1980), 20.

⁸⁶ John Mark Terry, *Church Evangelism* (Nashville, TN, USA: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 203.

⁸⁷ R. Bruce Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator: Changing the Course of Southern Baptist Missions* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2010), 202-3.

⁸⁸ Carlton, *Strategy Coordinator*, 208.

⁸⁹ *Foundations*, 97.

leaders to the highest level of education so that these churches can be self-sustaining and self-theologizing.

Exit to Partnership

The final component of the missionary task is exit to partnership. As said in *Foundations*, “Exit does not imply abandonment.”⁹⁰ In fact, Ralph Winter believed that missionaries should move through four stages that end in being a participant in the new church, so instead of abandoning mission fields, responsible missionary practice moves from pioneer to parent to partner to participant.⁹¹

TRENDS IN MISSIONS

The mission to take the gospel to all nations does not change, but the nations themselves are constantly changing. Missiologist David Sills writes, “To minister effectively, missionaries must engage the world that *is*, not the world that *was*.”⁹² In this section, we will investigate some of those historical realities and trends in order to see how they are impacting the world of missiology and missionary practice. As a current and future church leader, you will need to help formulate biblically faithful Christ-centered responses to these realities. We must agree with the following statement, “Only by anticipating the future, studying trends and considering the missiological implications will we be able to maximize missions efforts for success while advancing the kingdom and bringing glory to Christ.”⁹³ While we will not be able to discuss all of those changes and new realities, we will survey a few of those realities below.

Globalization

Globalization is the exponentially rapid increase of interconnectedness of economies, businesses, and *individuals* around the world. This definition is our own. We are specifically convinced that the interconnectedness of the *average*

⁹⁰ *Foundations*, 104.

⁹¹ Ralph D. Winter, “Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions,” accessed 16 October 2020; available from https://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/rfiles/res3_429_link_1342028689.pdf

⁹² M. David Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission: Responding to Global Challenges* (Donwers Grove, IL, USA: IVP Books, 2015), 11, emphasis ours.

⁹³ Sills, *Changing World*, 22.

person on the street is the distinguishing mark of globalization. Previous generations and even centuries saw the interaction of countries, governments, and even companies, but these interactions were limited to the very wealthiest people. The Internet and the smartphone have transformed the way that people look at the world and the way that people relate to one another. The very fact that we can relate to one another around the world impacts the manner in which we interact. In order to unpack this concept of globalization, let's look at American missiologist Michael Pocock's "four interrelated aspects of globalization"⁹⁴

According to Pocock, the first aspect of globalization is world migration. There are two major sides of world migration that impact missions. First, there are non-Christians who move from areas with little to no religious freedom to areas where there is freedom of religion and Christian communities and churches. For instance, there are Iranians who move to Malaysia. While it is illegal to try to evangelize a Muslim Malay, the Malaysian government does not seem to care if Christians evangelize a Muslim from Iran. There are also Saudis in places like the United States. While it is completely illegal to share the gospel with a Saudi while in Saudi Arabia, a Saudi in the USA has the freedom to attend church and hear the gospel.

But what about closer to home in Africa? There are an increasing number of Chinese all across Africa. In China, these individuals' religious freedom would be very limited. Attending church might result in loss of job, imprisonment, or even death. However, here in Africa, Christians are free to share the gospel with Chinese people, invite them to church, and give them tracts and other evangelistic materials.

So, the first side of world migration is when non-Christians move to place where they can hear the gospel. Additionally, vibrant evangelistic Christians are moving to un-evangelized and "post-Christian" areas. Of course, this can happen as traditional missionaries, but it can also happen "incidentally" as people move to different parts of the world for work, school, etc. We will return to this topic later, but for now, let's ask:

**Where in the world can Africans go to spread the gospel that Westerners/
Americans would have a hard time going?**

⁹⁴ Pocock, Michael "Globalization: New York's in New Dehli, Manilla's in Los Angeles," in *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 24-9.

From Tapiwa Ngwira (Malawi)

Yes, there are African nations where Westerners/Americans are not welcomed to share the Gospel. This happens commonly in North Africa. It may be very easy for Africans to go and share the Gospel in those places.

From Lucy Guma (Malawi)

Malawians can go to spread the gospel in Tunisia, Morocco, Mali, and Senegal and those in which Islam has taken root because it is easier for the people there to accept an African than a Westerner. They regard Westerners as competitors. There was also a lot of unfair treatment of the locals during the colonial days. This mistreatment has not left many people's minds.

The second aspect of globalization is widely available and relatively affordable air travel. The result is that everywhere in the world is theoretically accessible from anywhere else in the world. Pocock comments, "Nowhere in the world is more than thirty hours from where you presently sit."⁹⁵ Can you imagine that? One of the results of air travel is that you can get to EVERYWHERE in the world in just over one day! Air travel also makes short-term missions trips possible.

The third aspect of globalization is the Internet – including the smartphone. The availability of the Internet through laptops and smartphones has several results. First, the amount of information available online is immense, and, therefore, research is almost unlimited. Second, people are available to "meet" online – no matter where they are in the world.⁹⁶

The fourth aspect of globalization is the free-market economic system. At the beginning of the 21st Century, according to Pocock, 40,000 corporations operated across international borders.⁹⁷ The internationalization of economies has impacted cultures. Microsoft, Apple, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, McDonalds, Burger King, etc. all present American cultural values alongside the products that they are selling. The free market often causes resentment and pushback. American sociologist Philip Jenkins argues that the impact of American culture (represented by American companies and their influence on culture) and the resultant secular liberalism actually provokes radical Islam to act.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Pocock, Michael, "Globalization," 25.

⁹⁶ We recognize that there are negative aspects of the internet. We will cover those later in the paragraphs to come.

⁹⁷ Pocock, "Globalization," 27.

⁹⁸ Philip Jenkins, *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 12.

In his book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, American journalist Thomas Friedman argues that there is a push and pull that comes with globalization. People are attracted to the “Lexus” which represents the wealth and success globalization offers. At the same time, these same people often love their “olive trees” which represent the cherished cultural norms and values that globalization threatens to kill.⁹⁹

So, is globalization a good thing or bad thing? Let’s look at two bridges and two barriers to the gospel that globalization causes. The first bridge is technology/connectivity. As mentioned above, the Internet gives Christians the opportunity to evangelize, disciple, and train leaders by making use of the technological aspect of globalization.

The second bridge is the English language. The demand for English language teachers around the world is high – even in China and the Muslim world. Anyone who can speak English fluently has the chance to engage non-Christians in personal face-to-face relationships that will give ample opportunities to share the gospel.

The first potential barrier to the gospel that globalization presents is terrorism. In the same way that evangelism, discipleship, and leadership training are all available online, so too is bomb-making advice, other terror-related websites, etc.

The second barrier is the idea that increased virtual connectivity over social media and the Internet leads to disconnectedness. As Pocock points out, Western Christians and churches are getting directly involved in missions work as a result of globalization, and that is a good thing. It is a bad thing when this takes the place of a long-term missionary team.¹⁰⁰ Unreached people groups need more than just a church in the US who is committed to pray for them and pay for resources to be developed in their language. They also need someone to come and live among them as an incarnational witness.

Shift in “Center of Gravity” to the “Global South”

Another major trend is what scholars have referred to as the “shift in the ‘center or gravity’ of Christianity to the “Global South.” Where did the majority of the world’s Christians live in the 1st Century? 5th Century? 10th Century? 15th Century? 20th Century? Where do most Christians in the world live now? Christian

⁹⁹ Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 31. See also Robert Kagan, *The Return of History, and the End of Dreams* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

¹⁰⁰ Pocock, “Globalization,” 39.

populations have either fallen or stagnated in Europe and North America, while the number of Christians in the “Global South” – Africa, Latin America and Asia – has risen sharply.¹⁰¹ From 1900 to 2000 the number of Christians in Africa grew from 10 million to 360 million – from 10 to 46 percent of the population.¹⁰² As a result, the future of the Church will come from places like Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Kenya.

What does the reality that Christian churches are growing in Africa mean for the churches you are in?

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

To be very frank, most of the so-called pastors or churches have taken church as business. In Nigeria church is a huge business. This reality also may mean that people in Africa are receptive to the word of God for various reasons.

Urbanization

The third trend that we want to look at is urbanization. For the first time in history, more people live in cities than in rural areas.¹⁰³ The United Nations anticipates that the global urban population will double to 6.4 billion by 2050. In 2008, over *four hundred* cities had populations exceeding one million persons. *Nineteen* cities worldwide had populations over *ten million*.¹⁰⁴ Those numbers are continuing to rise.

Urbanization is a challenge because most missionaries “have been more successful in rural areas and have seen much less fruit in cities. Missionaries are now asking themselves what changes need to be made to reach the lost, plant churches and make disciples in the cities.”¹⁰⁵

How do you need to change your approach to evangelism in order to reach people in urban contexts?

¹⁰¹ Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 8-9

¹⁰² Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, 9.

¹⁰³ Brad Smith, *City Signals: Principles and Practices for Ministering in Today's Global Communities* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2008), 38

¹⁰⁴ “City View,” *Journal of Urban Ministry* 1, no. 1 (Sept 2008), 32.

¹⁰⁵ Sills, *Changing World*, 24-25.

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

There are several factors that need to be considered. I like to think that evangelism in urban settings is like going to the lake to fish. Before you go, you need to have a particular type of fish you want. This will determine the methods and strategies of going about that catching.

In urban settings we need to have a particular class of people in mind to reach. Is it youths from school, working class, teachers, soldiers, marketers, etc. A plan has to be drawn which will create a road map for evangelism.

From Tapwa Ngwira (Malawi)

We need to change the modes of doing evangelism because urbanization has brought a great variety of kinds of people. There are differences in education levels, economic levels, and religious affiliations.

I live in a rural Islamic community. So, in order to reach people with the gospel, I have formed a Youth club. Using the Bible as our authority, I have introduced several strategic approaches. We use sporting activities, educational trips, birthday parties, a community vegetable garden, and charity work. I integrate every activity with the sharing of the word of God to with youth. These mentioned activities are stepping stones to the gospel.

In the urban context, the approach has to be different from rural areas. In town, one could reach out to the urban areas by having prayer walks targeting a particular area. The other good methodology of reaching the urban people is by putting Christian programs on radio and television since most of the people have access to newspaper, radio, the Internet and television. Introducing Christian radio and television would be very effective to reach urban people. Lastly, promotion of education would be another way to do this, since many Christians would be the heads in most government, companies, and organizations. Therefore, Christians will have influence and be able to share the gospel in offices and allow schools to have Bible knowledge as a subject or course to take.

Postmodernism/Pluralism

The fourth trend is postmodernism and pluralism. What is the definition of philosophical postmodernism? What about pluralism? Empirical Pluralism is pluralism as a reality – there are different kinds of people in the world, and they all look at the

world differently. This is a good thing. Philosophical or Hermeneutical Pluralism is the idea that any system that claims to be absolutely true is necessarily wrong.¹⁰⁶

Who cares about philosophy? First, ideas have consequences, or as the African American Southern Baptist pastor, Voddie Baucham (who is now serving in Zambia at African Christian University) wrote, “What we believe determines how we behave.”¹⁰⁷ Second, since Western Europe, which has been called the new frontier in missions, is thoroughly postmodern, anyone who desires to reach Western Europe will face the reality of postmodernism.

The Apostle Paul warned us about the coming of a time when the Church would be told that truth is relative: For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear something new. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. But as for you, be serious about everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.¹⁰⁸

Creative-Access

The final trend that we will look at is the use of creative-access platforms. As we look at the unreached world, one issue becomes very clear: many people groups are hard to access. As a result, many missionaries and missions organizations are looking into “creative-access” options to reach various unreached people groups and places. These different forms of access are almost limitless. They can include student, various kinds of teachers, businesspersons, doctors, nurses, engineers, entrepreneurs, and retired persons (pensioners).

As we think about how to use creative access platforms, there are several factors to consider in using creative access for missions. The first factor is accessibility. In other words, does your “platform” give you access to the people whom you are trying to reach? If you are trying to reach a certain population segment, make sure that your access actually gives you access to those people. For instance, if you moved to a large urban center in Eastern or Southern

¹⁰⁶ These two categories of pluralism (empirical and philosophical) are identified by D.A. Carson in his book *The Gagging of God*. Carson also adds a third category – cherished pluralism. David Bosch addresses the issue of postmodernism in his book *Transforming Mission*.

¹⁰⁷ Voddie Baucham, Jr., *The Ever-Loving Truth: Can Faith Thrive in a Post-Christian Culture?* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2004), 7.

¹⁰⁸ 2 Timothy 4:3-5 (HCSB)

Africa to reach the South Asian population, working and living in an area where there are no South Asians would not give you access to them.

The second factor is legitimacy. Those using creative access platforms must ask themselves, “Am I doing what I claim to be doing?” We have met people who say they are English teachers but never actually teach English. One creative-access missionary bragged, “Well, I tell people that I am a businessman, but I do not actually ever do any business.” This kind of approach is not okay. It shows a lack of integrity – which is an ethical problem. It can also be a problem when the local government finds out that you are lying about what you are doing – which can create a legal problem.

The third factor is identity. The relevant question is here is, “Does your role ‘make sense’ to the culture you are trying to reach?” If you are a young, unmarried person, then you can live in an area as a student. However, if you are in your thirties or forties with a wife and children, then many cultures in the world will not accept the fact that you are a student. I (Phil) lived in a Muslim part of the former Soviet Union for two years. During my time there, I worked as an English teacher. I had an office. I taught actual classes. When the government agency in charge of foreigners came by my office one day, I was able to show them my lesson plans, syllabi, and course schedules. I encouraged the government officials to visit the school where I taught and talk to my supervisor there. They were happy with my response, and I did not have any problems from that office for the rest of my years there.

The fourth factor is strategic viability. Does your job provide opportunity to be salt and light? If you have a job as a computer programmer and you spend 40+ hours each week sitting at a computer with little to no interaction with other people, this job might not give the best access.

The final factor is integrity. We touched on this earlier, but it is worth repeating. In addition to the idea that we must do what we say we are doing, we also must be honest about our qualifications. For example, do not say that you are a French teacher if you cannot speak French! What about being an entrepreneur? Do you have any experience starting a business? If you do not have the skills needed for the access you want to use, you can learn. Go to school. Learn a trade.

What is a creative access platform that you could use to reach the unreached around the world?

From Christopher Chanda (Zambia)

I intend to be creative in writing stories that are experientially true and relate to leading people to Christ. I will achieve this by writing books and using social media platforms.

From Tapiwa Ngwira (Malawi)

The Internet is the best and effective way to reach the unreached people around the world. This could be done by using platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram.

Education is another way of reaching unreached people. For example, one would go to India as a professional Doctor. He would easily be given VISA and other requirements without difficulties unlike when you show papers that you are a pastor. So, a secular profession would be good to reach many with the gospel. And you could use your profession to share the gospel.

APPENDIX

Throughout this series, four major worldview contexts have been addressed. These four contexts are Islam, African Traditional Religion (ATR), Roman Catholicism, and Neo-Pentecostalism. In this appendix, we will briefly outline some of the unique challenges as well as some of the unique opportunities for doing missions among these four different (sometimes overlapping) groups in Africa.¹

ISLAM IN SSA²

Unique challenges

Identification

Religion serves many different functions for individuals, cultures, and societies. One of those purposes is identification. This identification ties cultures together not only in terms of the present society but also throughout time – going back to their ancestors.³ As such a person's religion serves as an important cultural marker that ties the individual to the group. When an individual from a given culture is considering the claims of Christ, he must confront this aspect of his religion and culture. Is he willing to break with his culture and family in order to respond to the call of the gospel? Among Muslim communities, identification as a Muslim is particularly important. A willingness for a new disciple to make a public stand for Christ will be a challenge for doing missions among Muslims in SSA.

“Peace”

As the introductory volume indicates, most Muslims and Christians in SSA live together in peace with one another. Muslims and Christians can be found living

¹ This appendix will assume that the reader has read the introductory volume to this series and will not seek to review that material here.

² We have already mentioned some of the unique challenges and opportunities for missions to Muslims. This section will serve as a reminder of some of those unique challenges and unique opportunities.

³ Stephen A. Grunlan and Marvin K. Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan Academic, 1988), 225.

side by side in many countries and in many communities around the continent. This lack of violence and community harmony is, of course, a positive. However, when this “peace” includes an explicit or tacit disapproval of evangelism among Muslims, Christian churches need to be challenged to carry the gospel to their Muslim friends and neighbours. African missionaries to Muslims should be willing to forgo a false “peace” in order for their neighbours to have peace with God (Romans 5:1).

Violence

Sadly, while *most* Muslims in Africa are peaceful, the 21st Century has seen a rise in Islamic Radicalism that specifically targets Christian communities. *Boko Haram* is a specific threat in Northern Nigeria and throughout West Africa. *Al Shabab* and other groups have sought to terrorize East Africa – specifically targeting Christian communities. A thorough evaluation of how to do missions in contexts that are hostile to Christians is beyond the scope of this appendix.⁴ However, churches in Africa will need to learn to be as “shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16, CSB).

Unique opportunities

Disenchantment with Islam

In 2013, I (Phil) attended a missions conference outside of Accra, Ghana. While there I had the opportunity to visit with different individuals who were doing missions around the continent. One brother from Egypt mentioned that the recent violence in Cairo had caused many Muslims to rethink their faith. When they saw some groups of people burning Christian homes, stores, and churches, some of these Muslims said that they did not want any part of Islam anymore.

Islam is a false religion. True truth will not be found among the pages of the Qur’an nor in the rituals of prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage. As individuals seek truth and peace in these rituals and teachings, some will be deceived and have their eyes blinded. Others will walk away discouraged and disenchanting. As those who have been entrusted with the Truth of the gospel, we have a unique opportunity to tell our Muslim friends how they can be reconciled to God. It is not through works but by grace through faith (Galatians 2:8-9).

⁴ To learn more about how churches have survived and even thrived in contexts of persecution, see www.nikriphen.com.

People of the Book

The Qur'an recognizes Christians as "people of the book." Most Muslims have a great deal of respect for Christians and are willing to dialogue with them about faith. Additionally, most Muslims are very open to discuss their faith. Christians should be willing to openly share their faith with Muslims. In his classic work on evangelism among Muslims, former missionary to Algeria and Chad C.R. Marsh lists several principles for sharing the gospel with Muslims.⁵ We will just mention three of them. First, we should not condemn Islam or speak about Muhammad in an offensive way. Second, we should remember that individual Muslims each have their own stories and backgrounds and should be seen primarily as a sinner in need of grace. Third, we should depend upon the Holy Spirit. There is much more to be said about sharing the gospel with Muslims, but these three principles will help anyone who is trying to do missions among Muslims in SSA.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN SSA

Unique challenges

Syncretism

Many books and articles have been written about the challenge of syncretism. The challenge of syncretism is *not* unique to African contexts or to missions among those who practice ATR. However, ATR does seem especially susceptible to syncretism. As a result, those who are seeking to take the gospel to those who practice ATR should be particularly sensitive to the possibility of syncretism and should seek to present the gospel as clearly and as contextually relevant as possible. At the same time, as mentioned earlier, Christians should not avoid discussing the differences between a biblical Christian worldview and the worldview of ATR.⁶

Unique opportunities

Supernatural Worldview

This opportunity is not "unique" to ATR. All four of the worldview contexts mentioned in this context are supernatural. However, ATR is especially con-

⁵ Charles R. Marsh, *Share Your Faith with a Muslim* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 8-13.

⁶ Hesselgrave, "Traditional Religions," 149-152.

cerned with spirits, ancestors, and the unseen world. Christians seeking to share the gospel among practitioners of ATR should make sure that they know that the Bible affirms the reality of the unseen world. However, Christian missions to ATR practitioners should also emphasize that the Spirit of Christ is greater than any and all other spirits. His supremacy is due to his position as Creator and his status as *Christus Victor* – the One who conquered sin, death, and the Evil One.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH (RCC) IN SSA

Unique challenges

Authority

As indicated in the Introduction to this series, while Roman Catholicism claims to be the universal church, the Roman Catholic Church has diverted from the Bible. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century declared “Ad Fontes!” (back to the sources [the text of the Bible]) and “Sola Scriptura” (the Bible alone as authority for faith and practice). Evangelical churches have followed in their footsteps and believe that Bible as the true and only source of authority. Meanwhile, the Roman Catholic Church places tradition and the office of the Pope on the same level as the Bible. As Evangelical missionaries seek to engage Roman Catholic communities in SSA, they should seek to ground their gospel proclamation in the Bible alone.

Connection to ATR

As with all faith traditions, Roman Catholicism in SSA has adapted to the local cultures and customs. In some cases, the result has been a syncretistic blend of ATR and Catholicism. As indicated in the introductory volume, the RCC has often substituted the idea of saints for the function of ancestors in ATR. The result is a sub-biblical understanding of Christ. Christ is the One and Only Mediator between God and mankind (1 Timothy 2:5). Missionaries to RCC communities and cultures will need to clearly articulate the uniqueness of Christ over and against the “mediators” of saints and ancestors.

Unique opportunities

The Bible and Common Vocabulary

While RCC has added author sources of authority to the Bible, they do still recognize the Bible as the Word of God. As such, missionaries to RCC cultures

and communities have a “starting point” for conversations about sin and salvation. Asking an individual from a RCC background to read from the Letter to the Hebrews or from the book of Genesis will be familiar. In addition to the sixty-six books of the OT and NT, however, the RCC recognizes the books of the Apocrypha as being authoritative as well. Getting into a debate about the history of the Apocrypha and its inclusion in the Bible will likely be counter-productive and should be avoided. Instead, missionaries should simply keep redirecting conversations back to one of the sixty-six books in the Bible.

NEO-PENTECOSTALISM AND THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL IN SSA

Unique challenges

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

Luke records Paul warning the Ephesian elders about false teachers: “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Men will rise up even from your own number and distort the truth to lure the disciples into following them. Therefore be on alert . . .” (Acts 20:29-31a, CSB)

Paul also wrote to his young friend about the dangers of false teaching: “I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear.” (2 Timothy 4:1-3, CSB)

While these two warnings from the Apostle Paul were directed to specific persons on specific occasions in the New Testament, the implications for today are clear. The teachings of Neo-Pentecostalism and the Prosperity Gospel represent a serious challenge to African churches and to churches all around the world. Those who seek to obey Christ and His Word must heed these warnings and beware of false teachers – even those who may be among our church lead-

ers.⁷ As missionaries who seek to make the gospel known among groups impacted by the false teachings of Neo-Pentecostalism and the Prosperity Gospel, warning against false teaching is a part of the entire missionary task.

Authority

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Pope and Church tradition are on the same level of authority as the Bible. Meanwhile, Neo-Pentecostal and Prosperity Gospel preachers often preach and teach that new “revelation” that they receive is as authoritative as the Bible. Many individuals in this movement deny that they are establishing new doctrine. However, when some of these preachers claim that all Christians must obey their teaching, they are clearly claiming that their words are equal to the Bible.⁸

Unique opportunities

Disenchantment with False Teaching

Many individuals are walking away from Neo-Pentecostal churches who preach the Prosperity Gospel. They are becoming disenchanted with its false teaching and beginning to see how the teaching clearly contradicts the Bible. For example, Nigerian author Adesanya Adewusi wrote, “The good news is that Christians already have the true kind of prosperity and the best type of wealth: that which is eternal. It’s just that sometimes, because we can’t see this with our physical eyes, we’re tempted to seek a different kind of comfort. We must remember that what we can’t see is more real and lasting than what we can see. As Christians we must have a proper biblical understanding of what true prosperity is by studying God’s word for ourselves. We’re in the days when we need to be able to discern the truth and separate the wheat from the chaff.”⁹ Costi Hinn, nephew of Benny Hinn, similarly wrote that he came to understand that “God’s

⁷ For a fuller account of the challenges of Neo-Pentecostalism and the Prosperity Gospel, *The Abandoned Gospel: Confronting Neo-Pentecostalism and the Prosperity Gospel in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Philip W. Barnes, et. Al. (Nairobi: Ekklessia Afrika, 2021).

⁸ R. Douglas Geivett and Holly Pivec. *A New Apostolic Reformation: A Biblical Response to a Worldwide Movement* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 135.

⁹ Adesanya Adewusi, “How I left the prosperity gospel behind,” *Premiere Christianity* [online] August 2018; accessed on 26 January 2021; available from <https://www.premierchristianity.com/Past-Is-sues/2018/August-2018/How-I-left-the-prosperity-gospel-behind>

highest purpose was not to make me happy, healthy, and wealthy; it was to give him glory.”¹⁰

CONCLUSION

This appendix has not sought to provide an exhaustive methodology for doing missions among the four worldview contexts. Instead, we have only sought to sensitize the reader to these four contexts and provide a starting place for conversations about missions to these groups.

¹⁰ Costi Hinn. *God, Greed, and the (Prosperity) Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan, 2019),

CONCLUSION

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to make disciples of *panta ta ethne* – all the peoples (Matthew 28:18). It is our prayer that this textbook will provide you with some of the necessary tools to start you on your way to being fully involved in the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

Soli Deo Gloria

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P.S. – Since the initial draft of this volume, one of the co-authors has gone to be with the Lord. Tapiwa Ngwira was a joyful and passionate servant of Christ. The other authors of this volume dedicate this work to the memory of our brother and partner in the mission of God among the nations.

The **Africa Theology Series** is a multi-volume set of books covering biblical, systematic and applied theology. The series is written in a way that will be accessible in nature and pastoral in tone. Each short book helps the reader understand the theological foundations, cultural implications and practical applications of key doctrines in the Christian faith. The series aims to give the pastor or lay leader contextualized tools needed to understand and defend their faith against the competing worldviews found in Africa.

In *Introduction to Missiology*, the authors lay in incredible foundation for a basic understanding of mission and missions. They trace the thread of God's mission throughout the Scriptures providing a biblical basis of missions from beginning to end. They also trace God's activity throughout the history of the church with a brief overview of the history of missions. Beyond these foundational sections, the authors also provide much practical help as they address current theological issues in missions and provide helpful practices in missions. This book is a helpful tool from professor to pastor to practitioner.

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