

Copyright © 2022 Jeffery Dean Abbett

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation, or instruction.

THE EXCLUSIVE MISSIONAL NATURE  
OF THE CHURCH

---

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Educational Ministry

---

by  
Jeffery Dean Abbett  
May 2022

**APPROVAL SHEET**

THE EXCLUSIVE MISSIONAL NATURE  
OF THE CHURCH

Jeffery Dean Abbett

Read and Approved by:

Faculty Supervisor: John M. Klaassen

Second Reader: Oren R. Martin

Defense Date: March 29, 2022

To my wife, Jane. You have been the perfect partner in life and in ministry. There is no better blessing than serving the Lord together.

To our children, John Marc, Chloe, Claire, and Emily. You have brought such blessing and joy to my life; may you persevere and run the race faithfully till the end.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE .....	vi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Thesis Statement .....	3
Familiarity with the Literature .....	3
Void in Literature .....	12
2. THE EXCLUSIVE NATURE OF THE CHURCH .....	14
The Exclusive Nature of God .....	15
The Nature of the Church Defined .....	20
The Perfect Design for an Imperfect Church .....	28
3. THE EXCLUSIVE ROLE OF THE CHURCH AS PILLAR OF TRUTH .....	32
Truth Entrusted to the Church .....	35
Truth Proclaimed by the Church .....	55
4. THE EXCLUSIVE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION .....	60
A Historical Mandate .....	62
A Single Mandate .....	64
An Authoritative Mandate .....	66
As You Go: The Sending Nature of the Church .....	67
As You Baptize .....	83
As You Teach .....	89
Making Disciples .....	93

Chapter	Page
5. THE EXCLUSIVE GROUNDS OF THE CHURCH IN PRODUCING HEALTHY MISSIONS .....	103
A Healthy Church .....	105
A Healthy Missionary .....	119
A Healthy Paramissional Organization .....	127
Conclusion .....	132
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	135

## PREFACE

I was blessed to have been raised on the mission field, which developed in me a passion for missions. I was blessed to have a faithful missionary father who labored to plant churches, which developed in me a passion for the church. This study brought these two passions together. I thank my parents who have been exemplary models of what it means to serve the Lord faithfully.

I am grateful to the Lord for providing me with the opportunity to study at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I made life-long friends, was taught by wonderful teachers, and learned to appreciate Al Mohler's defense of the inerrancy of the Word of God. I am indebted to my faculty advisor, Dr. John Klaassen, whose experience and passion for missions provided me with the direction I needed to complete this work.

I am grateful for a special friend, Christian Joulot, who for years encouraged me to embark on this journey and contributed financially to make it possible. I cherish the times we have spent sharing trials, joys, prayers, and the Word together.

Finally, I am grateful for my family. They patiently and graciously supported me by giving me the space and time needed to complete this work. My wife, Jane, as a faithful English teacher, spent hours reviewing chapter after chapter. There is no greater joy than having an earthly family which is also part of your spiritual family.

I deserve nothing, and yet I have been blessed with so much. I thank the Lord for His grace upon grace bestowed to me.

Jeff Abbett

Forest, Virginia

May 2022

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Life is shaped by the sum of experiences, knowledge gained along the way, and the choices made in the process. I am thankful God has revealed Himself through His Word and through the work of the Holy Spirit. Through His Word I have discovered the love and passion God has for His church.<sup>1</sup> I have come to see how the church is not simply a human institution but a divinely appointed gathering. As such, God has promised to bless and grow His church. I have been blessed to live the life of a missionary kid and see firsthand how the gospel transforms lives and how where there was once but dry land, inexplicably a church comes to life. I have been blessed to live the life of a missionary. My wife and I experienced the privilege and joy of being sent by a local church to go, proclaim the gospel, and see those that were once lost, come to life, gather, worship, and grow in the Lord together. From this life knowledge and experience stems a love for the local church and passion for missions. What I also discovered through the years is that although evangelicals believe in the legitimacy of the local church and would advocate that the church, at least in part, is called to fulfill the Great Commission (GC), there is a lack of clarity as to what the local church was uniquely and exclusively designed and created to do.

The era of modern missions, which according to many historians began with William Carey,<sup>2</sup> ushered in the rise of “parachurch,” or more specifically, “paramission”

---

<sup>1</sup> The Bible overwhelmingly refers to the church as a local visible gathering. This thesis uses the term *church* as such, though it will address the definition of the church in narrow (local) and broad (universal) terms.

<sup>2</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2018), 7. Kenneth Curtis, Stephen Lang, and Randy Petersen also list William Carey’s achievements



organizations.<sup>3</sup> This increased presence of paramissional organizations, which can do the work seemingly better and more efficiently, has left churches searching for their own missional identity. In time, many churches have been left with praying and giving for missions. In 2013 I transitioned from being a missionary on the field to a mission pastor with my sending church. Being a missions pastor has led me to reflect on the exclusive<sup>4</sup> missional role of the local church. Many dedicated believers serve in wonderful ministries outside the church, but those parachurch ministries do not answer the question as to what the local visible gathering is uniquely and exclusively called to do.

Matthew 16:18 says, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”<sup>5</sup> What a powerful, definitive, and exclusive statement. It is “powerful” because it has the full weight of deity making a claim as to what “I” will accomplish. The verse is “definitive” in that once God has proclaimed He “will” do something, nothing can keep a sovereign God from fulfilling His purposes. It is “exclusive” in view of the fact that the church is God’s chosen vessel to advance and grow His kingdom. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the missional exclusive nature of the local church in that there is a God-given purpose and design that no other can fulfill. The research begins by demonstrating the exclusive nature of God as it relates to His people. The following chapters lay out the biblical case for the exclusive nature of the local church in fulfilling the GC and multiplying local churches. The final chapter integrates and applies these truths to the local church and provides practical guidelines as to how the local church can maintain its missional exclusivity.

---

in missions as one of the 100 most important events in Christian history. Kenneth A. Curtis, Stephen J. Lang, and Randy Petersen, *The 100 Most Important Events in Christian History* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1991), 140-41. George Smith, *The Life of William Carey* (Edinburgh: R & R Clark, 1885), 437.

<sup>3</sup> Paramission organizations, as defined in this research, refer to ministries that specifically focus on fulfilling the Great Commission by establishing indigenous works.

<sup>4</sup> The term *exclusive* is used throughout the research to refer to where the church has exclusivity; meaning, God-ordained “exclusive rights” or a “just claim.”

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

## **Thesis Statement**

The church is God's divine instrument, designed to respond to the Great Commission. This thesis examines those areas the church has an exclusive missional responsibility, as the pillar of truth, to make disciples of all nations by going, baptizing, and teaching the whole counsel of God. In doing so, the church will do what it is uniquely designed to do: multiply itself until the ends of the earth.

## **Familiarity with the Literature**

A solid understanding of the exclusive missional nature of the local church will first draw from literature that focuses on systematic ecclesiology. This foundation is essential as poor ecclesiology will lead to poor missiology. Once a solid ecclesiology has been properly established, the research will draw from biblical missiology resources, and finally, literature that speaks to missional strategies and implementations within the local church.

## **Ecclesiological Resources**

A valuable ecclesiological resource is a book edited by Daniel Akin on the theology for the church.<sup>6</sup> Akin has been the president of Southeastern Theological Seminary since 2004, a vocal proponent of missions, and the author of a book on the life of inspiring missionaries.<sup>7</sup> His book on the theology for the church draws from various authors who study distinct doctrinal positions. The impetus behind this work is the understanding that the church, as the pillar of truth, needs to know truth and be able to defend it from bad theology. Akin invites fourteen different church leaders to speak on various aspects of theology. Each chapter focuses on four different areas beginning by focusing strictly on what the Bible says before contrasting this with historical teachings on the subject. History provides an understanding of cultural context that inadvertently

---

<sup>6</sup> Daniel L. Akin, ed., *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B & H, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Daniel L. Akin, *10 Who Changed the World* (Nashville: B & H, 2012).

tends to shape theology. The third area looks at how that specific topic fits within the broader body of truth. Doctrinal truths are often taught singularly and not necessarily in light of other doctrines. Some natural tensions are addressed in an effort to bring better unity to the text. The fourth area each author addresses is how this particular doctrine impacts the church today. In doing so, the authors do not contextualize in a way to compromise established truth but rather making it relevant to today's questions and issues.

The chapter most helpful to my research was the chapter by Mark Dever on the theology of the church.<sup>8</sup> He speaks to the significance of a solid ecclesiology. While some might treat the doctrine of the church as secondary, Dever argues that the church should be as important to every believer as it was for Christ. The author traces the continuity of Christ's passion for the church back to the people of Israel. Though they are distinct in many ways, and many prophetic promises are specific to Israel, God's plan is manifested through His people.

Dever gives helpful insight on what exactly constitutes a church. In doing so he does not focus so much on a technical definition as much as the practical visible outworking of biblical ecclesiology as evidenced by structure, deacons, elders, baptism, the Lord's Supper, caring for its own, and fulfilling the GC. This book has proven to be a helpful work to see church doctrine not only on par with other doctrines but demonstrates how it relates to them as well.

A second work on ecclesiology is that of Edwin Dargan (1852-1930) published in 1905.<sup>9</sup> Pastor, professor at Southern Seminary, author, and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, speaks to the wealth of experience Dargan brings to this work. His study on ecclesiology stood as a reference at the turn of the twentieth century. He states

---

<sup>8</sup> Mark Dever, "The Church," in Akin, *A Theology for the Church*, 603.

<sup>9</sup> Edwin Charles Dargan, *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches* (Louisville: Charles T. Dearing, 1905).

early in the book that such a study should incorporate Scripture and history, as well as practical considerations. While certainly history and the pragmatic side of church are important to study, they can only be understood and interpreted in light of Scripture.

Dargan favors a biblical definition of *church* that refers to a local gathering, yet he also tackles the issue of a universal church. He resists using the term *universal* because it is not a New Testament term but uses instead what he calls a “specific” and a “generic” meaning of the word. The author tackles this question in a most helpful way by demonstrating how *church* is used to define a single local visible church, a gathering of local churches, local churches in a general geographical area as well as a general collective meaning. In doing so, the collective meaning always has the local visible understanding in view. Even in Ephesians where church is most often used in a collective sense, the context and application is one where Paul is dealing with unity in the church over the issue of converted Jews accepting Gentile brethren as equals in the local visible gathering. Later, when Paul speaks to Ephesus leaders in Acts 20, he tells them to care for and feed the church of God. There again, though it references a generic understanding of *church*, it clearly applies to the local visible gathering.

Dargan lays a strong foundation for the local visible gathering and stays true to that understanding as he explains what that visible gathering was intended to do as an institution. He explains how the church is called to support and defend the truth of God. There is no power and authority beyond the local church and this is especially true in the matters of establishing, teaching, defending, and proclaiming truth. The church is called to examine the faith of those who would express a desire to join the church and eventually exclude those who need to be disciplined from the church. Dargan puts a lot of authority, and rightfully so, in the hands of the local assembly. This authority is seen in elders feeding the flock, deacons serving the body, and missionaries being sent to fulfill the GC. These men all operated under the full authority of the local church.

Dargan, in this voluminous and complete work, stays true to the centrality of the local visible church. The church of the living God is not a conglomerate of individual smaller churches, but rather each local church is the church of the living God. He ends by emphasizing the importance of every congregation who preaches the true gospel.

Another author who provides significant teaching on the church is Robert Saucy (1930-2015).<sup>10</sup> Saucy, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and professor at Talbot School of Theology, participated in the original translation of the New American Standard Bible. This extensive knowledge base contributed to Saucy putting a great deal of focus on defining the word *church* from its English, German, and Latin roots to its Greek usage. *Church* carries a lot of cultural baggage today to the point where redefining the word biblically is foundational to understanding the function of the church.

Having laid the etymological foundation, Saucy provides an extensive study on the nature of the church. He tackles some of the core issues helpful to my research; namely, what characterizes the church and the subject of the *universal* church. He speaks to the problem of using terms like *invisible church*,<sup>11</sup> which he would argue is done at the expense of the local visible church. Saucy goes on to explain how the visible church is not a small part of one greater church but is, in and of itself, the one true church. He tackles the key passage of Matthew 16 and argues for Christ explaining to Peter that he will play a foundational role in the future visible church which will see the light of day in the near future. Saucy works from a couple of convictional points: For one, he believes the church necessitates the finished work of Christ and therefore must be post-resurrection. Saucy also believes the passages in Matthew 16 and 18 are prophetic in nature. He lays the biblical groundwork as to why the local visible church began at Pentecost with the coming of the promised Comforter.

---

<sup>10</sup> Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972).

<sup>11</sup> The term *invisible*, in this thesis, refers to the fact that the body of Christ is not limited to a particular *visible* congregation, but rather includes the larger body of the redeemed. The term *visible* is understood as "local," and the term *invisible* is understood as "universal."

Moving on to what the church is expected to do, his focus is on sending missionaries. Saucy completes his work by walking through the organizational aspect of the visible church. He addresses a broad range of issues from the necessity of organization and establishing membership, to various forms of government. The author completes a thorough study of the local, with a defense of the primacy of the church as a local visible reality.

### **Missiological Resources**

It is hard to talk about missions without referencing Herbert Kane (1910-1988), one of the premier twentieth-century authors on missions. He brings his wealth of knowledge and experience to his books having served as a missionary to China, a pastor, and the president of several mission organizations. One such helpful book is historical in nature: *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission*.<sup>12</sup> Kane views the church as central to missions and thus centers his historical perspective accordingly. He demonstrates how history laid the foundation for the church to proclaim the gospel to every corner of the earth. He makes the connection between Jewish persecution, the establishment of Jewish settlements, synagogues, religious and cultural centers, and the spread of the gospel.

The author points to the fact that the church did not just exist, but it thrived, and successfully carried the gospel to the uttermost and in the process saw churches multiply. There was no governing body, no centralized hierarchy, no wealth or political connections, and yet, these local gatherings still serve as the reference as to what can be done with the power of the Spirit of the Lord. Kane points to the apparent weakness of the church and yet acknowledges its undeniable strength. This history begs the question as to why churches today believe they need something more than has already been given, to be successful. By the time one comes to the end of the book of Acts, one finds a church

---

<sup>12</sup> J. Herbert Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission: A Panoramic View of Missions from Pentecost to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978).

that had embodied the GC. Kane argues that religious centers gradually shifted from the synagogue to the local gathering of believers. He also points to the significance of the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 and the following persecution. He provides insight as to how this tragic event ensured that Jerusalem would not remain the religious center of the world and as such would fuel the flames of church expansion. Kane goes on to give a concise historical account as to the spread of missions into the twentieth century.

A second missiological book comes from a premier scholarly resource. Eckhard Schnabel, born in Germany, on the faculty of Gordon-Conwell, fluent in many ancient languages, experienced in cross-cultural missions, has a vast cross-cultural teaching experience (China, Belgium, Philippines, Poland, Sri Lanka, Canada, and Germany), and has authored eighteen books. One book particularly useful to this research is *Paul the Missionary*.<sup>13</sup> The student of church and missionary theology will find no better systematic study and biblical resource than this book.

Schnabel does an outstanding job of laying the foundation of biblical missions by walking through the life of Paul, drawing observations, and making applications. Contrary to other authors who seek to contextualize missions with modern realities, Schnabel provides a plethora of scriptural references and sticks first and foremost to the text. He takes what some might call a “narrow” or “technical” use of biblical definitions and uses that to guide his study. Such an approach is helpful, keeping a solid biblical understanding in view when contextualizing. With this mindset, the objective is not so much to provide a twenty-first century model, but rather examine the first century example and examine why the church moved away from that original biblical design.

Schnabel makes a helpful distinction between biblical mandates that must be followed, and biblical models that cannot always be duplicated. The goal is to examine how the contemporary church can best realign missional practices with biblical mandates.

---

<sup>13</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008).

Too many modern mission strategies focus on the local church's resources and its ability to implement the missional model. Schnabel would suggest that a biblical model is applicable to churches of all sizes and abilities.

In a world where many seek to duplicate Paul's missionary strategies, Schnabel points to what might be considered a lack of strategy on the apostle's part. A biblical mission appears to be very dependent on the moving of the Holy Spirit. The author walks through various Pauline methods and strategies fueled less by human strategies than the fruit of the work of the Spirit. Trusting the work of the Spirit is clearly evidenced by Paul's ability to train men and transfer leadership relatively quickly by today's standards.

Schnabel completes this book with a look at twenty-first century missions. Having established the proper biblical foundation for missions, he can properly address how these truths apply today. His inductive approach takes the established biblical mandates and applies them to modern missional practices. In doing so he avoids the pitfalls of pragmatism and stays true to the Word.

A third helpful book on a theology for world missions comes from Robert Culver (1916-2015).<sup>14</sup> As with other scholars, this work draws its wealth from personal experience and academic research. Culver was a pastor and a professor of theology at Wheaton College and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He lays out his objective for the book from the beginning by underscoring the unique role of the Bible in providing a guide to "missionary evangelism." He points to the fact that the expansion of the church came at the hand of churches acting as one, not missionary agencies. A little further he points to how instrumental William Carey was in the era of missions when faced with an impotent church. Though Carey made significant contributions to the missional debate, it can scarcely be said that God waited for Carey to expand His church to the uttermost.

---

<sup>14</sup> Robert Duncan Culver, *A Greater Commission: A Theology for World Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1984).



Culver's strength is biblical exposition as he presents an expository study on Matthew 10 and 13, and Romans 10 and 15. He points to the fact that the call to carry the gospel unto the ends of the earth did not begin with the GC of Matthew 28, but from the moment Christ called the twelve disciples to follow Him, He had church expansion in view. The call to follow Christ in Matthew 4, the prophetic vision of Matthew 8, the vision of Matthew 9, and the focus on the world in chapter 10 all lead to the culminating command called the GC.

Culver faces a common struggle, which is to emphasize the necessity of the local church while condoning working outside the church if this same church is not engaged missionally. He underlines how the apostles answered to no local church and that missions has often been carried by men outside the church, as if this was admirable, to later underscore the significance of the church in carrying out the missional mandate as he exposes the text. This confusion over the exclusive missional nature of the local church is not uncommon. Though the author at times airs away from textual criticism and makes sweeping missional generalities, his strength lies in the exposition of Scripture leading to a full understanding of the GC.

### **Missiology Implementation Resources**

The first resource comes from Chuck Lawless, professor of evangelism and missions as well as Dean of Doctoral Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Adam W. Greenway, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. In *The Great Commission Resurgence*, Lawless and Greenway look at the state of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in light of fulfilling the GC.<sup>15</sup> They draw timely observations particularly pertaining to coordinated efforts between the local church and missional agencies. In their view, the SBC was distracted from fulfilling the GC when it began to distance itself from theology, as if theology and missions were two

---

<sup>15</sup> Chuck Lawless and Adam W. Greenway, *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God's Mandate in Our Time* (Nashville: B & H, 2010).

separate things. They argue that the local church keeps missions grounded in truth. Without the local church and its theological foundation, missions bends toward pragmatism and eventually progressive theology. The issue of theology became so conflictual that some began to see it as holding missions back instead of the engine that drives biblical missions.

The point Lawless and Greenway make is not intended to belittle various Christian ministries but to demonstrate that the GC is to be fueled by the preaching and teaching of God's Word. The authors therefore strongly advocate for an active and essential role of the local church as God has granted it the authority to fulfill the GC. Given the denominational involvement of both Lawless and Greenway, it is remarkable that they have the courage to point out where the SBC has drifted and make a claim for the centrality of the local church in fulfilling the GC.

God's plan for the world unfolds through the church. Lawless and Greenway offer a powerful statement which summarizes their focus: "Jesus did not give the Great Commission to a mission board, he gave these marching orders to his disciples and through them to his church."<sup>16</sup>

A final book comes from David Hesselgrave (1921-2018). It would be hard to speak of missions without mentioning his name. He is credited with building the missions program at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, co-founding the Evangelical Missiological Society, and authoring many volumes with a particular focus on missions. His book, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* is a key missional reference in this field of study.<sup>17</sup>

Early in the book he introduces the terms *Church* and *church* to distinguish between the universal *Church* and local *church*. In my view, juggling between these two words is confusing at times in the book. He presents the "church" with having been given

---

<sup>16</sup> Lawless and Greenway, *The Great Commission Resurgence*, 114.

<sup>17</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980).

the task of proclaiming the gospel, gathering believers in local congregations, building believers in the faith, and planting new congregations throughout the world. According to Hesselgrave, Paul's mission was accomplished when a church was established, putting establishing local churches at the heart of missions. The fact that parachurch organizations have focused on developing schools, feeding the hungry, or hospitals has only exasperated the problem by giving the impression that missions is anything done in the name of the Lord. The author goes even further by stating that missions has focused to a fault on multiplying converts and not enough on establishing and growing congregations. He states, "A churchless mission is out of step with the plan of God."<sup>18</sup>

Hesselgrave makes some very poignant statements about the local church but his applications become quickly subjective. He states that missiology has three pillars: revelation (Scripture), reflection (sound thinking), and research (scientific observation). I am uncomfortable with putting reflection and research on par with revelation. Reflection and research must be understood in light of revelation. While the author makes interesting observations, biblical methodology is often counterintuitive to human logic, or in this case, to pseudo-science. He uses the term *science* to try to put weight behind his argument, but he has not done the subject matter service in doing so. Hesselgrave concludes by returning his focus on the local church and explaining how successful missionaries will have the strong presence of a local church not only in sending them, but also in working alongside the missionary.

### **Void in Literature**

There is a lot of literature on the church particularly following the Reformation.<sup>19</sup> As churches began to break away from the established state churches and

---

<sup>18</sup> Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, 39.

<sup>19</sup> Kenan Osborne says that systematic ecclesiology occurred in the sixteenth century. As individual church denominations grew, each began establishing its own ecclesiology and dogmas of faith. Kenan B. Osborne, *A Theology of the Church for the Third Millennium*, Studies in Systematic Theology 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

more denominations were formed, defining the role of the local church became more central to evangelical theology.

Beyond mission history and bibliographies, there is also a fair amount of literature on missiology with some casting the biblical vision of a missional God, focusing on the GC, or laying out the biblical mandate for the ecclesiastical role in fulfilling the GC. On the other end of the spectrum are many books written from a paramissional perspective that speak to practical missional issues and how the local church can “assist” mission organizations. These books are usually authored by missionaries or heads of mission agencies. Many of these writings are helpful, instructive, and would concede that the role of the local church is central, important, or even vital to missions. This thesis goes a step further and identifies what aspect of missions the local church has “exclusive” rights over. Chapter 2 will fully develop the theological understanding of the term *exclusive* beginning with demonstrating how truth is exclusive, how the term has its limitations, and how it can be applied to the modern missional context. The focus of this research is not to discuss the legitimacy of mission agencies but to examine the beauty of the local church and point to those areas the church cannot outsource as it pertains to missions.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE EXCLUSIVE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18). What a powerful, definitive, and exclusive statement. “Powerful” because it has the full weight of deity making a claim as to what “I” will accomplish. “Definitive” in that once God has proclaimed He “will” do something, nothing can keep a sovereign God from fulfilling His purposes. “Exclusive” in view of the fact that God has made the church the focus of His blessing and His chosen vessel to advance and grow His kingdom.

A key word throughout this project is the word *exclusive*. At first glance it might seem the term is too limitative, yet it is fitting for what this research seeks to accomplish. A vital understanding of the word is found in Webster’s description of “an exclusive right,” or “a just claim.”<sup>1</sup> There are specific areas in missions<sup>2</sup> where the church has exclusivity, meaning God-ordained “exclusive rights” or a “just claim.” Identifying what rightfully belongs to the church necessitates going to the Word of God and building on objective truth. Truth is, by definition, exclusive in nature and will inevitably also point to what is false; furthermore, knowing what is false will help one better understand the meaning of truth. One simply cannot have one without the other.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Webster Dictionaries, “Exclusive,” accessed November 16, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/exclusive>.

<sup>2</sup> Whereas the term *mission* is used to describe the broad universal purpose of the church, *missions* will be used in this thesis to refer to the sending of commissioned individuals beyond the boundaries of the local church to proclaim the gospel, win converts, and establish autonomous congregations. *Missionaries* will refer to those involved in missions as envoys sent by Christ, through the church, to proclaim the risen Savior. Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, vol. 1, *Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Is Your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 27.

Therefore, as one examines the missional role of the church, the question is not simply to pinpoint what is central or vital, but rather, what is true. Truth that is anchored in the Word of God as the “depository of God’s absolute truth,”<sup>4</sup> transcends time and is applicable in all situations. Grasping and trusting the exclusive nature of God and His church will keep missions from individualism, experientialism, pragmatism, or relativism.<sup>5</sup>

Absolute truth is revealed and not created, and if it can be demonstrated biblically, then believers have a spiritual obligation to believe and conform to it. As Johan Bavinck says, “The work of missions is the work of God; it is not lawful for us to improvise. At each step, we must ask what it is that God demands.”<sup>6</sup>

### **The Exclusive Nature of God**

Genesis 1:1 reads, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The identity and unchallenged reality of God is made manifest from the beginning of Scripture.<sup>7</sup> The Bible makes the claim that there is but one true God: Jehovah God of Israel. He is introduced as the creator God, author, and possessor of all things known to man. This picture of effortlessness and sovereignty on the part of the creator God will be

---

<sup>4</sup> Robert Jeffress, “Absolute Truth Is Revealed and Exclusive,” July 1, 2016, <https://ptv.org/devotional/absolute-truth-is-revealed-and-exclusive/>. Jeffress argues that absolute truth is exclusive. In a culture of diversity with many varying opinions, it is hard to say categorically what one person believes is right while what another believes is wrong. Jeffress argues that though there are different opinions, it would be a mistake to believe there is no truth.

<sup>5</sup> Sharon Burch argues against the inerrancy of the text claiming that far too often truth is a product of human manipulations and various assumptions. She claims experience is what validates truth. “What works” is in missions far too often the base for what is true instead of examining biblically and subjecting experience to that truth. Sharon Peebles Burch, “Christian Particularity Does Not Depend on Exclusive Truth Claims: Teaching Enthusiastic Witness in a Pluralistic World,” *Religious Education* 95, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 299.

<sup>6</sup> Johan H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1960), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel L. Akin, *A Theology for the Church*, rev. ed. (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 159.

seen in the creation of His people and His church.<sup>8</sup> God's established covenant is based on His rightful claim to His people. "I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Exod 20:2). This statement follows a lengthy account of God redeeming His people from the bondage of Egypt. God has the right over all men as Creator and the right over His people as Redeemer.<sup>9</sup> Moses will give the broader implications of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 6:5, where believers are called to love this Redeemer God with all their heart, soul, and strength.

Moses leads up to this statement beginning with Deuteronomy 4 where there is the first reminder since Genesis 1 that God is at the origin of all creation (v. 32), and there is no other like Him. He is the redeemer (v. 34), and His statutes are to be obeyed (vv. 39-40). Moses reminds the people of the Decalogue in Deuteronomy 5, before finally, in chapter 6, giving them "the greatest commandment" (Matt 22:36-37), which is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength" (Deut 6:5). Therein lies the essence of the believer's obedience to the law as an act of worship and an expression of love to the one and only God. All missional endeavors are demonstrations of love rooted in the believer's worship of the one true God.

### **A Period of Common Grace**

Man's ability to know, love, obey, and worship God is an act of divine grace and the fertile ground of missionary work. This grace, common to all men, permits man to reap the benefits of creation and discover God without experiencing the full extent of His judgment and wrath.<sup>10</sup> When Adam fell, all of mankind fell with him, and with it

---

<sup>8</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Brevard Childs makes assumptions as to this text being an expanded version of the original based on oral traditions and historical impact. Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 400-403.

<sup>10</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, "Protestant Echoes of the Constantinian Era," in *Religion and Public Education*, ed. Theodore R.Sizer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), 212, 306-8.

man's capacity to know, search, and understand God.<sup>11</sup> The earth experienced two major catastrophic changes: the first one came with Adam and the fall when the curse fell upon the earth, and the second was when Noah's generation, being continually evil, was judged by the flood that reshaped the earth. Both changes were a direct result of the wrath of God against the sin of the human race. Abraham Kuyper argues that the Noahic covenantal promise (Gen 9:8-17) has remained in effect century after century where God is, in essence, withholding His wrath. This promise stipulates that as long as earth remains (Gen 8:22),<sup>12</sup> man will experience seedtime, harvest, and all that is needed to produce fruit.<sup>13</sup> God's gift of grace to unbelievers today is that they can know and worship God. Though the Noahic covenant is not salvific in nature, it undoubtedly has redemption in mind as a means of preserving the line of Shem and allowing God to prepare the bride of Christ.<sup>14</sup> God's gift of grace to believers is that they can take hold of the plow and work the harvest.<sup>15</sup>

This period of Common Grace is where God makes himself known through His creation. Romans 1:18-21 points to God's power and divine nature with the implication that what is visible is sufficient for man to respond by giving God the glory instead of choosing to worship idols.<sup>16</sup> Paul specifically states man suppresses the knowledge of a Creator God and be blinded to the fact that His entire creation declares Him. In addition to creation, God makes Himself known through man's conscious awareness. In

---

<sup>11</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Common Grace*, vol 2, *God's Gift for a Fallen World* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2015), xi.

<sup>12</sup> Gen 8:22 says, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

<sup>13</sup> Kuyper, *Common Grace*, 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *The Common Grace Covenants*, vol. 1, *Biblical Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014), 172.

<sup>15</sup> Kuyper, *Common Grace*, xi.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 111.



Ecclesiastes 3:11, Qoheleth, once having described “the beauty of God’s creative hand,”<sup>17</sup> goes on to describe how God has placed “eternity” or “a sense of timelessness” in the heart of everyone.<sup>18</sup> The very fact that man, who has only experienced the temporal, can contemplate and pursue the eternal is in and of itself proof of divine revelation. As with creation proper, man’s understanding is not salvific, but pushes man to hang an orderly creation in a greater timeless setting that goes way beyond his grasp. Men of every tribe and every nation pursue an understanding or a relationship with a greater creator outside of man’s temporal realm. In addition to an awareness of eternity, the period of Common Grace is one where man is confronted with an inner awareness of God’s moral demands. Paul speaks to this in Romans 2:12-16, where he describes how the Gentiles exhibit behavior conformed to the law though they do not possess the law.<sup>19</sup> This moral awareness of what is right and wrong, a moral norm, and the awareness of a greater eternal reality, is the bridge between the human and divine realm which plows the ground for a receptive heart to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This period of Common Grace is one where God reveals Himself through His Word to provide the whole counsel of God necessary for His glory and our salvation. As the Westminster Confession of Faith states, natural revelation is not sufficient to give that knowledge of God necessary for salvation. God, therefore, has revealed Himself through His Word to provide the whole counsel of God.<sup>20</sup> This progression of how God reveals Himself to man is described in Hebrews 1:1-2, where God is speaking in the past through

---

<sup>17</sup> Edward M. Curtis, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, Teach the Text Commentary Series, ed. John H. Walton and Mark L. Strauss (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 27. Curtis describes the beauty in question as specifically how all of creation fits together in a coherent way, pointing towards an intelligent design.

<sup>18</sup> Eric S. Christianson, *Ecclesiastes through the Centuries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 176. Christianson compares various historical interpretations of this text.

<sup>19</sup> According to Christianson, some believe the Rom 2:14 passage refers to Gentile believers as a response to the prophetic passage found in Jer 31:31-34; however, Paul’s focus is on observable behavior, leaving the question of judgment for later in v. 16.

<sup>20</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1882), 29-31, <https://archive.org/details/westminsterconfe00macp/page/30/mode/2up>.

the prophets, through Christ Himself, and now through the inspired Word left for generations to follow.<sup>21</sup>

### **A Period of Redemption**

The period of Common Grace is one where God draws people unto Himself. God is purposeful in creation, deliberate in His inner promptings, and intentional in what He reveals about Himself. God left man with a very specific and clear path to Him. John 14:6 is one of the most exclusive statements in the Bible: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Man, in his own sinfulness, is always seeking “another way” to God. David Platt summarizes this well when he says, “If there were 1,000 ways to God, we would want 1,001. The issue is not how many ways lead to God; the issue is our autonomy before God. We want to make our own way. This is the essence of sin in the first place, trusting our ways more than God’s way.”<sup>22</sup> By grace, all of God’s creation and all of God’s revelation points to one truth, one way, and one life found in Jesus Christ.

This period of Common Grace is designed to grow the church. From Adam to the Israelites, the church advances God’s covenantal relationship with His people, pictured as one body that finds its identity in Christ.<sup>23</sup> As an act of grace, not only does God draw people to Himself, but He sends those same people to the uttermost parts of the earth as a conduit through which reconciliation is proclaimed to a lost and dying world.<sup>24</sup> Just as

---

<sup>21</sup> Keith Mathison, “General and Special Revelation: A Reformed Approach to Science and Scripture,” Ligonier Ministries, May 18, 2012, <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/general-and-special-revelation-reformed-approach-science-and-scripture>.

<sup>22</sup> David Platt, *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2017), 14, Kindle. Platt speaks to what he calls the offense of the gospel, in that people are offended at the exclusive nature of salvation. The problem boils down to man’s desire to do things his own way.

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin L. Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church: A Biblical Theology of the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019), 39.

<sup>24</sup> Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church*, 125.

God breathed life into Adam, called Abram out of Ur, led the Israelites to the Promised Land, and gave his only Son, Pentecost marked the pouring of the Spirit on mankind and the visible unfolding of the church in view of fulfilling the Great Commission.<sup>25</sup> As the church takes the gospel to the uttermost, it embodies its love for God and for its neighbor; however, it is not enough to say God desires that all come to the knowledge of Christ without specifying the exclusivity of Christ in the matter. It is not enough to say God reveals Himself to mankind without speaking to the exclusivity of the Bible in the matter. It is not enough to say God has given a command to the church to spread the gospel, in some universal sense, without speaking to the exclusive nature of the visible church in the matter. The church, in its design and purposes, is as unique as God Himself. It is the product of God's creative work, not man's, and as such needs to be examined and pursued with passion.

### **The Nature of the Church Defined**

Demonstrating how exclusivity applies to the church necessitates defining what is meant by "church." Layers of cultural experiences and preconceived notions must be peeled away to clearly understand the church's intended singularity. Edwin Dargan would suggest that a definition should include contemporary context and usage.<sup>26</sup> While that might be true for the common study of linguistics, when it comes to knowing the revealed truth of God, only Scripture can serve as an unequivocal source of truth. Wayne Grudem makes the point that Scripture is the sufficient source of truth for man to know everything he needs to know about the church.<sup>27</sup> Within Scripture, it behooves believers

---

<sup>25</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 40.

<sup>26</sup> Edwin Dargan states, "The proper method of study for Ecclesiology is a combination of the scriptural, historical, and practical." Edwin Charles Dargan, *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches* (Louisville: Charles T. Dearing, 1905), 12. Proper historical and practical understanding, however, can only be helpful if grounded in the Word. The idea that these three could be equal in importance is problematic.

<sup>27</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 127.

to understand not just the etymology of a word but its biblical cultural understanding as well.<sup>28</sup> The natural understanding of the word “church” within its biblical context is critical if the intended exclusive nature is to be appreciated. Failing to understand a clear biblical definition and usage can easily lend toward a very broad definition which then tends to even broader applications. The most appropriate applications are those closely tied to the original intent of the text. Thankfully, there seems to be a desire to return to a core understanding and intended practice in the local church today.<sup>29</sup>

The English word *church* from the Scottish *kirk* and the German *kirche*, which mean “belonging to the Lord.”<sup>30</sup> The Greek usage of the word in the New Testament, *ekklesia*, finds its origins in the verb *ekkaleo* or *ek*, which means “out,” and *kaleo* which means “to call or to summon.” From this verb, the meaning of the word can be defined as “to call out.”<sup>31</sup> The usage in secular Greek helps provide background as to what the word meant to New Testament believers. Though the word “church” today is specifically used as a religious term, that was not the case in secular Greek where it was used to describe “a visible assembly of citizens that had been summoned to gather.”<sup>32</sup> A Greek concordance will reveal that the word *ekklesia* is used 118 times in Scripture.<sup>33</sup> Of those, three times it is translated as a secular “assembly” (Acts 19:32, 39, 41) and once as an “assembly of God’s firstborn children” (Heb 12:23). The remainder 114 times it is

---

<sup>28</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew, Mark, Luke* ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 369.

<sup>29</sup> Jeremy Myers, *Skeleton Church: A Bare-Bones Definition of Church* (Dallas, OR: Redeeming, 2016), 168. Myers goes on to explain how the church is “simple” in its design so as to provide maximum flexibility in its functionality.

<sup>30</sup> Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 11. Saucy begins with the modern understanding of the word and backtracks essentially into the original Greek usage. It is important in etymology to contextualize words and their meanings.

<sup>31</sup> Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Blue Letter Bible, “Assembly,” accessed January 17, 2022, [https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/search.cfm?Criteria=assembly%2A+G1577&t=KJV#s=s\\_primary\\_0\\_1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/search.cfm?Criteria=assembly%2A+G1577&t=KJV#s=s_primary_0_1).

translated as “church,” with three of those references found in the Gospels. It is found once in Matthew 16:18 where Christ makes the promise to Peter that He will build His church, and twice in Matthew 18:17 where specific instruction is given on when to discipline and exclude someone from the church.

The term church is used in the following ways: (1) as a reference to a specific church, (2) to describe a non-specified assembly (1 Cor 4:17), (3) to designate a group of individual churches (Gal 1:22), (4) in reference to a non-specified number of churches (2 Cor 11:8), and (5) speaking for all individual churches (1 Cor 7:17).<sup>34</sup> Other terms used to identify the local assembly are: (1) flock of God (Acts 20:28-29), (2) house of God (1 Tim 3:15), (3) church of the living God, and (4) pillar of truth (1 Tim 3:15). This later text speaks to establishing elders and deacons within the local assembly to carry out that which the body has been called to do. Some theologians, like Gregg Allison, are not keen upon restricting the term *ekklesia* to its “visible” roots, preferring a broader understanding based on the totality of Scripture.<sup>35</sup> Such largess, however, runs the risk of defining and using the word in ways beyond its biblical intent. Given the interpretation of *ekklesia* there is every reason to believe that when Peter heard Christ say, “I will build my church,” Peter was imagining a visible, called out, gathering of believers. Scripture consistently uses the same word *ekklesia* to describe His church and never pauses to indicate a newly evolved or even nuanced understanding of the word; therefore, the word *church* in this project will always carry, first and foremost, the idea of a visible gathering of believers.<sup>36</sup> Reginald Matthews gives a definition of the church which encompasses this idea:

---

<sup>34</sup> Robert, *The Church in God's Program*, 16.

<sup>35</sup> Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 127. While Allison supports the concept of the local visible church, he supports what he calls an ontological ecclesiology which defines the church in terms of its attributes (51). He finds those characteristics to be first and foremost “universal” in nature, thus objecting to the primacy of the local visible body.

<sup>36</sup> Myers would go as far as to say that there cannot be a church without a gathering or without an assembling together. Myers, *Skeleton Church*, 250.

A local, New Testament church is an organized body of immersed believers, maintaining the apostles' doctrines, continuing in fellowship, worship and prayer, and is the custodian of the ordinances of immersion and the Lord's Supper. The great task to which the church is called is the global evangelization of the lost and the edification of the saints in accordance with the Great Commission and as directed therein (Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 2:41-47; 13:1-4).<sup>37</sup>

### **The Promise Made to Peter**

Christ made a promise to Peter: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against” (Matthew 16:18). This passage has been a battleground for hundreds of years with Protestants pushing back on the Catholic misuse of this text claiming that Peter is the first Pope. There is also a dispensationalist battleground where some see the text as evidence that Israel will be replaced by the church. D. A. Carson rightfully points out that present-day evangelical churches' interpretation of this text was no doubt influenced by these issues.<sup>38</sup> As with any biblical text, context is important in interpreting specific intent of a passage. Matthew 16 begins with a confrontation between the Pharisees and Sadducees who were seeking a sign. Jesus rebuked them by stating that they refused the revelation already given to them (Matt 16:4), while Peter on the other hand had received the revelation that Christ was the Son of the living God (Matt 16:17).

A key debate centers on the identity of the “rock” upon which Christ will build his church. Through tracing the history of the exegesis of this text from 1781 to 1965, research shows that one third believed the “rock” was Peter, another third believed it refers to the truth of the gospel, and yet another third say it refers to Christ.<sup>39</sup> Those three positions continue to be debated today. Several observations point to the promise being made to Peter that he will be instrumental in shepherding the newly called out church at

---

<sup>37</sup> Reginald L. Matthews, *Missionary Administration in the Local Church* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist, 1970), 20.

<sup>38</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 368.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph A. Burgess, *A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16:17-19 from 1781 to 1965* (Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, 1976), 5.

Pentecost. First, in the Matthew 16 dialogue, Christ asks Peter, “Who do you say that I am?” (v. 15), to which Peter answers, “you are the Christ (v. 16). As Peter acknowledges that Jesus is the Christ, so will Christ acknowledge that Peter is the rock (v. 18). It is evident that “Christ” applies to Jesus, and so should “rock” apply to Peter.<sup>40</sup> Given that the name Peter means “rock,” there is an obvious play on words when Christ tells Peter, the rock, that upon this “rock” He would build His church. The play on words makes sense when both images of Peter the living stone, and Christ the Cornerstone, are present.<sup>41</sup> Peter is told that he will be a “living stone” in the building of His church of which Christ Himself is the Chief Cornerstone (Eph 2:20). Peter references the “living stone” again in 1 Peter 2:4 when he states that Christ is the Chief Cornerstone to which all believers, not just Peter, are living stones.

Second, the word *ekkesia* was not foreign to Peter who heard Christ say He was going to call out his people in a visible assembly of which Peter would have the care to feed. This passage marks a critical turning point in the life of Christ as He sets his eyes on Jerusalem from this point on (Matt 16:21: “From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem”). Jesus is preparing his disciples, and Peter in particular, for what is to come in his death and resurrection as well as the care and feeding of the flock. After the resurrection in John 21, Christ tells Peter to go and feed His flock. Peter could not have imagined Christ referring to an “invisible” assembly, but on the contrary a very visible flock.

Third, Peter speaks to the gathered believers in Acts 2:46-47, which serve as a model for the church to this day. He later refers to Pentecost as the “beginning” in Acts 11:15. These two passages would be consistent with Matthew 16 being a prophetic passage preparing Peter for his role as a shepherd. Finally, the fact that Christ says He

---

<sup>40</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: B & H, 1992), 214.

<sup>41</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 368.

“will” build His church as a future event does not preclude the fact that God has been gathering His people, but it does point to a future event as well.

One can easily observe today, over two thousand years after this promise, how the church has gone global, gathering people from every tribe and nation. The church could not go global until it first was made local at Pentecost. The church can be more than the local visible expression, but it is never less than the local visible manifestation. Christ promised the “indestructibility of his church,”<sup>42</sup> and has made good on that promise to Peter by adding to His church and growing his bride. As the local church grows, so does the body of Christ. It is not surprising that Peter, later in life (1 Pet 5:1-2), passes the baton to the elders of the church by exhorting them to shepherd the flock, oversee the flock, and be examples to the flock.

### **The Promise of a Visible Church**

The word *ekklesia* conveys something more than a random visible crowd, but rather a structured, organized, and purposeful congregation. Davis Allison and Dale Allison argue that there is no reason to believe that Christ is not simply speaking of making Peter a foundational leader in this newly gathered community of believers.<sup>43</sup> To further prove this point, the second reference to the church (Matt 18:15-20) is teaching on church discipline. If a brother finds himself in sin and refuses to repent, then the brothers are to take the matter before the church. The only way this passage makes sense is if Matthew 18 is referencing the local congregation. There is no indication that Matthew 16 and Matthew 18 refer to different types of churches, one being “universal” while the other is “local.” The same word *ekklesia* is used and no new explanation is given for a newly defined word.

---

<sup>42</sup> Blomberg, *Matthew*, 215.

<sup>43</sup> Davis Allison and Dale Allison, Jr., *Matthew 8-18*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 614. Allison and Allison see this promise of building his church as a real, visible, building process in the same tone as Mark 1:17 where Christ says “come follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.”



When speaking about the church, the term “invisible church” is often used, but it is not a term found in the New Testament and probably does a disservice to the teaching on the church. It might appear to some that the local church is a mere reflection of a greater universal church reality; however, such a mindset, not justified in Scripture, has weakened the idea of the exclusive nature of the local church. Being part of an “invisible” church without ties to the local assembly is something never mirrored or contemplated in the New Testament. The church is never and can never be “invisible.” Each individual church is the church, complete in every way, in that locality. Perhaps this is well-described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:1 and 2 Corinthians 1:1 where he says, “The church of God which is at Corinth.”<sup>44</sup>

The term “universal” church is also commonly used and can easily be promoted as more important than the “local” church.<sup>45</sup> It is important that the “universal” church not be viewed as the sum of all individual churches and somehow eclipse the local visible church into a “greater” universal church. Each individual local church is a representation of the church as a whole, and thus lives in light of the whole. Millard Erickson says it well: “The church is not a sum or composite of the individual local groups. Instead, the whole is found in each place.”<sup>46</sup> The biblical term “body of Christ,” used to describe the totality of the bride of Christ, is an accurate picture of this “universal” church. The bride of Christ (Eph 5:32-33), which also is used in reference to Israel (Isa 54:5-6; Jer 3:20; 31:32), is in essence a soteriological and not an ecclesiological term. Soteriologically, the

---

<sup>44</sup> Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*, 17-18.

<sup>45</sup> Another definition that encompasses the *universal* church is given by Henry Barrow in 1589: This church as it is universally understood, containeth in it all the elect of God that have been, are, or shall be. But being considered more particularly, as it is seen in this present world, it consisteth of a company and fellowship of faithful and holy people gathered together in the name of Christ Jesus . . . being peaceably and quietly governed by his officers and laws, keeping the unity of faith in the bond of peace and love unfeigned” (Henry Barrow, “A True Description of the Visible Church,” quoted in Iain Murray, ed., *The Reformation of the Church: A Collection of Reformed and Puritan Documents on Church Issues* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965], 196)

<sup>46</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 3:1033.

church is all of the redeemed, whereas ecclesiology, it is the visible gathering of believers.

The Bible speaks overwhelmingly of the local, visible church and yet, the picture of the “universal” church has captivated many at the expense of the local gathering.<sup>47</sup> The most common passages put forth to emphasize the “universal” church are found in Ephesians. It is beyond the scope of this project to examine every biblical passage that references the church and see which ones can be attributed to the local assembly and which ones reference the larger body of Christ; however, the primary verses referencing the “universal church” are found in Ephesians where Paul says the “Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promises in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (3:6). Paul’s argument is that both Jews and Gentiles alike should worship together, as equals in Christ and part of the same local congregation. Paul expects this broad understanding of the bride of Christ to be played out in the local body of believers.<sup>48</sup> Ephesians also references how Christ “loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). This passage applies to the local congregation as well as to the entire Church.<sup>49</sup> The picture of a broader church which encompasses all the redeemed cannot be understood without a firm understanding of what it means on a visible level. The “universal” church is to be viewed and understood through the lens of the local church. Dargan uses the term specific, collective, and generic when referring to how the word “church” is used.<sup>50</sup> Larger or generic understandings are but a magnified view of the more

---

<sup>47</sup> Niehaus stresses that focusing on the universal church “has little value in understanding the significance of the local body of believers.” Niehaus, *The Common Grace Covenants*, 27.

<sup>48</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians Verse by Verse* (Oak Harbor, WA: Lexham, 2017), 60.

<sup>49</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Devoted to God’s Church: Core Values for Christian Fellowship* (East Peoria, IL: Versa, 2020), x.

<sup>50</sup> Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 45. Dargan walks through Scripture to illustrate the differences between references to a specific church, churches within a certain region, or the church at large.

specific or observable view. A focus on the “universal” church would be incomplete and deficient without the local church in view. A visible ministry is tied to a visible church!

### **The Perfect Design for an Imperfect Church**

The very ongoing existence of the church today is a tribute to the fulfillment of this promise made to Peter. Missions finds its source of hope and strength in this same promise that God will continue to grow His church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. As Christ was battered, bruised, and persecuted, so will His church be, but church history will be one of victory and not of defeat. The church has been perfectly equipped and has the power to fulfill its missional mandate. Christ’s promise to Peter, thankfully, was conditional upon God’s faithfulness, and not man’s. The “God needs me” mentality, which lead some to believe that if man is disobedient, then God’s plan would be frustrated, is seriously flawed. Carolyn Weatherford calls this the “God does His part and man does his part” approach.<sup>51</sup> God has chosen to use individuals to fulfill His purposes, but He depends on no “one” individual’s fidelity. So it is with the church, that though God has designed and equipped the church to answer the call of the Great Commission, He depends on no “one” church. God is in no way limited by human deficiencies, whether individual or congregational. He does however call on the church, as He does every believer, to obedience by joining Him in carrying the good news of the gospel to the uttermost.<sup>52</sup>

Believers should be deeply committed to God’s perfect plan for an imperfect church. It should come as no surprise that something divinely ordained should face human

---

<sup>51</sup> Carolyn Weatherford, *God Has Done His Part: Bible Teachings on Support of Missions* (Nashville: Convention, 1977). Weatherford was known for her passion for missions and served as the executive director of the Woman’s Missionary Union from 1974 to 1989. Her book was written to encourage people to get involved in missions, not to reflect on God’s sovereignty.

<sup>52</sup> Henry T. Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude V. King bring the reader’s attention to having a God-centered life and ministry where the focus is God’s plans, purposes, and ways. The crux of their argument is that believers are invited to discover and join God in what He is doing. Missions is about discovering what God is doing and joining Him in His plan. Henry T. Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 90-93.

resistance. There is, of course, hostility from those who do not claim to know Him who see the church as a mere self-serving human contraption. Coming from believers, the resistance comes in more subtle forms. First, resistance comes in the form of pragmatism which is defined by William James as “the attitude of looking away from the first things, principles, and supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, it is a reliance on what appears to work and be effective. Instead of trusting the divine appointment of the church and trusting it to produce its intended results, a premium is placed on outcome. Missions is often pragmatic in that instead of measuring success by faithfulness to Scripture, it measures success by the immediate response of non-believers.<sup>54</sup> The danger of a “pragmatic” approach is that it leads to various forms of subjective relativism.<sup>55</sup> It takes a basic “the end justifies the means” approach to put aside the local church in favor of something that appears to be less burdensome and more expedient. The church is built on a biblical foundation and once believers turn away from those basic principles and look instead toward outcome, what something produces, then that outcome becomes the primary motivator.

Second, resistance comes in the form of experientialism, which offers experience as the final court of appeal for what is determined to be good and true.<sup>56</sup> William James would argue that there is a dichotomy between on one hand the realm of organized religion with its set of dogmas, and on the other a personal belief based on one’s own religious experience.<sup>57</sup> Many believers fail to see the beauty of the church

---

<sup>53</sup> William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1907), 54-55.

<sup>54</sup> Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), xi.

<sup>55</sup> Avery Cardinal Dulles, “On Relativism,” *Nova et Vetera* 15, no. 3 (2017): 729-43. As a Catholic, Dulles defines relativism as a lack of absolutes and the ability to hold two opposing views as valid. He traces the origins of relativism to the agnosticism of Immanuel Kant.

<sup>56</sup> Norman, L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 58.

<sup>57</sup> Marziyeh Dastmard and Abbas Izadpanah, “The Relationship of Religion and Spirituality in the School of Thought of William James,” *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 6, no. 6 (December 2019): 730-38.

because their view of the body is tainted by their own experiences. It is not unusual in missions for experience to be used as a justification for methodology. Norman Geisler writes, “No religious experience as such is either understandable or justifiable apart from some truth framework independent or separate from the experience itself.”<sup>58</sup> As a believer, that “truth framework” is the Word of God. What it says about the church is the truth from which one must hang all church experiences.

Third, resistance comes in the form of individualism. James Plueddemann stresses the importance of recognizing American individualistic culture to understand how it shapes theology.<sup>59</sup> This is certainly true in missions where the values of individualism are personal achievement, fulfillment, independence, freedom of choice or personal responsibility. Other cultures, more collectivist in nature, value harmony and communal success.<sup>60</sup> An individualistic culture also shapes what a person expects from the church and explains why many leave the church disillusioned not feeling personally valued or fulfilled. Paul speaks of the individual dwelling of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 6:19, but he also speaks of the collective dwelling in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: “Do you not know that you (second person plural/collectively) are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”<sup>61</sup> Though individualism has many strengths, it can shadow the beauty of the church which finds its strength from a visible gathering of redeemed individuals together growing the kingdom. Sinclair Ferguson states that being a believer is not an individualistic activity but that “believing also involves belonging.”

---

<sup>58</sup> Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 70.

<sup>59</sup> James E. Plueddemann, *Teaching across Cultures: Contextualizing Education for Global Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 38-39. Plueddemann also points to the fact that those with more formal education systems are not comfortable with ambiguity, leading toward a more structured church environment.

<sup>60</sup> Plueddemann, *Teaching across Cultures*, 64-65.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas R Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018), 90-91.

Therefore, being a Christian, by definition, is belonging to the church and by inference to a particular church.<sup>62</sup>

Everything that is known about the church flows from the exclusive nature of God and His revelation to mankind. As believers come to understand and welcome this, their love for the local body, with all of its imperfections, grows as does the confidence that God will sovereignly fulfill His promises with respect to building His church. The Jehovah God, who so effortlessly and sovereignly created the world, will build His church for His purposes and glory. These truths lead the gathered church to seek missions that (1) focuses on faithfulness; (2) seeks first and foremost to glorify God; (3) has practices consistent with Scripture; and (4) relies on the power and promises of God to bring about success.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Ferguson, *Devoted to God's Church*, 1.

<sup>63</sup> David M. Doran, *For the Sake of His Name: Challenging a New Generation for World Missions* (Allen Park, MI: Student Global Impact, 2002), 61-65.

CHAPTER 3  
THE EXCLUSIVE ROLE OF THE CHURCH  
AS PILLAR OF TRUTH

God's exclusive revelation passed down from the prophets, to Christ, to the apostles, now finds itself entrusted to the church. This chapter demonstrates that the local church, as recipient of this deposit, is uniquely tasked with and designed to guard, protect, defend, and proclaim the truth entrusted to its care. As such, missional endeavors need to give special deference to the role of the church in theological matters with the understanding that the church is called to be the steward of truth, given the responsibility of guarding truth, and tasked with proclaiming truth to the unbelieving world.

The church is pictured by Paul as the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.<sup>1</sup> This would be consistent with the power and authority given to those first apostles (Matt 10:14-15),<sup>2</sup> as well as the announcement concerning Peter being a foundational piece of the early church (Matt 16:18-19). The apostolic teachings themselves derive their source from Jesus Christ, the cornerstone, who holds the entire structure together. Without the cornerstone, who brings unity, harmony, and symmetry, there is no building.<sup>3</sup> The depth and breadth of this foundation on which the church is built includes all revelation from Genesis to Revelation and encompasses every

---

<sup>1</sup> Eph 2:19-22 says, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

<sup>2</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 74.

<sup>3</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, Eerdmans Classic Biblical Commentaries Series (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 188. Bruce also points to 1 Cor 12:28 to demonstrate that apostles and prophets are foundational ministries of the church.

aspect of theological teaching from soteriology to ecclesiology, to missiology. This received deposit, recognized as the revelation of Jesus Christ, becomes authoritative for the apostles and is now upheld by the church.<sup>4</sup>

The church is not only the recipient of truth, but the recipient of the apostolic mission. The apostles formed the hinges of the divine mission which binds the vertical mission of sending the Son by the Father with the horizontal mission of the church at Pentecost. The church's apostolic foundation is seen in its ongoing apostolic<sup>5</sup> nature. These hinges, fixed upon the apostles and their deposit of faith, give an immediate mission of the church in the world.<sup>6</sup> The church is as instrumental to the spread of the gospel as the apostles were before Pentecost.<sup>7</sup> For the church to have a proper understanding of the scope of its mission, it needs to have a proper understanding of the scope of what has been entrusted to it.<sup>8</sup>

To understand what is expected of the gathering of believers, Scripture pictures the church as the household of God. This household, which Paul speaks of in Ephesians 2:19 is, according to Peter, made of living stones or disciples (1 Pet 2:5).<sup>9</sup> Paul takes it a step further in 1 Corinthians 3:9 by declaring believers to be, corporately, God's building.<sup>10</sup> Paul adopts this same imagery as he instructs the church at Ephesus, through Timothy, on

---

<sup>4</sup> Joseph H. Sherrad, *T. F. Torrance as Missional Theologian: The Ascended Christ and the Ministry of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2021), 135-36.

<sup>5</sup> The word *ἀπόστολος* is defined as "one who is sent on a mission or assignment." In a more general sense a "messenger, delegate," or fulfilling the work of a "gospel ambassador," or "envoy." Frederick William Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 50.

<sup>6</sup> Sherrad, *T. F. Torrance as Missional Theologian*, 138.

<sup>7</sup> Chuck Lawless points to the urgency of this task which is addressed by the church appointing leaders that will lead the flock in missions. Chuck Lawless and Adam W. Greenway, *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God's Mandate in Our Time* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 273.

<sup>8</sup> Sherrad, *T. F. Torrance as Missional Theologian*, 62.

<sup>9</sup> First Pet 2:5 says, "You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house."

<sup>10</sup> First Cor 3:9 reads, "For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building."



how it ought to behave within the “household” knowing that it is the “church of the living God”: “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim 3:14-15).

Paul is preparing the church for the post-apostolic period which will see the emergence of local congregations led by elders and served by deacons. The church is pictured here as a “household,” a “pillar,” and a “buttress.” Apostolic leadership will be replaced by elders who will be tasked with managing the household of God. Several elder requirements focus on the ability to manage one’s own household, for it is inconceivable that a person who cannot manage his own house can adequately take on the greater responsibility of managing the household of God.<sup>11</sup> How the church is to conduct itself is fundamental to its task of being a pillar and buttress of truth. In using the term “pillar,” which can be understood as foundational,<sup>12</sup> Paul points to the need of qualified elders and deacons whose duties will directly point toward the church’s primary role as pillar of truth. Donald Guthrie goes on to say that given the fact that there is also no article in front of “pillar” or “foundation” in 1 Timothy 3, this means one can reasonably conclude that the text indicates that each church, individually, stands as a pillar, as the strength, and as the support of truth.<sup>13</sup> The term “buttress” reinforces an understanding of the church as a custodian of spiritual truth.<sup>14</sup> What an honor attributed to the church. John Calvin described

---

<sup>11</sup> First Tim 3:2-5 says, “Therefore an overseer . . . must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?”

<sup>12</sup> Martin Dibelius et al., *The Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Helmut Koester (Philadelphia: 1517 Media, 1972), 60-63.

<sup>13</sup> Donald Guthrie says that other agencies are also used equally by God in the preservation of the gospel. This conclusion is arbitrary and seems more designed to accommodate present realities. He goes as far as saying agencies are “equally used” by God, which is egregious considering the case he just made for the church. Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 79-80.

<sup>14</sup> ἐδραίωμα: “that which has reinforcing power,” describes the act of stabilizing or settling something firmly. Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 108.

it well when he said, “It is not ordinary dignity that is ascribed to the church when it is called the pillar and ground of the truth. For what higher terms could he have used to describe it?”<sup>15</sup>

It is worth observing that, as R Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell explain, the purpose for Paul to address behavior within the house of God is evangelistic in nature. The context for instruction regarding the household of God is to present that which is “good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:3-4). This truth, this Christ, this one mediator (1 Tim 2:5) who gave himself as a ransom, is what Paul has in mind when he gives instruction to the church on how to behave so that it can be a “teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth” (1 Tim 2:7).

God is the source of truth, not the church, but wherever and whenever the church is faithful to God’s Word, it is the foundation and the pillar of God’s truth in this world.<sup>16</sup> The missional thrust of the church will be as deep and wide as the truth it carries. Ross Hastings says the church is centrifugal, or deep, because it is anchored in solid theology and yet it is centripetal, or wide, because it extends its reach to all nations.<sup>17</sup> The church is concerned with world-missions for its very foundation rests upon it.

### **Truth Entrusted to the Church**

Understanding the place of the church in the continuum of revelation is a prerequisite to understanding what is expected of the church. One sees the passing of the

---

<sup>15</sup> R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1-2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 83.

<sup>16</sup> Hughes and Chapell, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 84-85.

<sup>17</sup> Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 12-13.

torch in the words of Paul to Timothy: “O Timothy, guard the deposit<sup>18</sup> entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge for by professing it some have swerved from the faith” (1 Tim 6:20-21). In Paul’s second and final letter to Timothy one sees this charge repeated: “Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, *guard* the good deposit *entrusted* to you” (2 Tim 1:13-14). Paul gives the same admonishment to Titus in Titus 1:9-14. Titus is told to “hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught . . . and also rebuke those who contradict it.” Titus is told to take ownership and responsibility for this deposit that was passed on to him. He is told to protect it and in doing so, rebuke error. Titus acknowledges the source of this faith as a gift from God “delivered” to man. One also sees Jude call on believers to fight for the faith: “Appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). As the church grows in its understanding of the truth that has been delivered to it, it can accurately grasp what it is expected to do.<sup>19</sup>

These appeals by Paul and Jude are not individualistic but “churchocentric”<sup>20</sup> in nature. The church as a visible gathering has been entrusted with the Word and given the charge to protect and defend it. This appeal is to every local household of believers (1 Tim 2:8)<sup>21</sup> as they gather to worship in truth. The wealth of what they have received is

---

<sup>18</sup> William Barclay defines the word “deposit” as meaning to entrust a possession to another, depositing it to him and this person is now called to protect it. William B. Barclay, *1 & 2 Timothy*, An EP Study Commentary (Faverdale North, UK: Evangelical, 2005), 210-11.

<sup>19</sup> Walter McGilvray points to the vital nature of preserving purity of the faith, that the glory of God is connected to preserving truth, and that it is through truth that sinners are converted to God. Walter McGilvray, *Expository Lectures on the Epistle of Jude (1845)* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2008), 33-35.

<sup>20</sup> Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 2008). As it pertains to making disciples, Hull uses the term *churchocentric* to explain how the church went from a Christ model (Christocentric) to a church model (Churchocentric) where disciples that could reach the entire world for Christ were developed within the congregation.

<sup>21</sup> First Tim 2: 7-8 says, “For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.” “Every” points to “everyone” as individual entities as recipients of truth who now worship in truth.

what Jude desires to see multiplied in believers: mercy, peace, and love (Jude 1–2). The scope of what they have received is found in these words “once and for all” (Jude 3), which speak to the complete revelation in their trust. This “faith” they are called to defend encompasses the sum of those things they are called to believe and live by. Attempts to add or remove from what has been given “once and for all” should be vehemently rejected. These attacks may be as obvious as the heretical Book of Mormons and the claims of Jehovah’s Witnesses, or more subtle, coming from liberal theologians attempting to replace the inerrancy of Scripture with reason, humanism, or psychology. What the church has received is inspired, inerrant, complete, sufficient, and must be treated as such. An attack on the truth is ultimately an attack on the church.

Sherrad claims the very nature of the church is shaped and defined by how it identifies and relates to the gospel and to the deposit of faith.<sup>22</sup> John Stott calls on the church to heed the message of Paul to Timothy out of fear that believers are “relaxing their grasp of the gospel, fumbling it, in danger of letting it drop from their hands altogether.”<sup>23</sup> The scriptural admonition of being a steward of truth is a task and struggle that the churches are to treasure above all else, not only for themselves but for the generations to follow.<sup>24</sup> The beauty of which, as Tim Challies writes, is unfolded in God’s unique design for the church to accomplish that purpose.<sup>25</sup>

Much theological erring in missions is the result of the church entrusting the defense of the gospel to the care of “professionals.” While recognizing some organizations are well equipped to handle administrative tasks, the body of believers cannot outsource

---

<sup>22</sup> Sherrad, *T. F. Torrance as Missional Theologian*, 152.

<sup>23</sup> John Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1973), 22.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, “The Deposit of Faith,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36, no. 1 (1983): 2-3.

<sup>25</sup> Tim Challies, *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 33.

that which God has divinely equipped and mandated them to do.<sup>26</sup> Missionaries who carry out the missional mandate need to have a full appreciation as to the unique safeguards which the church provides in matters of truth, which include the congregation itself, appointed elders, church ordinances, and church discipline.

### **Preserved by the Congregation**

Regardless of which form of government a local congregation has adopted, the body is called to be participant in the preservation of truth. The church, as a visible gathering of believers, is united in truth and called to protect and defend such truth corporately. There is an individual responsibility, but the instruction given in the New Testament is a corporate calling to guard the faith as one. Joseph Sherrad leaves no ambiguity by saying “only” the church corporately can answer that call faithfully.<sup>27</sup>

This congregational view is seen in Paul as he admonishes the “brothers” to fulfill their obligation to “stand firm and hold to the traditions, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 2:15). He instructs these same brothers again in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 to “keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.” Paul tells the Galatian believers in chapter 1:6-9 to separate themselves from anyone who “is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one received.” To the Corinthian believers, the apostle admonishes them not to be easily deceived and led astray.<sup>28</sup> The author of Hebrews is instructing the believers as a group to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering” (10:23). So, while letters have

---

<sup>26</sup> Mark Dever describes how the congregation as a whole plays an integral part in appointing qualified elders, testing the spirits, and exercise ordinances, which in essence serves to define what should be the body and who should be a part of it. Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 44.

<sup>27</sup> Sherrad, *T. F. Torrance as Missional Theologian*, 139-41.

<sup>28</sup> Second Cor 11: 3-4 reads, “But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.”

individual authors and often specific recipients, the message to the body is unmistakable: guard the truth as one.

Much of the teaching concerning the church's role in guarding the truth is centered around the church in Ephesus. The nature of the church as following in the footsteps of Christ and the apostles is explained in Ephesians 2:19-20. Soon thereafter in Acts 20:28-29 they are warned to be alert, knowing that "fierce wolves" would come teaching lies. Now, five years later, these predictions come true, and Paul dedicates two letters to Timothy (1 and 2 Tim) on how the church is the pillar of truth and how they are called to guard and protect it. Paul expects the visible members of the body to lift-up truth.<sup>29</sup> Chuck Lawless describes this as theology that walks, weeps, and bleeds.<sup>30</sup> Twice in this first chapter (1:5, 18) the body is warned to identify and stay away from "certain persons" who are seemingly in the church and yet wander from sound doctrine and in doing so prove to be unfaithful stewards of truth.<sup>31</sup> Paul wants Timothy and the church at Ephesus to "fight the good fight" (1:18). This military term, describing a soldier going to war, is placed upon the men and the women of Ephesus as they join the spiritual battle for truth over error. Ephesian church is mentioned one last time in Revelation 2:1-2 where it is commended for "how you cannot bear with those who are evil but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not and found them to be false." It would seem that protecting the body from error is one lesson they learned well.

### **Preserved by the Elders**

How is the congregation to protect themselves from false teachers? Paul answers that question by showing the church how they are to choose and establish overseers.

---

<sup>29</sup> Aida Besancon Spencer, *1 Timothy*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 131.

<sup>30</sup> "Theology doesn't just think. Theology walks. Theology weeps. Theology bleeds." Lawless and Greenway, *The Great Commission Resurgence*, 120.

<sup>31</sup> Spencer defines this "vain discussion" (1 Tim 1:6) as "talk devoid of truth" because they lead towards error. Spencer, *1 Timothy*, 28.

Scripture gives a lot of freedom on how to structure a church. Particularly in missions, one must be cautious not to impose cultural norms and expectations; however, a basic need for overseers is common to all. J. B. Lightfoot points to what he calls a universal law which demands structure: “It must be evident that no society of men could hold together without officers, without rules, without institutions of any kind; and the Church of Christ is not exempt from this universal law.”<sup>32</sup>

If the church is going to fulfill its purpose and advance truth, then it will need godly overseers to lead in that task. Paul, having affirmed the church as a pillar of truth, focuses on the competency of elders who will shepherd the flock and lead the congregation in truth. The list of qualifications is indicative of the task they will be expected to fulfill. Clearly these are not a “preferred” or “recommended” but a “must” (1 Tim 3:4-5) list. Of interest while looking at the church’s role in preserving truth is the elder’s ability to manage his household. Paul explains that it would be inconceivable that someone who could not manage his own household well would be expected to take care of God’s church. As Thabiti Anyabwile points out, this is not something he is to learn on the job, but a prerequisite for the job.<sup>33</sup> These qualifications should come as a warning to those who are so dedicated to ministry that they lose their families in the process. The history of missions is full of families who have shipwrecked. The term “manage” may give the idea of administrative duties; however, the term is found in Luke 10:34-35 in reference to the Good Samaritan and his care for the man who fell among robbers. Managing a household carries the idea of oversight and nurturing. To understand what is meant by “manage well,” Paul adds the qualifier “with all dignity,” which is reference to his relationship to his children. This dignity goes both ways as on one hand the elder is dignified in his raising

---

<sup>32</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* (New York: MacMillan, 1903), 181.

<sup>33</sup> Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 68-69.

of his children, and they in turn show respect and obedience.<sup>34</sup> This should be observable and affirmed by the body if one is to be affirmed as an elder. Paul pictures this father and child relationship as one where care is given to each individual child to be encouraged to walk in a manner worthy of God (1 Thess 2:11-12).

A second key element is being able to teach truth. Not all elders will have teaching as their primary ministry, but all must be able to handle the Word. Charles Boothe will point to the need to be not just “a mere apprentice in the truth, but a master; otherwise, it will be the blind leading the blind.”<sup>35</sup> One would reasonably expect this to entail communicating, explaining, transmitting, and defending the truth. Elders may not be required to have formal theological training; however, training is a necessity. Paul speaks of his training “at the feet of Gamaliel” (Acts 22:3), and Paul charges these teachers that are to transmit the truth to others (2 Tim 2:2) to be diligent in studying the Word (2 Tim 2:15). In Acts 20, he reminds these same Ephesian elders to take special care of the flock. A congregation will affirm them as elders, but they should not forget that the Spirit of God has charged them with this task (Acts 20:28). Serving as an elder is a divine appointment.<sup>36</sup> As such, the congregation doing the affirming should make sure the person is qualified and the one who desires the office should prepare himself for the task.

A church that is sending a missionary who they anticipate serving as an elder (preaching, baptizing, shepherding) should expect such a person to meet the qualifications of a biblical elder. This missionary will in turn seek to invest in men who themselves will be able to fill the biblical role of a pastor/elder. This can be challenging as “qualified”

---

<sup>34</sup> These qualifications apply to the elder and the children still under his household.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Octavius Boothe, *Plain Theology for Plain People* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017), 100.

<sup>36</sup> Gregg Allison points to the divine interaction between the divine and human agencies for the purpose of maturing and growing the church. Gregg R. Allison, “Article IX,” in *The Church Confessing the Faith, The Living Legacy of Southern Seminary’s Abstract of Principles*, ed. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2016), 93.



men are often hard to come by. Mark Dever says to keep praying, keep discipling, be patient, and make the standard biblical. Missionaries can fail to see qualified men right before their eyes because they hold an inadequate expectation of what an elder should be.<sup>37</sup> Success in the ability to see a mission church plant grow in truth and train faithful men to do the same begins with sending men who are qualified elders themselves. These leaders, as Calvin would attest, need to be able to “advance the kingdom of Christ and maintain purity of doctrine.”<sup>38</sup> If the work being built is of God, then ministers can trust a sovereign God to provide what is needed to fulfill the task. Otherwise, the work is the fruit of man’s efforts alone. It would be hard to imagine under what circumstances it would be advisable to send someone to the mission field with church planting expectations who had not been trained, not met the qualifications of an elder, or without a body of believers that would affirm the calling (Acts 20:17-21, 28-32, 35-38). Elders cannot function without some level of authority entrusted to them by the local church. Regardless of one’s ecclesiastical model, this puts the local church at the heart of missional work.

Beyond the teaching, preserving, and transmission of truth, elders must perform two tasks to preserve truth and keep error out of the body: administer the ordinances of the church and exercise church discipline.

### **Preserved by the Church Ordinances**

One of the tasks of qualified elders is to oversee and administer two church ordinances which together are designed to unify the body around the truth of the gospel. The first, baptism, a metaphor picturing those who have joined Christ in His death and

---

<sup>37</sup> Dever answers the question as to what do to when it seems there are no qualified men to train. He challenges the pastor/missionary to first examine if expected standards are beyond the biblical mandate. He then helps establish steps to identify an elder. Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 137.

<sup>38</sup> John Calvin, “Isaiah 49:1-26,” accessed August 14, 2021, <https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom16/calcom16.ii.i.html>.

resurrection,<sup>39</sup> purposes to recognize into the fellowship those who share a common faith (1 Tim 2:4). Those who are in Christ are called to live their lives as members of the body of Christ. Robert Saucy points out that one cannot join the head, which is Christ, without being a part of the visible body, given that baptism is outward evidence of an inner spiritual reality.<sup>40</sup> Dever calls baptism “the door which guards the entrance to the church.”<sup>41</sup> Elders are the keepers of that door to ensure that those who wish to enter the fold and identify with the body do so on solid biblical grounds. In doing so they protect the sheep, proclaim the truth, and preserve the church. Leeman goes on to make an important clarifying point: “the church does not have the authority to make a Christian, only to declare who is one.”<sup>42</sup>

As missionaries go and proclaim the gospel, God will call a people for His name (Acts 15:14). As He does, these new believers, as they are baptized, are called to gather and grow together. What will start out as a humble unstructured informal gathering will grow, out of necessity, into a more formal, structured environment. It is vital in those early foundational stages that a qualified missionary be able to discern sheep from wolves,<sup>43</sup> Christ-followers from the self-deceived, and guard the flock if a church plant is to perennialize.

This first ordinance helps determine those who should enter the gathering while the second ordinance of the Lord’s Supper reminds believers of the common truth and

---

<sup>39</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), 168. Baptism reflects a gathering of those who have crucified the old Adam to now walk in newness of life.

<sup>40</sup> Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 195-96.

<sup>41</sup> Dever and Alexander, *The Deliberate Church*, 105.

<sup>42</sup> Jonathan Leeman, *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus*, 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 25-26.

<sup>43</sup> Paul tells the elders at Ephesus to guard the flock because after his departure “fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:28-29). Alexander Strauch speaks to how elders need to be on the lookout for wolves, how to identify them, and how to guard the flock. Alexander Strauch, *Acts 20: Fierce Wolves Are Coming, Guard the Flock; A Study of Paul’s Final Charge to the Ephesian Elders* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth, 2021), 141-57.

hope which unites them. The purpose of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11) is described as an opportunity for self-examination, confession, and realigning one's life with the truth of the Word. While the ordinance of baptism is the gate into the church, the Lord's Supper is designed to keep believers in line with and united in the truth. According to Dever, these two ordinances speak to an individual's spiritual state as well as the collective hope of an entire congregation.<sup>44</sup> Authors like Anderson,<sup>45</sup> Hastings<sup>46</sup> and McKinion<sup>47</sup> agree with Dever that baptism and the Lord's Supper put the local church at the center of the Great Commission with a command to go and baptize!

### **Preserved by the Exercise of Church Discipline**

While baptism admits people of like faith into the fellowship and the Lord's Supper reminds people of the truth that unites them in Christ, church discipline removes from the gathering unrepentant souls who violate the truth in words or deeds. A crucial aspect of eldering is knowing how to protect and preserve the household of faith. Error comes in two ways: false teaching contrary to that which was passed down from the apostles to the church once and for all; and false living—when one asserts to be a disciple of Christ but whose life conveys just the opposite. Such a person may claim to know Him, but “they do not live for Him and his works repudiate Christ.”<sup>48</sup> This is where the

---

<sup>44</sup> Dever, *The Church*, 21-27.

<sup>45</sup> Stanley Anderson says, “Baptism is an integral part of the Great Commission as is evangelism or teaching.” Stanley Edwin Anderson, *Your Baptism Is Important* (Little Rock, AR: Seminary Press, 1958), 180.

<sup>46</sup> Hastings indicates that “baptism and the Lord's Supper are missional in nature because they define the church.” Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church*, 201.

<sup>47</sup> Steven McKinion speaks to the fact that “the Lord's Supper serves the ongoing development of the believing making it indispensable to the GC.” Steven A. McKinion, *Life and Practice in the Early Church: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>48</sup> Leeman, *Church Discipline*, 19-21. Leeman would affirm that the backdrop to church discipline is the expectation that the church would behave differently from the world. He points to five reasons for church discipline: to expose, to warn, to save, to protect, and to present a good witness for Jesus Christ.

difficult and vital task of church discipline comes into play, and yet, according to a LifeWay survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors, 49 percent of evangelical pastors and 67 percent of mainline pastors have never witnessed church discipline!<sup>49</sup> Paul warned the church at Ephesus that “fierce wolves” (Acts 20:29) would infiltrate the congregation. He gives instruction to Timothy on how to establish elders who can shepherd, guard, and protect the flock from wolves. Equally important to knowing who to include is knowing who to exclude from the body.<sup>50</sup> R. Albert Mohler, Jr., speaks to the fact that church discipline can only be local. Christ delegated his divine authority to the church<sup>51</sup> to remove unrepentant members from the body for the express goal of restoration to the same body.<sup>52</sup> Church discipline is not something anyone rejoices in, but the church is uniquely designed to exercise church discipline to preserve truth and purity the body from those who would speak lies or live a lie by the way they conduct themselves.<sup>53</sup> Failing to exercise church discipline, according to Leeman, puts the entire church at risk.<sup>54</sup>

It is interesting to note that the second mention of the church in the New Testament, Matthew 18:17, is the first primary text on church discipline. This is a prophetic text in that the church was not formed completely until the arrival of the church at Pentecost; yet, clear instruction is given on how to remove someone from the gathering

---

<sup>49</sup> Bob Smietana, “Church Discipline Focus of New Survey,” *Baptist Press*, April 5, 2018, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/church-discipline-focus-of-new-survey/>.

<sup>50</sup> Spencer, *1 Timothy*, 61.

<sup>51</sup> Albert R. Mohler, Jr., ed., *Confessing the Faith: The Living Legacy of Southern Seminary’s Abstract of Principles* (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2016), 98.

<sup>52</sup> Allison, “Article IX,” 98.

<sup>53</sup> Gregory A. Wills, “A Historical Analysis of Church Discipline,” in *Those Who Must Give an Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline*, ed. John S. Hammett and Benjamin L. Merkle (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 148. Wills reminds the believer that though church discipline is painful, it is more important to not let the love of man trump the love of truth. Though church discipline is an act of love toward a wayward sinner, it is first and foremost an act of love for the truth that the church is called to guard.

<sup>54</sup> Leeman, *Church Discipline*, 21.

through the exercise of church discipline. Churches have different views on what constitutes a member but suffice it to say that for someone to be removed from fellowship, he/she was admitted into fellowship at some point—formally or informally (see also Gal 6:1; Eph 5:11; Titus 3:10; 2 Thess 3:14-15). A believer is part of the church body when that body affirms an individual’s profession of faith and baptism, and the body commits to provide oversight and discipleship. That individual, in turn, submits to the authority of the body and its elders. This fellowship, where believers break bread together, is precious and must be protected.<sup>55</sup> When someone openly and unrepentantly sins against God, those gathered, through their elders, need to take a stand to preserve standards of holiness and purity.<sup>56</sup>

If false teaching and false living is to be addressed, then it will be through the means of formal and formative discipline. Formal discipline is where an unrepentant professing believer is brought before the church, whereas formative discipline is broader in scope. Dever describes preaching, teaching, discipling, and the gathering for corporate worship as part of formative discipline,<sup>57</sup> all of which shape the way one thinks, corrects wrong thinking, and addresses wrong actions along the way. Discipline consequently shapes the way a church grows, which comes from rebuke and correction. This formative discipline is contrasted with formal, corrective discipline that requires specific action to remove someone from fellowship. Whether it be formative or corrective discipline, the local church is designed and well suited for both.

---

<sup>55</sup> Leeman says that this is on one hand an act of love toward a wayward individual; it is also an act of love toward the weaker sheep that need to be protected. Leeman, *Church Discipline*, 14.

<sup>56</sup> Scot McKnight points to baptism where one is recognized as having gone from darkness unto light, from dead to alive in Christ. Discipline is enacted towards that one who no longer is walking in the light. Scot McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014), 104-5.

<sup>57</sup> Dever and Alexander describe an intermediate step of corrective discipline as prohibiting participating in the Lord’s Supper. Dever and Alexander, *The Deliberate Church*, 67-68.

How vital is this in terms of missional work? Jeremy Kimble says this question of membership, who belongs or who needs to be excluded, is not culturally bound. There will always be a process by which some are part of the fellowship and others are excluded because the task of the Great Commission is to make distinct people from the world. The tools to accomplish that are embedded in what constitutes membership, the authority to guard the gospel, affirming professions of faith, making disciples, teaching truth, and exposing error. This will be true of any church around the world.<sup>58</sup> It should be of no surprise that missionary works that are detached from the local church are prone to wander from truth.

### **Preserving from Drifting**

Observing missional works drift away from truth is far too common. Missions not anchored in the Word might provide short-term comfort but no long-term hope; there might be short-term change but no long-term transformation. Missions not anchored in truth will not produce spiritual fruit. Several authors sound the alarm and speak to the issue by pointing to ministries that were once faithful to the Word of God but now find themselves demoting truth at the expense of pragmatism, experientialism, or relativism. Few would suggest that Christian ministries willfully or even knowingly drift from the core tenants of theology that once were foundational and even at the core of their existence. Peter Greer does an excellent job of giving the history of Christian organizations that have drifted so far that they can no longer be considered Christian, or worse, they become apostate.<sup>59</sup> David Doran provides an in-depth study of the history of the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM). Of particular interest to his study is how they went from sending thousands of missionaries to the ends of the earth to quickly fading out of existence. He

---

<sup>58</sup> Jeremy M. Kimble, *40 Questions about Church Membership and Discipline* (Chicago: Kregel, 2017), 5.

<sup>59</sup> Peter Greer and Chris Horst trace the history of organizations like the YMCA, Harvard, and Yale. Peter Greer and Chris Horst, *Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2014), 15.

points to a movement that lost its theological bearings and drifted toward adopting a pragmatic agenda; a shift of focus toward social gospel, to adopting ecumenism.<sup>60</sup> Lawless and Greenway specifically studied the Great Commission heritage of the Southern Baptist Convention. Between 1920 and the 1960s they observe that the Southern Baptist Convention had become progressively more pragmatic in their approach to missions. They divorced missions and evangelism from sound doctrine and in doing so opened the door to the spread of progressive theology. In their view, a convention that was united around certain theological truths began developing loyalty based on denominational lines.<sup>61</sup> J. H. Bavinck makes some of the same observations in his systematic study entitled the “Science of Missions” where he observes that there is a great temptation to water down the gospel to make it culturally relevant.<sup>62</sup>

**Drifting toward poor theology.** Amazing as it might seem today, mission organizations began seeing theology as separate from missions or even more problematic and began seeing theology as impeding the progress of missions. Statements like “theology divides; service unites,”<sup>63</sup> or “the focus of the convention was missions, not theology,”<sup>64</sup> testify to that. However, as an instrument in the hands of God, of primary importance is what man believes about God or who man is in relation to God. Missions is the work of God, not of man; therefore, what one believes about God is mission critical. Theology

---

<sup>60</sup> David M. Doran, Pearson Johnson, and Benjamin Eckman, *For the Sake of His Name: Challenging a New Generation for World Missions* (Allen Park, MI: Student Global Impact, 2002), 35-39.

<sup>61</sup> Lawless and Greenway, *The Great Commission Resurgence*, 58-59.

<sup>62</sup> J. H. Bavinck points to the need to run to God’s Word to understand the condition of the human heart and why it responds the way it does to truth, not culture. J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1960), 284-85.

<sup>63</sup> Clowney speaks to the early motto of the Life and Work conference of 1925 in Stockholm which eventually fed into the World Council of Churches. The motto was “Theology divides; service unites.” There was a big push for unity as reflected in the 1927 Lausanne conference with the theme of “God wills unity.” Clowney, *The Church*, 18.

<sup>64</sup> Lawless and Greenway, *The Great Commission Resurgence*, 61. Lawless and Greenway reference Cecil Sherman, a prominent figure in the SBC and particularly the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

puts God's truth at the center of missions and attempts to put anything else will only be at the detriment of truth. As he examines history and missional strategies, Bavinck makes the point that theology takes priority because it determines the "theological character of the science of missions and directs us back to God's Word."<sup>65</sup> Efforts to advance missions, as meritorious as they might be, apart from sound theology will lack the power of the gospel to bear needed fruit and lead to error. In Lawless and Greenway's observation, as the SBC grew, the importance of theological clarity weaned. By the 1960s there was a common commitment to cooperative missions more so than a commitment to sound doctrine. The Great Commission remained at the heart of SBC, but missions, theology, and ecclesiology were studied as separate cognates instead of being interdependent. Unfortunately for many, theology became a distraction from missions rather than the very foundation of that work.<sup>66</sup>

**Drifting toward poor priorities.** Ministries in their genesis are often eager to fulfill the Great Commission and their zeal in doing so is commendable. As these organizations drift away from the authority of a local church, different priorities tend to emerge that are a result of a desire to grow and be successful. The problem comes when numbers, results, and expansion become unintentional priorities. This is certainly not to impugn the character or intention of paramissional organizations; however, ministries independent from the church have an increased pressure to show progress and demonstrate how invested funds are fruitful in order to solicit more funds. No organization wants to send out newsletters without showing signs of growth. No missionary wants to send out prayer letters without demonstrating that supporting their ministry is a worthy investment. These types of pressures push ministries toward what brings quick results, which is not

---

<sup>65</sup> Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, 284. Bavinck reminds the reader that God is the object of missions because He alone is great. While man will face many setbacks, be regularly discouraged, erects his own barriers to missions, and is ultimately powerless—God from age to age will continue His glorious work. Man is called to join in the truth of His work.

<sup>66</sup> Lawless and Greenway, *The Great Commission Resurgence*, 61.



always compatible with lasting impact. Missional success is measured by fidelity to the truth and faithfulness to the mission of proclaiming the gospel and making disciples.

According to Doran, Johnson, and Eckman, one of the biggest failures of SVM was a desire from its founders to grow a movement wide.<sup>67</sup> It is easy to understand how in the early stages of a ministry while there is much excitement, things are new, and it appears to bear fruit, the desire would be to strike the iron while the iron is hot; however, for the church to go wide, it must first go deep and find its roots in the truth of God's Word, and that takes time. Some ministries go wide quickly only to wither at the vine. The truth is what provides the groundwork for long-term efficacy, and the local church is an obligatory means toward that end. Hastings describes missionary work in terms of centrifugal and centripetal. It must first be centrifugal in that it has deep roots in ecclesiology and then in turn centripetal in that it goes wide and makes disciples of all nations.<sup>68</sup> The beauty of the church is that it is designed to go deep and build the right foundation and pillars of truth that will build a healthy biblical ministry.

Other priorities immerge as paramissional organizations grow. Though many will purpose to support the local church, as the organization grows, self-preservation becomes an issue. Organizations which began with barebone budgets and small volunteer or self-supporting staff, now live from the missionaries they serve. Ten to 20 percent of missionary support goes toward support services which, though appropriate, create conflicting interest when it comes to maintaining transparency and purity within an organization. It is far too easy to handle things internally to avoid a bad name or out of fear of eroding donor confidence. It can prove to be difficult to discipline missionaries who are the financial livelihood of that same mission organization. Institutions are sensitive to the fact that donors want to see growth, results, and not sin exposed. These same issues could arrive in a church, but God has equipped the church to handle such

---

<sup>67</sup> Doran, Johnson, and Eckman, *For the Sake of His Name*, 30.

<sup>68</sup> Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church*, 12-13.

situations biblically to protect truth. Issues that relate to matters of sin need to be delegated to the One given the authority to do so. Handling issues in-house will protect an organization for a season but will be done to the detriment of the missionary family and ultimately to the detriment of the mission itself.

**Drifting toward poor ecclesiology.** Missional problems are the fruit of poor ecclesiology. It is not uncommon for missiologists to have conflicted emotions between trying to affirm the role of the church on one end, and a feeling that the church is holding back progress on the other. Few would be as visceral as Sam Metcalf who blames the church for selfishly hanging on to people who could be free to reach their full potential outside the church.<sup>69</sup> Such frustrations have led many to step outside the boundaries of the church and in doing so limit the church's influence or authority. The faulty premise on which this rationale is built presupposes the church is optional. When the church is viewed as necessary, solutions are found within the biblical framework with progress and success being measured by faithfulness to God's Word.

Poor ecclesiology is seen in the irony that many missionaries have distanced themselves from the church back home while purposing to establish churches in distant lands. Poor ecclesiology manifests itself in conflicted agendas on the field between what an agency desires to accomplish and the needs and desires of an established indigenous church. It is difficult for some organizations to relinquish control of ministries they have poured so many resources in and buildings purchased in the organization's name. Lawless and Greenway observe how, as the SBC grew, so did the bureaucratic expansion along with a culture of denominational professionals in the convention's agencies and

---

<sup>69</sup> Sam Metcalf, *Beyond the Local Church: How Apostolic Movements Can Change the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 66. The premise of his book is that the local church is not enough. He terms the idea of "reductionist ecclesiology" (10) as a rebuke to those who cannot think beyond the church. Metcalf says the church can barely reach past its own programs, let alone go cross culturally and transform cultures.

boards.<sup>70</sup> Loyalty naturally grows upon denominational and organizational lines at the expense of the local church here and abroad.

Poor ecclesiology back home undermines the ability to successfully establish autonomous, indigenous churches cross-culturally. A missionary who fails to understand and establish the centrality of the local church in his own life finds himself hard-pressed to know how to define the role of the local church on the mission field, particularly as that growing church matures and seeks to fulfil the GC itself. A missionary who succeeds in establishing a solid ecclesiology will be key to establishing healthy churches on the field which will stand the test of time and become pillars of truth in their own right.

**Drifting toward poor methodology.** Theology and methods go hand in hand in that one can and will impact the other. One’s biblical understanding of Calvinism<sup>71</sup> or Arminian theology<sup>72</sup> will impact evangelistic methodologies. One’s understanding of a woman’s biblical role in ministry will impact who is trained and considered qualified to shepherd a flock. One’s biblical understanding of the local church will determine how believers are gathered and organized into a local congregation. Volf describes it this way: “All major methodological decisions have implications for the whole of the theological

---

<sup>70</sup> Lawless and Greenway, *The Great Commission Resurgence*, 59.

<sup>71</sup> Gregg R. Allison explains, “Calvinism is the doctrinal tradition that originated with John Calvin (1509-64) and significantly influences Reformed theology. His doctrines of sin and salvation underscored total depravity and total inability, divine sovereignty, predestination, union with Christ, justification, and perseverance of Christ.” Gregg R. Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 25.

<sup>72</sup> Allison writes,

The Protestant tradition that originated with Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) and whose churches include Methodist, (many) Baptist, and Nazarene. In part a reaction to Calvinism, its differences include the following: (1) Predestination is conditional, based on God’s foreknowledge of people’s response of grace. (2) The atonement is unlimited. (3) Prevenient grace is given to all people; there is no special saving grace for the elect. (4) Grace can be rejected; it is not irresistible. (Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 18)

edifice and, inversely, all major theological decisions shape theological method.”<sup>73</sup>

Missional practices desperately need sound theology if they are going to establish objective biblical norms.

It is easy to look at mission history and draw wrong mythological conclusions simply on the basis of perceived effectiveness. Bavinck says that one cannot judge an historical event with another historical event subjective in nature. History can reinforce good concepts, but it cannot be the basis for sound practice.<sup>74</sup> Biblical theology gives missions the lens through which it can interpret facts, view history, learn from setbacks, provide perspective, and ultimately provide guidance to methodology. Truth be told, God fulfills His purposes more often than not in spite of man, not thanks to man’s ingeniousness.

Biblical theology flows from the church, and as such, the church is the rudder needed to prevent ministries from drifting toward poor methodologies. Lawless and Greenway describe the greatest need of the SBC: “To ensure that her evangelical Baptist theology drives her actual ministry practice.”<sup>75</sup> Missiological practices must be closely tied to Scripture so that doctrine is the guiding factor in faith and practice. Bavinck says methodology is an extension of the content of preaching and “the content of our preaching is God Himself.”<sup>76</sup> May the proclamation of truth be one and the same. Given the nature of the church, missional methodology finds its source in the church’s proclamation of truth.

---

<sup>73</sup> Miroslav Volf, “Theology, Meaning & Power: A Conversation with George Lindbeck on Theology & the Nature of Christian Difference,” in *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals and Postliberals in Conversation*, ed. Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 45.

<sup>74</sup> Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, 283.

<sup>75</sup> Lawless and Greenway, *The Great Commission Resurgence*, 207.

<sup>76</sup> Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, 81.

## **Anchored in Truth**

Observing the drift is one thing but understanding what caused the drift is another. Greer and Horst say missional drift does not often come from the first generation who was birthed out of the church, but rather from the second or third generation as the local church takes a back seat role.<sup>77</sup> Looking back from the moment Paul entrusted Timothy and the church at Ephesus with the truth, Challies observes how “the gospel has been protected and has carried from one generation to the next the long, storied history of the church.”<sup>78</sup>

One of the fundamental mistakes is when a ministry distances itself from that which was designed to keep it close to the truth, the local church. Having seen how the church is exclusively tasked with guarding the truth and uniquely designed to preserve it, it should come as no surprise that ministries who have drifted from the local church have so easily compromised on the Word of God. Granted, some churches drift from the Word, but that is the topic of another study. When a ministry separates itself from a theologically sound church and drifts away from truth, it will become as dead as the church in Sardis (Rev 3:1) who had forgotten the truth and failed to keep what had been entrusted to them.

Many gladly recognize the role of the church as a source but not the source of truth. Greer and Horst do a wonderful job explaining why ministries drift, yet he describes the board members of organizations as the guardians called to protect the integrity of the mission. It is only near the end of his book that he writes, “One of the most powerful anchors is the local church.”<sup>79</sup> Greer and Horst go on to picture the church as one of the anchors that stabilizes the ship. This statement falls short of putting the weight where it belongs: solely on the shoulders of the local church. The church is the

---

<sup>77</sup> Greer and Horst, *Mission Drift*, 164.

<sup>78</sup> Challies, *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment*, 33.

<sup>79</sup> Greer and Horst, *Mission Drift*, 167. The major portion of his book speaks to how a ministry can avoid drifting by knowing its mission, electing committed board members, hiring the right people, choosing the right partners, and demanding excellence. In the final chapter he speaks to looking at the role of the local church.

anchor; it is the rudder which directs the ship, and it has been solely entrusted with being the guardian of the mission.

It would be fitting to end this section on the testimony of Adrian Rogers as told by his wife, Joyce Rogers. Rogers pastored Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis from 1972-2005 and served as president of the SBC from 1979-1980 and 1986-1988. He was known for his strong stance on the inerrancy, infallibility, and sufficiency of the Bible. He served on what was known as the Conservative Resurgence (later the Peace Committee). At the time, many pressured Rogers into finding a compromise between the liberal and conservative Baptists on doctrinal matters. Roger simply said,

I'm willing to compromise about many things, but not the Word of God. So far as getting together is concerned, we don't have to get together. The Southern Baptist Convention, as it is, does not have to survive. I don't have to be the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church. I don't have to be loved; I don't even have to live. But I will not compromise the Word of God.<sup>80</sup>

### **Truth Proclaimed by the Church**

In Paul's final letter, the apostle's charge to Timothy and to the flock at Ephesus in his care is seen. The reader has a keen conscience that these are Paul's final words and as such Paul's words are read with special attentiveness. The power and passion of his words are evident when he says, "I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me" (2 Tim 1:11-12). Guarding the deposit does not mean keeping it to oneself, but rather faithfully proclaiming and committing the truth to others. Paul continues to focus on his preaching and teaching (2 Tim 2:8, 14; 3:14) as he warns of difficult times ahead as man swerves from the truth, pursues his own lusts, "always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim 3:1-9). As Paul's words reach their crescendo, he gives the church his final charge: "I charge you in the

---

<sup>80</sup> Joyce Rogers and Julie-Allyson Ieron, *The Life of Adrian Rogers and His Philosophy of Preaching* (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 109-10.

presence of God . . . preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (1 Tim 4:1-2). Paul is exhorting Timothy as a shepherd to lead the church in proclaiming and teaching that which has been entrusted to them. Richard Caldwell challenges the concept that preaching and shepherding are two separate responsibilities: “The power of the preacher flows from the heart, mindset, and focus of a shepherd.”<sup>81</sup> Samuel Volbeda takes it a step further by saying that preaching *must* have a pastoral quality about it.<sup>82</sup> The point being made is that preaching is not just about dispensing truth—it is about loving God, His church, and caring for souls. Shepherding is the aim of preaching.

### **Preaching and Church Growth**

Much has been written on church growth since the Church Growth Movement (CGM) of the 1990s. There is certainly much to be commended for the desire to see the church grow and in doing so bring emphasis to the importance and the purpose of the church. Some of the stated objectives, according to Os Guinness, was the “renewal of mission through the employment of human sciences’ insights and tools to aid effective evangelism, particularly those borrowed from the fields of management, marketing, psychology, and communications.”<sup>83</sup> With the explicit desire to revive the church and promote its expansion, the CGM had one glaring omission, one that should be at the heart of any attempt to grow the church: the central role of proclaiming the Word of God.

David Eby, a former missionary to Uganda, laments the fact that biblical missions, influenced by the CGM, replaced biblical preaching with a focus on sociological

---

<sup>81</sup> Richard Caldwell, *Pastoral Preaching: Expository Preaching for Pastoral Work* (Spring Hill, TN: Rainer, 2016), 17.

<sup>82</sup> Samuel Volbeda, *The Pastoral Genius of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 5.

<sup>83</sup> Os Guinness, “Church Growth: The Movement of the Nineties,” January 1, 1992, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/church-growth-the-movement-of-the-nineties>.

techniques, methodology, programs, and pragmatism. Eby speaks strongly to the fact that there can be no church growth without preaching:

The ministry of the Word is the main weapon in the spiritual arsenal, the only seed for church planting, the primary tool for church building, and the principal strategy in God's plan to disciple the nations. No preaching, no church. No proclamation, no church growth. Preaching is the heart, the blood, the whole circulatory system of church life and church growth.<sup>84</sup>

While it is not surprising to see pastors interested in church growth, what is surprising is that the proclamation of the gospel is not center stage of those discussions. Little is said about the direct biblical causation between preaching and church growth. Yet, the Word saves, transforms, and adds to the church. Believers know this to be true because the book of Acts records it.<sup>85</sup> Acts is a church growth manual. Eby reminds preachers that the church will grow by preaching. Acts demonstrates that as the Word spreads, so does the church grow. There is clear opposition, and in some places they were told to dust off their feet and move to the next town (Acts 13:51), but the testimony of Luke is that as the Word is proclaimed, the Word grows, and as the Word grows so does the church.<sup>86</sup> Believers see this throughout the book of Acts: "And the Word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem" (6:7); "The Word of God increased and multiplied" (12:24); and "So the Word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily" (19:20). Other passages (9:31; 16:5) point to the preaching that builds and strengthens the church thus growing the church. Paul speaks to this as well for the maturing church at Ephesus. Where the body of Christ is united in truth, as one body it grows (Eph 4:11-13).<sup>87</sup> The final words of Luke are indicative of the centrality of

---

<sup>84</sup> David Eby, *Power Preaching for Church Growth: The Role of Preaching in Growing Churches* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2009), 16-17.

<sup>85</sup> Eby, *Power Preaching for Church Growth*, 20.

<sup>86</sup> Eby, *Power Preaching for Church Growth*, 30.

<sup>87</sup> Clowney, *The Church*, 102.



preaching the Word: “Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:31).

Preaching was central to the New Testament church and no lasting church growth and expansion has taken place without the power of preaching. From the Reformation, to revivals, to missionary endeavors, history underscores the proclamation of the Word as spearheading entire movements. The vitality of preaching is necessary to birth, grow, and to sustain missions.<sup>88</sup> If the church is going to stay true to its mission it cannot afford to feed the “insatiable appetite of culturally generated felt needs.”<sup>89</sup> The gospel is to be preached in all faithfulness to Scripture. It should not call on the wisdom or feelings of men, but rather upon the power of the Holy Spirit to open hardened hearts and blinded eyes.<sup>90</sup> The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom 1:16).

### **Preaching and Missions**

As the gospel is preached and one has trusted Christ, that soul becomes part of a community of believers in need of shepherding. In missional work, evangelism and shepherding need to go hand in hand, which implicitly implicates the local church. Preaching and pastoral work “require” each other, according to Caldwell.<sup>91</sup>

Paul’s mindset as an apostle was certainly that of a shepherd overseeing and burdened for his flock. Paul was an overseer and structures the church to establish elders to do the same. Lawless and Greenway point to the centrality of preaching as the church fulfills the GC mandate. They make the distinction that “evangelists grow the church.

---

<sup>88</sup> J. I. Packer, “Why Preach?,” in *The Preacher and Preaching*, ed. Samuel T. Logan (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986), 3, 13, 21.

<sup>89</sup> Douglas D. Webster, *Selling Jesus: What’s Wrong with Marketing the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992), 112-13.

<sup>90</sup> Pierre Charles Marcel, *The Relevance of Preaching*, trans. Rob Ray McGregor (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1963), 16.

<sup>91</sup> Caldwell, *Pastoral Preaching*, 26.

Biblical preaching edifies the church.”<sup>92</sup> The missional mandate will necessitate that both evangelism and biblical preaching walk hand in hand. When these areas are distinct, the focus on evangelism leans toward a preoccupation with methods, techniques, or sociological factors. The American business culture in particular, according to Eby, can promote zeal, which in reality is a “Trojan horse of autonomy, pride and self-dependence.”<sup>93</sup> Goals are set with marketing plans on how to achieve set objectives. Paul reminds the Corinthian church that it is through the folly of preaching that men are saved (1 Cor 1:21). Every missionary is called to be culturally sensitive, aware, and yet remember that preaching was the principal strategy for the early church and so should it be in today’s missional work. The preaching of the Word crosses cultural divides. Paul is basically told to preach to everyone he runs into (Acts 22:15), which included all residents of Asia whether Jews or Greeks (Acts 19:10).<sup>94</sup> Missionaries who are expected to be involved in church planting or church growth efforts need to be more than strategists—they need to be able to accurately exegete the Word.

What a privilege given to the local church of guarding, preserving, and proclaiming the truth. The church is called to faithful biblical, gospel-driven preaching to its own congregation, neighborhood, community, and Jerusalem. As Spurgeon said, “Preach the gospel, the gates of hell shake. Preach the gospel, prodigals return. Preach the gospel to every creature, it is the Master’s power to everyone who believes.”<sup>95</sup> As the Word is preached to the congregation, they will gain a passion for the lost at home and abroad. Churches will respond not by sending missionaries to the uttermost but by sending truth through the preaching of the Word.

---

<sup>92</sup> Lawless and Greenway, *The Great Commission Resurgence*, 273.

<sup>93</sup> Eby, *Power Preaching for Church Growth*, 33.

<sup>94</sup> Eby, *Power Preaching for Church Growth*, 96.

<sup>95</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Sermons Volume 10: 1864*, ed. Anthony Uyl (Woodstock, Ontario: Devoted, 2017), 18.

CHAPTER 4  
THE EXCLUSIVE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN  
FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION

Having examined the nature of the church and its unique role as the recipient and pillar of truth, this chapter will focus on the exclusive mission of the church in fulfilling what is commonly known as the Great Commission (GC).<sup>1</sup> This mandate, found in Matthew 28:19-20, is woven in the very fabric of the church as it answers the call to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

When considering the biblical significance of the GC, many thoughts also go to Mark 16:15, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:21, or Acts 1:8; however, far from being new, the evangelistic thrust of the gospel can be seen in the beginning with the birth of Christ: “For it is He who will save His people from their very sins” (Matt 1:21).<sup>2</sup> Through His sentness, baptism, teaching, and disciples, Jesus is the foundation on which the New Testament mandate is built. As one sent by the Father, Jesus is the message of the gospel,

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Schmalz, “What Is the Great Commission and Why Is It So Controversial? The Conversation, February 8, 2019, <https://theconversation.com/what-is-the-great-commission-and-why-is-it-so-controversial-111138>. The origins of the term Great Commission are unclear. Schmalz suggests the term was coined by Baron Justinian von Welz in the seventeenth century. The term was central to the argument that the gospel was to be brought to foreign lands. Others, like Yoder, say the term Great Commission only developed after the 1800s becoming essentially a twentieth century message. John Howard Yoder, *A Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 76.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Duncan Culver, *A Greater Commission: A Theology for World Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 2. Culver demonstrates that the GC is not a new revelation but a mandate consistent with the entire thrust of the Gospels.

the very incarnation of the GC,<sup>3</sup> and the archetypal missionary.<sup>4</sup> As such, Christ has the church in view when he cast the vision of the harvest (Matt 9), calls the disciples to go from being fishermen to fishers of men (Matt 4) and sends them out into the world (Matt 10). Culver describes the imagery of the twelve tribes in whom “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 26:4) is not lost in the twelve apostles who now lay the foundation for the church to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth.<sup>5</sup> While the first biblical mandate, according to Henry Boer, is to be fruitful and multiply physically (Gen 1:28), the second is to be fruitful and multiply spiritually by being faithful to the GC mandate.<sup>6</sup> This vision of Christ gathering His bride is one which encompasses the entire world as they “will come from east to west and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 8:11). Believers have a promise that before the end comes: “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come” (Matt 24:14). Luke provides the next step in the fulfillment of this promise with the book of Acts, which begins with the commitment that the Holy Spirit would empower the disciples as they go to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Acts, however, leaves the reader with an unfinished narrative, underscoring the incomplete or ongoing nature of the task.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Max Warren, *I Believe in the Great Commission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 13.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century*, Invitation to Theological Studies Series 3 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 77.

<sup>5</sup> Culver, *A Greater Commission*, 6. Though the church is unique and new, it is important to point out that it is not a new Israel or a substitute heir for all the prophetic promises reserved for Israel. In this way, the GC is unique to the church.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Boer builds his case that the second mandate (Great Commission) is much like the first (Populate the Earth) in that it was organic in nature and not purely a matter of obedience. Whereas the first mandate flowed from physical desires, so does the second from spiritual ones. Henry R. Boer, *Pentecost and Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 121-22.

<sup>7</sup> Everett Harrison says Luke pictures the church growing but did not glamorize the church and rather shows the frail and fallible side as well. Everett F. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 32.

## A Historical Mandate

In addition to the biblical significance of the GC, much of today's missional understanding has been shaped by history. Many would agree that William Carey, often called "the father of modern missions,"<sup>8</sup> is a key figure in addressing the current perception of the GC.<sup>9</sup> The writing of "An Enquiry" has been used as a foundational missions document for generations.<sup>10</sup> His famous quote, "Expect great things from God, and attempt great things for God,"<sup>11</sup> is a favorite of many and has doubtless been used to motivate many to missional action. Some have even credited him with revitalizing the eighteenth-century church in their zeal for a lost and dying world.<sup>12</sup> However, Carey would scarcely agree as he did not see himself as initiating a movement, but rather following in the footsteps of faithful men, such as the Moravian Brethren, of which he admired their evangelistic efforts.<sup>13</sup>

William Carey is a remarkable man that has inspired many to invest, pray, and follow in his footsteps. Little did he realize how the choices he made back in 1792 would impact missions for the next 200 years. A few decisions in particular impacted the church. First, while many believed the GC only applied to the Apostles, Carey made the case that

---

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1975), 222.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Curtis, Stephen Lang, and Randy Petersen say Carey was well ahead of his time in part because he set in motion missionary practices, like establishing a mission board, that are still common practices today. Kenneth A. Curtis, Stephen J. Lang, and Randy Petersen, *The 100 Most Important Events in Christian History* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1991), 140.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Early has selected "An Enquiry" as one of the 41 most significant documents in Baptist history since what he considers the birth of the "Baptist denomination" in 1609. Joseph Early, Jr., *Readings in Baptist History: Four Centuries of Selected Documents* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 69.

<sup>11</sup> Nathan P. Feldmeth, *The IVP Pocket Reference Series*, Pocket Dictionary of Church History (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 34.

<sup>12</sup> Jules M. Nicole, *Précis D'Histoire de l'Eglise* (Nogent-sur-Marne, France: Editions de l'Institut Biblique, 2008), 218.

<sup>13</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey: A Long Line of Godly Men Profile* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2018), 66.

every believer needed to respond to the GC.<sup>14</sup> He was faced with, amongst other things, hyper-Calvinists which taught that since the unsaved could not respond to the gospel without God enabling them to do so, it was not the unregenerate men's responsibility to repent and believe, but rather wait on the Lord to draw them unto salvation; therefore, pastors and missionaries need not try to convert such heathens. To his credit, though Carey was a Calvinist, he was able to marry God's sovereignty in salvation with the fact that God uses human instruments to reach the lost.<sup>15</sup> In doing so he set an example for many to follow in obedience to the call while trusting God for the harvest of souls. Second, Carey formed, independently of the church, the Baptist Missionary Society, which would serve as a sodality to gather necessary resources to send missionaries overseas. Sam Metcalf sees a historical push for sodalities with William Carey.<sup>16</sup> Today, it is normative to rely on a mission agency to go and serve overseas. The third area of influence is that Carey fiercely advocated for human associations that could raise funds to enable him and others to go.<sup>17</sup> What he advocated—raising funds for missions outside the church through individual donors—was unheard of at that time. Carey began a campaign that would encourage believers to give one penny a week.<sup>18</sup> Today, missionaries are trained and encouraged to raise a support base outside the church.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*, 22-23.

<sup>15</sup> Haykin speaks to the theological debates of the time which accused Carey of being Arminian. Haykin speaks to Carey being an evangelical Calvinist comparable to John Bunyan or Jonathan Edwards. Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey*, 43.

<sup>16</sup> Sam Metcalf, *Beyond the Local Church: How Apostolic Movements Can Change the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 50.

<sup>17</sup> Culver, *A Greater Commission*, xi.

<sup>18</sup> Haykin, *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey*, 73.

<sup>19</sup> Betty Barnett, *Friend Raising: Building a Missionary Support Team That Lasts* (Seattle: YWAM, 2003). The intent here is to simply point toward a practice, not as an indictment but simply as an observation.

As Carey separated himself from the church, he would lead the way for others to follow.<sup>20</sup> Today, 200 years later, this drift has persisted with many churches limiting their missional involvement to praying and paying. Thankfully, there is an ongoing effort amongst many churches to reclaim some of that GC mandate.

### **A Single Mandate**

At first glance, Matthew 28:19-20 gives the impression that the GC is comprised of four separate commands: going, baptizing, teaching, and making disciples. However, a closer look at the Greek grammatical structure indicates, as Daniel Doriani points out, that there is but one imperative: “make disciples.” This single command assumes that preaching the gospel, conversions, and gathering believers are taking place.<sup>21</sup> It is one imperative, “make disciples,” with three adverbially Greek participles to describe how to make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching.<sup>22</sup> The text could have been translated “as you go, as you baptize, and as you teach, make disciples.” Bringing clarity to this pivotal text will help define what is missions and identify the role of the church as it pertains to missions.

Making disciples is the single imperative of the GC and the reason for “going” in the first place.<sup>23</sup> Go, baptize, and teach are participles that serve to augment the primary argument of making disciples.<sup>24</sup> As Robert Culver points out, only “making disciples” is a finite imperative verb, which means it governs the understanding of what it means to

---

<sup>20</sup> Paul Beals describes Carey as a “pacesetter” for many mission societies to follow. Paul A. Beals, *A People for His Name: A Church-Based Missions Strategy* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1955), 133.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew*, in *ESV Expository Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew-Luke*, ed. Lain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton, Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 453.

<sup>22</sup> Yoder, *A Theology of Mission*, 77.

<sup>23</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 23.

<sup>24</sup> Jeannine K. Brown, *Matthew*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 318.

go, baptize, and teach.<sup>25</sup> The word “go” (πορευθέντες) means “to pass from one place to another.” It is deponent, meaning it occurs with passive (or middle) voice forms but with active meaning.<sup>26</sup> Clearly the text, as an aorist participle, is saying “having gone” or “as you go,” and is agreeing therefore with the understood subject, “making disciples,” which immediately follows. This use of the word “go” is common to Matthew (9:13, 11:4, 18:12, 21:6, 22:15, 25:16, 27:66, 28:7).<sup>27</sup> βαπτίζοντες (baptize), like πορευθέντες (go), is in agreement with μαθητεύσατε (make disciples). It carries an imperative idea due to its tie with the imperative verb. διδάσκοντες (teach) is syntactically connected with βαπτίζοντες, indicated by the absence of the participle *kai* (and). The text therefore reads “baptize, teach” and not “baptize and teach,” which would have made “teach” subsequent to “baptize.” These two words are not successively but “contemporaneously” given.<sup>28</sup>

Two critical observations can be made here. For one, the missionary mandate is not just wrapped in the idea of going to feed the poor, give water to the thirsty, educate the uneducated, or any other humanitarian effort as meritorious as it might be. At the heart of the GC is making disciples of Jesus Christ. On one hand this presupposes the proclamation of the gospel and on the other the means by which this is accomplished is wrapped in the supporting commands “to go” baptize (gathering believers around the centrality of the gospel) and teaching the whole counsel of God. It is not a command that all must go but is a call for all to be making disciples. As the church is obedient, some are to be sent to those nations without a witness in fulfillment of the promise that disciples will be made of all nations. Given the oneness of the command, taken in its entirety, it would

---

<sup>25</sup> Culver, *A Greater Commission*, 150.

<sup>26</sup> Webster Dictionaries, “Deponent,” accessed November 6, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deponent>.

<sup>27</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, ed. William F. Arndt and Felix Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 692.

<sup>28</sup> Culver, *A Greater Commission*, 150-53.



be impossible to extrapolate the church from the GC as it is uniquely qualified to obey the given mandate.

### **An Authoritative Mandate**

The comprehensive nature of this mandate dominates the entire GC passage.<sup>29</sup> First, one sees that God gives “all authority” (Matt 20:18) to Christ for the purpose of His mission, which is to be carried out by his disciples. The church has full authority to fulfill the GC and with that authority comes the power of God to do so. The work of missions, though carried out by men, rests on the shoulders of God Himself. God is reconciling the world to himself through Jesus Christ and has entrusted believers as ambassadors of Christ with the message of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:11-21).<sup>30</sup> Second, the command is given to go to “all nations” (Matt 28:19). The power of the gospel is for the Jews and Gentiles alike. God is gathering His bride from every tongue, every tribe, and every nation. The gospel is sufficient for every civilization, every generation, every culture, in every situation. The gospel message does not need contextualization to be effective—it needs proclamation as it is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). Third, the church has been given the complete revelation as it lacks nothing and is not in want of additional truths (Matt 28:20). All that is to be taught has been given to the church, through the Word of God, to dispense freely and completely. The GC is extensive in nature in that the whole counsel of God is to be taught and not limited convenient portions of it. Finally, the church has the promise that Christ will be with His bride all the days needed to fulfill its task: “I will be with you always” (Matt 28:20); “all the days.” These words have been promising words of comfort to those who go in obedience in fulfilling the GC. These final words of Matthew 28 are fitting as they promise

---

<sup>29</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 103.

<sup>30</sup> Erich Sauer says the church must carry on this ministry of reconciliation because Jesus is the Savior of the world, because Jesus commanded it, and because it is related to the nature of the church as the body of Christ. Erich Sauer, *From Eternity to Eternity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954), 70.

all power and authority to His church as it goes to all nations, to teach all that has been revealed, all the days until the end when the bride of Christ will be called home.<sup>31</sup> Viewed as such, the GC is not received as some commandment imposed upon the church, but rather the very “fundamental law of her existence.”<sup>32</sup>

### **As You Go: The Sending Nature of the Church**

While the crux of the GC is about making disciples, it appropriately begins with the idea of going. The word “go,” πορευθέντες, speaks simply of the idea of going from one place to another. The church could not be successful at the task of making disciples of all nations if it did not answer the call to go.<sup>33</sup> For some, missions is anything and everything the church is doing to advance the kingdom. For others, missions is travelling cross-culturally to plant a church in an unreached area.<sup>34</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, missions is about the intentionality of sending commissioned<sup>35</sup> individuals beyond the boundaries of a local congregation to make disciples. When a commissioned individual “goes,” he is a representative of the whole body which sends him.<sup>36</sup> For there to be

---

<sup>31</sup> S. E. Anderson speaks to the evangelistic nature of the church having been entrusted with the gospel “until the end of this church age.” S. E. Anderson, *The First Church* (Little Rock, AK: Challenge, 1983), 49.

<sup>32</sup> Tom Julien, *Antioch Revisited: Reuniting the Church with Her Mission* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 2006), 1. Julien points to the fact that the spirit of the church and the spirit of mission are one and the same. To speak of one is to speak of the other, or to be critical of one is to be critical of the other (18).

<sup>33</sup> Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, *Understanding the Great Commission* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 2.

<sup>34</sup> A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 17.

<sup>35</sup> Webster Dictionaries, “Commission,” accessed November 12, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/commission>. A commissioned individual is one who has been granted the power/authority to perform various acts or duties. A missionary that is sent does not act on his own behalf or authority but on that which has been instituted by God through His church as they commission, lay hands, or pray over an individual and send him on a mission.

<sup>36</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church, Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 214.

missions, there needs to be one who sends and one who goes.<sup>37</sup> As George Murray says, “Missionaries don’t just go to the lost and unreached; they are sent to the lost and unreached.”<sup>38</sup> There needs to be an authority that sends ambassadors with a message for people in “other” places. As unbelievers come to Christ, they are baptized, taught to be disciples of Christ, and matured in established autonomous congregations.<sup>39</sup>

These commissioned individuals are more than a face on a prayer card or friendship relationships built over time; they are truth-bearers. The church is not first and foremost sending people; it is above all sending truth and light in the darkness of an unbelieving world. The church is at the heart of the missional enterprise exactly because it is the pillar and guardian of truth. Edmund Clowney rightfully argues that the purpose of missions will be lost if Christians forget that captives are set free through the truth of the gospel.<sup>40</sup> If churches are not careful, they will focus solely on what they are doing for the missionary through prayer and support and forget what they are doing through the missionary by sending truth.<sup>41</sup> Truth stands the test of time and will contribute to the long-term success of a ministry as a foundation, and something future generations can build upon.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Eckhard Schnabel focuses on the Latin roots which point to the intentionality on one hand and displacement on the other. Eckhard Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 22.

<sup>38</sup> Steve Beirn and George W. Murray, *Well Sent: Reimagining the Church’s Missionary-Sending Process* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2015), 52.

<sup>39</sup> George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 11.

<sup>40</sup> Clowney, *The Church*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Julien, *Antioch Revisited*, 24.

<sup>42</sup> Clowney reminds the reader that the weapons of the church are spiritual, not physical, and that the kingdom of God is to be advanced not with social action but with the sword. Not that social action is irrelevant, but only within the boundaries set by Christ. Clowney, *The Church*, 196.

## Why Send?

The church finds its sent nature in the very essence of its Creator.<sup>43</sup> John Yoder would suggest that the nature of God's sentness was *ante-peccatum*, but from the moment there was a fall, there was a need to send. By sending His only Son, He affirms man's own depraved nature, his inability to save himself, and manifests His own sent nature. Contrary to idols who must be approached and satisfied with offerings, God initiates a relationship by reaching across that which separates Him from mankind.<sup>44</sup>

There is continuity of purpose in the missional mandate of the church.<sup>45</sup> Peter Forsyth pictures God as the first missionary who sent His Son into the world that the world might be saved (John 3:16-17). The second missionary was the Son who came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). The third missionary is the Holy Spirit whom the Savior sent into all the world to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). The fourth missionary is the church, who with divine authority, sends commissioned individuals into all the world proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8).<sup>46</sup> The church, corporally, is God's primary missionary to a lost and dying world. Ross Hastings uses the term *collective Christ* to describe how the body collectively is God's missionary.<sup>47</sup>

Schnabel writes that His sentness is a constant theme throughout the Gospels as Christ went from the presence of God to live amongst men to fulfill His mission.<sup>48</sup> A few noticeable gospel passages are Luke 4:18-19 where Luke quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 and prophetically speaks of the One "sent to proclaim liberty to the captives." However,

---

<sup>43</sup> Robert Speer, *Christianity and the Nations* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), 17.

<sup>44</sup> Yoder, *A Theology of Mission*, 129-30.

<sup>45</sup> Scott W. Sunquist, *Why Church? A Basic Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 11.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Taylor Forsyth, *Missions in State and Church: Sermons and Address* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), 270-71.

<sup>47</sup> Ross Hastings attributes this term "collective Christ" to Bonhoeffer. Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 128.

<sup>48</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 23.

sentness is perhaps most noticeable in the Gospel of John where right from the beginning light is sent into a world of darkness (John 1:3-9). The purpose of this light is given in John 3:16-17: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not *send* his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” John goes on to refer to God the Father sending his Son thirty-two times,<sup>49</sup> as can be seen in John 6:38, “to do the will of him who *sent* me”; John 7:18, “one who seeks the glory of him who *sent* him is true”; John 8:29, “the one who *sent* me is with me”; or John 12:49, “the Father who *sent* me has himself given me a commandment.” Sentness is a recurring theme all the way to its climactic point in John 20:21<sup>50</sup>: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” Cyril argues that with this call comes the call to be imitators of Christ, and as a church, to be tied to His purpose to seek and save the lost.<sup>51</sup> God so loved the world that He sent Christ-bearers into the world to carry out His mission. The GC is God sending the church to complete the mission.<sup>52</sup>

The mission of Christ, followed by the apostolic footsteps, is thus perpetuated in the mission of the church. As the church goes, the world is confronted not with mere human institutions but with the Son of God. Confusion emanates from those who go with humanitarian aid and are received on the basis of what they have to offer. A messenger of Christ, on the other hand, will be received on the basis of how people view Christ. Christ told His disciples this much when He told them that those who receive them would be

---

<sup>49</sup> Eric E. Wright, *A Practical Theology of Missions: Dispelling the Mystery, Recovering the Passion* (Leominster, UK: Day One, 2010), 43.

<sup>50</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 23-24.

<sup>51</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, vol. 2, trans. David R. Maxwell, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, *Ancient Christian Texts*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Gerald L. Bray (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 367.

<sup>52</sup> Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 7.

those who receive Him, and so it is today (Matt 10:40).<sup>53</sup> The great marks of the church and those it sends reside in its message of the one who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6).<sup>54</sup>

One final observation regarding John 20:21 is that in the context leading up to this Johannine GC passage, Christ sends Mary to go and testify to the resurrection she has witnessed. There is beauty in the message. “Go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (John 20:17). The text speaks of “my Father,” referring to the Father by nature for Christ and “your Father,” referring to the Father by grace for the believer. This characteristic is found in the mandate to follow in verse 21, as the divine sent nature of Christ is by grace bestowed as an act of grace to believers. What a blessed privilege, as now brothers (John 20:17), to be partakers of the divine sent nature of Christ.<sup>55</sup> The great miracle of the resurrection and the GC go hand-in-hand, for as Jaroslav Pelikan said, “If the Resurrection of Jesus actually happened, then nothing else really matters. If the Resurrection of Jesus did not happen, then nothing else really matters.”<sup>56</sup> This resurrection GC gives the disciples the continuation of His mission and divine purpose for their lives.<sup>57</sup> These first disciples represent all those disciples who would follow. In John 20 there is, according to Hastings, a proleptic event which finds its fulfillment in Acts 2 and the birth of the church. From this Pentecostal indwelling the disciples will answer the “go into all the world and make disciples.”<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 1114-15. Matt 10:40 says, “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”

<sup>54</sup> Clowney, *The Church*, 103.

<sup>55</sup> Bruner, *The Gospel of John*, 1109-10. Disjunctively in that there is a unique nature of God and of Christ, and conjunctively in that there is a unique grace bestowed upon those who follow in His sentness.

<sup>56</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, “In Memoriam Faculty,” Yale Department of History Newsletter (Spring 2007), 3.

<sup>57</sup> Bruner, *The Gospel of John*, 1112.

<sup>58</sup> Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church*, 28.

## Who Is Sent?

The GC has been given for all disciples to follow, but that does not discount the need for specific individuals to be sent to all the nations. *Missionary* is a term which finds its linguistic roots in the idea of “being sent.” More specifically, the English word *missionary* comes from the Latin *missionem*, meaning “act of sending,” or *mittere*, meaning “to send.”<sup>59</sup> Though there is not a direct New Testament Greek equivalent, the noun *Apostolos*, from which the word *apostle* comes, is derived from the verb *apostellos*, which means “to send off on a commission.” A distinction needs to be made between the office of apostle<sup>60</sup> and the apostles of the church.<sup>61</sup> As Christ passed on His mission to the twelve, so did the twelve entrust the church with the responsibility of carrying out the mission. In 2 Corinthians 8:23, the term *apostle* was used to describe those who served as messengers of the church. Several others, not all with significant roles, were called apostles or messengers such as Barnabas (Acts 14:14),<sup>62</sup> Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Andronicus and Junius (Rom 16:7), and James, the brother of Jesus (Gal 1:19). John Flett points to the fact that both “Apostles and apostles share in the common task of sharing the Gospel and both labored to grow the church.”<sup>63</sup> In making disciples, both the twelve and the missionaries who followed have the common goal of building the community of believers.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> C. Gordon Olson, *What in the World Is God Doing?* (Cedar Knolls, NJ: Global Gospel, 2003), 10.

<sup>60</sup> Gregg Allison states, “Apostles are the disciples chosen by Jesus to be the foundation of his church. They were Spirit-empowered eyewitnesses of his life, death, and resurrection.” Gregg R. Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 17.

<sup>61</sup> The term *Apostle*, capitalized, is used to reference to the twelve Apostles of Christ. The term *apostle*, uncapitalized, refers to the messengers of the church as seen in 2 Cor 8:23.

<sup>62</sup> Elbert E. Smith, *Church Planting by the Book* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2015), 90-91.

<sup>63</sup> John G. Flett, *Apostolicity: The Ecumenical Question in World Christian Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 291.

<sup>64</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, vol. 2, *Paul & the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 353-55.

**Is everyone a missionary?** Few would argue that all believers should be light and salt in the world. In fact, it would be unhealthy to develop a culture where sharing the gospel and making disciples is left solely to professionals.<sup>65</sup> The desire to motivate all believers to get involved in the GC is commendable, but it is counterproductive to make the claim that all believers are missionaries at the risk of demobilizing those who should be answering the call to take the gospel beyond their own Jerusalem to all nations. E. D. Burns says it is helpful to distinguish between what would be considered a general practice in the church and a unique calling given to some individuals gifted by the Spirit.<sup>66</sup> Gordon Olson rightfully claims, “All Christians are to be missionary-minded in obedience to the Great Commission, but not all Christians can be missionaries in the proper biblical sense of the word.”<sup>67</sup> If everyone is not called to be a missionary, then who is called? If being a missionary begins with being called,<sup>68</sup> then it is important to define what a missionary call looks like and what role the church might play in the matter. This question of the missionary call is neither secondary nor insignificant. Paul Borthwick goes as far as to say that “nothing needs to be said about ministering in a cross-cultural situation until the issue of ‘the call’ is settled in people’s minds.”<sup>69</sup> For some, from the moment an individual presents himself to a church and says, “I feel called to be a missionary,” the church is expected to affirm and support such a call. While for others, the idea of a “call” is somewhat of a mystical experience. J. Herbert Kane says that some people claim the

---

<sup>65</sup> Ken Caruthers, “Is Every Christian a Missionary?” 9Marks, December 7, 2015, <https://www.9marks.org/article/is-every-christian-a-missionary>.

<sup>66</sup> E. D. Burns, “Are We All Missionaries,” Founders Ministries, accessed November 20, 2021, <https://founders.org/2020/08/19/are-we-all-missionaries>.

<sup>67</sup> Olson, *What in the World Is God Doing?*, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Hale writes, “Being a missionary begins with being called. You don’t choose to be a missionary; you’re called to be one. The only choice is whether to obey.” Thomas Hale, *On Being a Missionary* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 16.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Borthwick, “The Call to Missions,” in *Global Mission Handbook: A Guide for Cross-Cultural Service*, ed. Steve Hoke and William David Taylor (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 74.



missionary should have a “Macedonian call” like Paul in Acts 16:9-10, comprised of visions, dreams, or voices. Some would suggest Christians should seek out such experiences and wait.<sup>70</sup> Borthwick says these “mysterious calls” should not be expected to be normative as there are more common ways that God calls individuals into missions. One is what he calls the “commissioned call,” where the Spirit leads church elders to commission an individual (Acts 13), and the other is the “common sense” call where God works in minds, knowledge, and common sense. In Acts 15:22, the apostles, the elders, and the whole church chose men from among them and sent them to Antioch because “it seemed good.”<sup>71</sup> Thomas Hale states, “No missionary call is pure; the deeper we look at our motive the more of self we see.”<sup>72</sup> There is no biblical definition of a missionary call that one can refer to,<sup>73</sup> but as the Holy Spirit leads, He does not bypass intellectual practices (common sense, analyzing alternatives, applying biblical principles, calculating the cost, weighing priorities, capacities and limitations, etc.). On the contrary, He uses these and more to lead an individual to see clearly what is right and good to decide and do in each situation.<sup>74</sup> More often than not, problems come from not humbly seeking wisdom, ignoring God-given authority, impatience, and various issues of the heart (pride, affirmation, man-pleaser, etc.). Even in a smaller church context, one can seek wisdom and advice from a pastor and trust the Lord to use him to provide direction or clarification. Instead of waiting for a clear mysterious direction that somehow God expects man to find,

---

<sup>70</sup> J. Herbert Kane, *Life and Work on the Mission Field* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 1.

<sup>71</sup> Borthwick, “The Call to Missions,” 74-75.

<sup>72</sup> Hale, *On Being a Missionary*, 25.

<sup>73</sup> Michael David Sills, *The Missionary Call: Find Your Place in God’s Plan for the World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 55.

<sup>74</sup> J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *God’s Will: Finding Guidance for Everyday Decisions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 136-37.

the key is to be faithful in what God has called one to do, today.<sup>75</sup> In doing so, God providentially opens opportunities and provides affirming experiences as believers are assured that He works things for the good of those who are in Christ Jesus,<sup>76</sup> confident that God's desire for the believer to know His will is exponentially greater than the Christian's desire to know God.<sup>77</sup>

Bruce Waltke narrows it down to one definition: "A call is an inner desire given by the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, and confirmed by the community of Christ."<sup>78</sup> He provides three ingredients which include the work of the Holy Spirit (desire), the Word of the Lord (biblical principles), and the work of the church (elder shepherding). Kirk Youngblood agrees that it begins with a God-given inner desire, as seen in 1 Timothy 3, where one aspiring to the office of an elder will first desire such position.<sup>79</sup> The second includes conformity to the truth of God's Word. The third puts the call in the context of the congregation of believers who are called to test, affirm, and send. Michael Griffiths writes, "An individual can express his willingness while others must determine his worthiness. The individual may be free to go, but only his church knows if he is really fitted to go."<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Eugene Stock quotes E. A. Lawrence as saying the individual's call is much like that of the church which comes with a "renewal of life within" and "an enlargement of opportunities without." The individual needs to "Surrender the will. The rest is only matter of judgement, according to providential indications." Eugene Stock, *A Short Handbook of Missions* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904), 22.

<sup>76</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will* (Chicago: Moody, 2014, 2009), 24.

<sup>77</sup> David Platt, *Follow Me: A Call to Die, A Call to Live* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013), 127-28.

<sup>78</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 118.

<sup>79</sup> Kirk Youngblood, *Free to Be Wise: A Guide to Biblical Decision Making* (Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2012), 172.

<sup>80</sup> Michael Griffiths, *Get Your Church Involved in Missions* (Robesonia, PA: OMF, 1981), 14.

James Walsh states that the call, as it originates with God, is “discerned, declared, and ratified by the church . . . without that ratification there is no vocation.”<sup>81</sup>

The responsibility of a missionary vision falls on the church<sup>82</sup> where that call is to be nurtured and matured in the “womb of the church.”<sup>83</sup> The local congregation is the “ideal testing ground for potential missionaries,”<sup>84</sup> and is perfectly equipped to examine one’s character, gifts, and commitment to ministry. A missionary should have a strong sense of calling upon his life and a desire to do the work of the ministry and go make disciples; however, this calling is not apart from the church but in submission to the God-ordained body of Christ who in turn commissions the individual as part of a corporate calling.

### **Who Sends?**

“Who sends the missionary?” The answer to this question is critical given that failure to answer correctly could lead to unbiblical missions, missional drifts, wasted human and physical resources, or a host of other related breakdowns. Few, if any, would argue that the church has no responsibility to send, but as that answer is broken down to the specifics of what that looks like, the waters quickly get murky. Unfortunately, much of church sending today is limited to a commissioning ceremony and financial and prayer

---

<sup>81</sup> James Edward Walsh, *Blueprint of the Missionary Vocation* (Maryknoll, NY: Maryknoll, 1950), 34-35. He gives two reasons why the calling must be ratified by the church. First, there is no other way to determine whether a call is from God. Second, God has given the church charge over such matters. Walsh (1891-1981) was a Catholic missionary in China. His theology of the church undoubtedly explains such a strong view regarding the authority of the church.

<sup>82</sup> Nathan A. Finn and Keith S. Whitfield, *Spirituality for the Sent: Casting a New Vision for the Missional Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017), 72.

<sup>83</sup> Wright, *A Practical Theology of Missions*, 216.

<sup>84</sup> Neal Pirolo, *Serving as Senders Today: How to Care for Your Missionaries as They Prepare to Go, Are on the Field and Return Home* (San Diego: Emmaus Road, 2012), 56.

support. As sending agencies historically grew in influence, the church gradually relinquished responsibility for the sending process.<sup>85</sup>

**Parachurch versus paramissions.** There exists a plethora of Christian nonprofit organizations which set out to fulfill worthy ministries. Jerry White says, “The proliferation of organizations outside the traditional boundaries of the local churches is so great as to stagger the imagination. Its potential input can either divide or build the kingdom of God.”<sup>86</sup> These ministries range from providing clothing, education, food, medical assistance, biblical counseling, pro-life adoption support, addiction recovery programs, care for the homeless, Christian schools, publishers, and community centers to name but a few of the 1,184,547 nonprofit charitable organizations in the United States.<sup>87</sup> Some of the top Christian nonprofits (in annual revenue) would be the Salvation Army (\$3.7 billion), World Vision (\$1.05 billion), Food for the Poor (\$942 million), Compassion International (\$890 million), Samaritan’s Purse (\$699 million), or Campus Crusade for Christ (\$627 million).<sup>88</sup> These mega Christian non-profits are representative of the thousands of much smaller organizations that purpose to assist people in need and do so in the name of Christ. These ministries can be labeled “parachurch” organizations because they come alongside the church and minister to those in need. At the heart of being a believer is a desire to, out of love, serve others in the name of Christ. This is seen in Acts

---

<sup>85</sup> Yoder, *A Theology of Mission*, 37.

<sup>86</sup> Jerry E. White, *The Church and the Parachurch: An Uneasy Marriage* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1983), preface. Fred Smith says every function other than funerals, weddings, and baptisms can be done outside the church. Fred Smith, *Leading with Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House, 1998), 56-58.

<sup>87</sup> Internal Revenue Service, “SOI Tax Stats—Charities & Other Tax-Exempt Organizations Statistics,” August 31, 2021, <https://www.irs.gov/statistics/soi-tax-stats-charities-and-other-tax-exempt-organizations-statistics>.

<sup>88</sup> Mark Hrywna, “The NPT 2019: Top 100: An In-Depth Study of America’s Largest Nonprofits,” November 4, 2019, <https://www.thenonproffitimes.com/report/npt-top-100-2019-an-in-depth-study-of-americas-largest-nonprofits/>.

6:1-6 where ministry is pictured as being a servant, a *diakonia*, of the church.<sup>89</sup> Beyond the official position of being a deacon, the term is used to describe a greater call to serve as seen in John 12:26: “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.” Robert Hampshire provides a good definition of ministry: “Ministry is about giving of ourselves and our time, talents, and resources to bless and help others. The cry of the minister is ‘someone’s got to do it, might as well be me.’”<sup>90</sup> Clearly the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, and the persecuted are close to the heart of the Lord (Matt 25:35-40), and so should it be to believers and, consequently, the church. Edwin Dargan would argue that the church has first an evangelistic obligation, but it also has a second humanitarian one.<sup>91</sup> Local congregations would undoubtedly not wish to live in autarky, but rather aspire to attend to some of the necessities within and without the church, knowing that many larger Christian parachurch organizations have taken it to heart to focus specifically on these needs. A congregation of believers may choose to support these organizations financially, provide facilities, or support those who serve full-time in those ministries.

To bring clarity to the responsibility of the church in regard to missions, it would be helpful to make a distinction between *ministry* and *missions*. A *ministry’s* primary focus is humanitarian need, whereas *missions* is focused on the GC of making disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching the whole counsel of God. There is naturally an overlap in these two areas, but the primary stated objective is what is in view. For example, Samaritan’s Purse stated mission is:

Samaritan’s Purse is a nondenominational evangelical Christian organization providing spiritual and physical aid to hurting people around the world. Since 1970,

---

<sup>89</sup> William D. Mounce and Zondervan Staff, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian, 2006), 870.

<sup>90</sup> Robert Hampshire, “What Is Ministry?” Christianity.com, March 16, 2020, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/church/what-is-ministry.html>.

<sup>91</sup> Edwin Charles Dargan, *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches* (Louisville: Charles T. Dearing, 1905), 571.

Samaritan's Purse has helped meet needs of people who are victims of war, poverty, natural disasters, disease, and famine with the purpose of sharing God's love through His Son, Jesus Christ. The organization serves the Church worldwide to promote the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>92</sup>

Whereas The Evangelical Alliance Mission's (TEAM) stated mission is: "Our mission is to partner with the global Church in sending disciples who make disciples and establish missional churches to the glory of God."<sup>93</sup> Samaritan's Purse is a parachurch organization in that it serves the church worldwide by "providing spiritual and physical aid to hurting people around the world," while the TEAM is paramissional in that it purposes to fulfill the GC by "making disciples and establishing missional churches." The responsibility of the church in supporting parachurch organizations is limited to finding theological compatibility<sup>94</sup> with the organization as a whole; insuring there is fiscal integrity and assessing what helps and what hurts.<sup>95</sup> Depending on the context of a specific ministry, the shepherding needs of someone serving in a parachurch organization would likely be assumed by a church in proximity. Given the nature of ministry, the doctrinal congruency<sup>96</sup> needed is not the same as with paramissional organizations which will take on the task of teaching the whole counsel of God, making disciples, and

---

<sup>92</sup> Samaritan's Purse, "About Us," accessed January 12, 2022, <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/our-ministry/about-us/>.

<sup>93</sup> TEAM, "Our Values," accessed January 12, 2022, <https://team.org/about-us/team-our-values>.

<sup>94</sup> Defined as "being able to work together in harmony." Webster Dictionaries, "Compatible," accessed November 24, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compatible>.

<sup>95</sup> Steve Corbett and Brian Kikkert begin by laying the foundation that every believer is "called to participate in the life of a local church." Steve Corbett and Brian Kikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody, 2012), 14. It is from this vantage point that they provide healthy critical view of how Western missions, if not careful, can do more harm than good when it comes to addressing humanitarian needs. "Our concern is not just that these methods are wasting human, spiritual, financial, and organizational resources but that these methods are actually exacerbating the very problems they are trying to solve" (27).

<sup>96</sup> Defined as "the quality of agreeing, coinciding" or "matching, in agreement with something." Webster Dictionaries, "Congruent," accessed November 24, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/congruent>.

reproducing churches. The object of this doctoral thesis is aligned with paramissional organizations given the focus on the church and its role in fulfilling the GC.

**Sending versus supporting.** An additional distinction needs to be made between the role of a sending church versus a supporting church. A congregation may decide to support a missionary member of another likeminded church via a paramissional organization. A sending church, on the other hand, can be defined as

a local community of Christ-followers who have made a covenant together to be prayerful, deliberate, and proactive in developing, commissioning, and sending their own members both locally and globally, often in partnership with other churches or agencies, and continuing to encourage, support, and advocate for them while making disciples cross-culturally.<sup>97</sup>

Knowing this, the responsibility of a church can be broken down in three areas. First, given that the church is uniquely designed to guard the truth, the sending or supporting church should ensure the paramissional organization, its mission, its objectives, and its methodologies have a solid theological foundation. This would require more than a cursory reading of a stated doctrinal statement, but certainly begins there. Second, the sending or supporting church should affirm the one being sent is qualified to fulfill the task assigned. In the case of a supporting church, this will necessitate contact with the sending church's leadership in addition to getting to know a missionary on a personal level. Mack Stiles argues that, unfortunately, many "self-proclaimed" missionaries have never been approved or appointed by any one church.<sup>98</sup> Third, the sending church should maintain a shepherding role and oversight. Shepherds have a biblical charge to care for the souls of the sheep, including those sent to other nations on their behalf. Paramissional organizations, as

---

<sup>97</sup> Zack Bradley, *The Sending Church Defined*, ed. Rodney Calfee (Knoxville: Upstream Collective, 2020), 8.

<sup>98</sup> Mack Stiles, "Eight Types of People Churches Should Send to the Mission Field," Southern Equip, March 5, 2021, <https://equip.sbts.edu/article/eight-types-of-people-churches-should-send-to-the-mission-field>.

helpful as they are, are facilitators, not senders in the biblical sense, and this makes all the difference. The church must not forget that it is the great “Missionary Society.”<sup>99</sup>

**Biblical sending.** Paul is often cited, and rightfully so, as one sent by the Antioch church. He did not use his authority as an Apostle to impose his way, nor did he claim some independent calling (Acts 13:1-3, 15:3). The laying on of hands and intentional sending points to the authority of the church in commissioning these men. Even if this passage does not provide a biblical template for future churches, it is seen upon Paul and Barnabas’ return from their first journey (Acts 14:27) when they gave a report to the entire church. Distinct from the Apostles who played a unique role in the expansion of the church, the biblical narrative provides other examples of those being sent as apostles or messengers of the church. The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22); the church in Jerusalem sent Judas and Silas (Acts 15:22); Paul and Silas were sent by the church in Antioch (Acts 15:40); the church in Phillipi sent Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25); and unnamed messengers were sent by the churches (2 Cor 8:23).

Another text which speaks to the need for the church to send is Romans 10:14-17: “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” “How beautiful are the feet” sets the entire chain of events in motion. Once the good news is preached, then it follows that unbelievers will hear and be converted. The use of the word “feet” indicates sending and the going.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, the clarity with which the passage says, “unless

---

<sup>99</sup> Stock, *A Short Handbook of Missions*, 17.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 542.



they are sent,” points to the fact that the text refers to human sending, not divine. It also demonstrates the responsibility of some to go and others to send.<sup>101</sup>

Paramissional organizations, as meritorious as they are, cannot be experts at what they are not, which is the church. The church may delegate, partner with, find help and assistance in, but cannot abdicate responsibility for missions.<sup>102</sup> As Steve Beirn and George W. Murray suggest, “God is a missionary sending God, but it is equally true to say that missionaries are sent by local churches.”<sup>103</sup> It is not just about the missionary being a “sent one,” but rather a “sent from.”

Those who would argue for two equal structures (church and paramissional)<sup>104</sup> do so by either not distinguishing between the roles of apostles of Christ and apostles of the church, by arguing from history and the current missional context, or by having a poor understanding of ecclesiology. Such misguided efforts are reflected in comments like, “Poor people need Jesus more than they need the local church.”<sup>105</sup> The question of the relationship between church and paramissional will always be difficult to balance, but the solution is not removing the church and the local congregations from their primary task

---

<sup>101</sup> Culver, *A Greater Commission*, 121. Culver goes on to say that the sending is by God, by the church, and by the parachurch agencies. He uses Paul’s example to say that he went out without a congregation for missionary authority (116) and would have “doubtless” gone out with a sense of God’s calling without church support. Culver is correct to say that as a general principal, Apostles were not sent out by churches (149), but he fails to distinguish between Apostles of Christ and apostles, messengers, of the church.

<sup>102</sup> Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 7-8, 22.

<sup>103</sup> Beirn and Murray, *Well Sent*, 165.

<sup>104</sup> Ralph Winter, “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission,” *Missiology* 2, no. 1 (1974): 121-39. Winter argues that Christianity has always had two structures and that both are necessary to carry out the Great Commission. Charles Mellis tries to join these two entities (assemblies and agencies) by arguing that both entities constitute the church in a universal sense. Charles J. Mellis, *Committed Communities* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 9.

<sup>105</sup> Mez McConnell and Mike McKinley, *Church in Hard Places: How the Local Church Brings Life to the Poor and Needy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 74. McConnell is quoting a group of missionaries reaching street gangs in South Africa. These missionaries viewed the church as a hindrance, whereas McConnell will ask the question if paramissional organizations are a hindrance to the church in the long run (80).

of missions.<sup>106</sup> Regardless of how paramissional agencies fit into the missional landscape, missions is ultimately the rightful role of the church: the church is the missionary.<sup>107</sup>

### **As You Baptize**

The four Gospels, as well as Acts, give a comprehensive view of the GC. In going, the church is following in the footsteps of Jesus and completing His mission (John 20:21: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you”). The mission of the church in going is to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20) by preaching (Mark 16:15-18: “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel”) the message of Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44-49: “Death, resurrection, repentance . . . you are witnesses of these things”), in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”), unto every nation of the earth (Acts 1:8: “To the end of the earth.”).

With this holistic view, that two assumptions are made in the Matthew 28:18-20 passage. First, it is assumed that those going are preaching the gospel. Second, it is assumed that God will draw people unto Himself.<sup>108</sup> These two assumptions lead to the command to go and baptize new converts. The new converts, beyond simply building loving relationships, are called to gather as a visible body.<sup>109</sup> The order in which the GC is given is significant.<sup>110</sup> Baptism, which gathers those who identify with Christ, is a step

---

<sup>106</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, vol. 2, *Paul & the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 1579.

<sup>107</sup> Tom Steffen, *The Facilitator Era: Beyond Pioneer Church Multiplication* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 90.

<sup>108</sup> Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We Love the Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 36.

<sup>109</sup> DeYoung and Kluck, *Why We Love the Church*, 162-63.

<sup>110</sup> Omri Jenkins, *Allez par Tout le Monde: La Grande Mission de l'Eglise* (Chalon-sur-Saône, France: Europresse, 1997), 149.

which will lay the foundation for the teaching and discipling to follow.<sup>111</sup> This is pictured in Acts 2:41-42 where “those who received his word were baptized . . . and they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.” This pattern is seen again in Acts 11:19-26 as the gospel is proclaimed (v. 20), a great many were added to the Lord (v. 24), a church is established (v. 26), and disciples are formed (v. 26). Missional joy is made complete as those who claim Christ identify with Christ and the body of Christ through baptism.<sup>112</sup>

As the church is gathered, it forms what Dargan calls “a unit of power,” which impacts not only every individual within the body but the world as a whole.<sup>113</sup>

### **Church Planting: A Missional Model**

Paul’s missionary journeys are an example of the inseparable role of church-planting and missions.<sup>114</sup> Mike McKinley writes, “When we’re talking about Christian missions, we ought to be talking about doing the things that lead to the formation of churches.”<sup>115</sup> Other missional authors echo the same sentiment that one cannot talk about missions without talking about establishing churches. David Hesselgrave says, “Only organizations that support evangelism and church-planting in a significant way should be thought of as missions”<sup>116</sup>; Eric Wright explains, “Missions is church planting”<sup>117</sup>;

---

<sup>111</sup> Stock says the order is evangelize, instruct, organize an independent church, and assist the church. The GC however mentions baptism as the first step beyond salvation, which consists of gathering believers. This is intentional as the gathering is where the believers are “cherished, nourished, edified.” Stock, *A Short Handbook of Missions*, 159.

<sup>112</sup> Arthur T. Pierson, *The Divine Enterprise of Missions* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894), 92.

<sup>113</sup> Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 538-39.

<sup>114</sup> A. R. Hay, *New Testament Order for Church and Missionary* (Audubon, NJ: New Testament Missionary Union, 1947), 220.

<sup>115</sup> Mike McKinley, “Missions Is Church Planting, or It’s Not Really Christian Missions,” International Mission Board, October 26, 2017, <https://www.imb.org/2017/10/26/mission-church-planting/>.

<sup>116</sup> Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, 20. He goes on to say that missions has focused too much on multiplying converts and not nearly enough on multiplying congregations (32).

<sup>117</sup> Wright, *A Practical Theology of Missions*, 171.

Edward Smither writes, “The visible expression of Christian mission was the church”<sup>118</sup>; Donald McGavran says missions is “an enterprise devoted to proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, and to persuading men to become His disciples and dependable members of His church”<sup>119</sup>; and finally, Craig Ott and Gene Wilson suggest that “missions must be considered incomplete where there are not churches being planted.”<sup>120</sup>

As Paul founded churches, he gave them the commission to engage the world as instruments of gospel proclamation.<sup>121</sup> The early church gathered primarily in homes, which provided the ability to show hospitality to believers and unbelievers alike. The uniqueness of meeting in someone’s home was that it was tied to a social network, conducive to authentic worship and fellowship, and provided a meaningful way to integrate new believers in Christ.<sup>122</sup> It also provided a collective witness to nonbelievers and natural evangelistic opportunities.<sup>123</sup> Far from being a detriment to church growth, it was the very thing that contributed to it. Paul continued to nurture these same churches through his letters and encouraging visits. These new churches were instruments in mission, which is evident by Paul’s expectation that new converts would engage in making their faith

---

<sup>118</sup> Edward L. Smither, *Mission in the Early Church: Themes and Reflections* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 162.

<sup>119</sup> Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 26.

<sup>120</sup> Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 23. Ott and Wilson argue that weak view of church planting is a consequence of poor ecclesiology in the church. Church planting is “where missiology and ecclesiology intersect” (26).

<sup>121</sup> Gregg R. Allison, “Article XIV: The Church,” in *Confessing the Faith: The Living Legacy of Southern Seminary’s Abstract of Principles*, ed. Albert R. Mohler, Jr. (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2016), 98.

<sup>122</sup> Smither, *Mission in the Early Church*, 151.

<sup>123</sup> Roger Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 181. The house church facilitated an organic church at a time where the church could not exist as a state recognized organization. This is still the case today in many parts of the world where the church is experiencing organic growth.

known.<sup>124</sup> This spontaneous evangelistic expansion is the very key to kingdom expansion according to Roland Allen.<sup>125</sup> As the churches shared their faith, they multiplied, and as they multiplied, they grew the kingdom of God. According to Peter Wagner, the “single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches.”<sup>126</sup> This biblical model is how the church multiplied in North America. As Christians migrated across North America, they began new churches along the way.<sup>127</sup> The church of today is indebted to those first churches who shared the gospel, multiplied themselves, and now call on believers to do the same.<sup>128</sup>

### **Church Planting: Gospel Model**

Individuals are recipients of the gospel, but the community of believers model the gospel in ways individuals cannot; conversion is inevitably communal.<sup>129</sup> Missions which focuses on individual conversions, but is not intentional about establishing churches, will be presenting a truncated gospel. Participation in the life of a local assembly is an essential ingredient of the gospel (Acts 2).<sup>130</sup> The connection between the gospel and church life is not solely consequential but integral and constitutive.<sup>131</sup> Incarnational

---

<sup>124</sup> P. T. O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 42.

<sup>125</sup> Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church, and the Causes which Hinder It* (Yuma, CO: JawboneDigital.com, 2018), 7.

<sup>126</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Ventura, CA: Regal House, 1990), 11.

<sup>127</sup> Tang Len and Charles E. Cotherman, *Sent to Flourish: A Guide to Planting and Multiplying Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), ix.

<sup>128</sup> George Salmon, *The Infallibility of the Church: Lectures Delivered in the Divinity School of the University of Dublin*, 4th ed. (London: John Murray, 1914), 338, Kindle.

<sup>129</sup> Sunquist, *Why Church?*, 37.

<sup>130</sup> Allison, “Article XIV: The Church,” 99.

<sup>131</sup> Joseph H. Sherrad, *T. F. Torrance as Missional Theologian: The Ascended Christ and the Ministry of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2021), 139.

missions is not to replace proclamational missions<sup>132</sup>; however, while the proclamation of the gospel makes the gospel audible, Christians gathered will make the gospel visible<sup>133</sup> as their interaction will “authenticate” the message they proclaim.<sup>134</sup>

The gospel is evidenced by the unity of believers. The beauty of the church is that it gathers people from all walks of life, bonded together in Christ. People that are normally divided by gender, race, social status, and any other human criteria are now brought together in unity in Christ with all their differences transcended in Christ.<sup>135</sup> A. W. Tozer pictures the church as one hundred pianos tuned to the same fork, and therefore, tuned with each other.<sup>136</sup> This unity is the work of the Holy Spirit which equips each individual with spiritual gifts to benefit the whole.<sup>137</sup> Spiritual gifts strengthen the unity of the body as they make each individual interdependent, making them not only related to Christ but related one to another.<sup>138</sup>

The gospel is evidenced in believers’ worship. A Christian cannot experience the presence of God to its fullness in the way he can when believers are gathered. God is glorified when believers gather, the Word is taught, and lives are transformed and conformed into His likeness (2 Cor 3:17-18). Sanctification, the transformative process

---

<sup>132</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 102.

<sup>133</sup> Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), xi. John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Dever points to the fact that the gospel was not only to be proclaimed, but it was to be lived, exemplified, manifested, demonstrable within a visible body.

<sup>134</sup> Smith, *Church Planting by the Book*, 35.

<sup>135</sup> Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*, 102.

<sup>136</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, Project Gutenberg, 2008), 97.

<sup>137</sup> Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 32-33.

<sup>138</sup> Saucy says there is no greater picture of unity than the one provided by the spiritual given for the edification of the body as a whole. Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*, 27.

whose aim is likeness with God, is not simply individual but corporate and ecclesial.<sup>139</sup> As believers are baptized and gathered, they not only model the present hope of the gospel for a lost and dying world, but they expose God's promised future of a completed transformation at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6).<sup>140</sup> The being of the church is the salvation story, as well as the instrument, the object lesson, and the deposit.<sup>141</sup> Is it no wonder men of God, like Martin Luther, marveled at the church: "In my own house there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through."<sup>142</sup>

### **Church Planting: Permanent Model**

Bill Hull describes how the apostles went from a Christocentric to a Churchocentric ministry, which is evidenced by the fact that the world would be reached through congregational means. The body, as an ensemble, is a voice and a model of the gospel.<sup>143</sup> Believers go from Christ who meets the needs of all, to the body of Christ who meets those needs.<sup>144</sup> Many claim to follow in Paul's missionary footsteps, but they create nothing permanent in a church. Allen writes, "Paul did not gather congregations, he planted churches, and only left that church once disciples were made."<sup>145</sup> Paul, being obedient to

---

<sup>139</sup> Hastings argues that conversions have both a personal and an ecclesial aspect. Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church*, 285.

<sup>140</sup> Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 147.

<sup>141</sup> Yoder, *A Theology of Mission*, 126. The deposit refers to that future promise of Christ being united with His bride.

<sup>142</sup> Martin Luther, quoted in Robert G. Rayburn, *O Come Let Us Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 29-30.

<sup>143</sup> Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Church* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 2008), 25.

<sup>144</sup> Hull, *The Disciple Making Church*, 47.

<sup>145</sup> Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours: A Study of the Church in the Four Provinces* (Columbian, SC: ReadaClassic.com, 2010), 8. Allen is critical that missions is often about planting missions, not churches (67).

the GC, meant not simply being satisfied with converts, but with planted churches.<sup>146</sup> The missional mandate of making disciples cannot be done without planting churches. As such, it becomes the standard for all mission work.<sup>147</sup> Every missionary will not be “church planting” *per se*, but every mission should serve the purpose of gathering, growing, and establishing the church. It is the task that lays the foundation to teach, and it is the completed task once disciples are made. Rick Warren says that “starting new congregations is the fastest way to fulfill the Great Commission,”<sup>148</sup> but it could also be said that it is not just the fastest way, it is the only way.

### **As You Teach**

As missionaries go, the gospel is proclaimed, new converts are baptized and taught the whole counsel of God. There is a sense where man never ceases to learn, but in Matthew 28:19-20, Matthew speaks of teaching what is needed to arrive at the maturity of a disciple of Christ. The objective is to see these new converts not be imitators of Western Christianity or adopt the missionary’s convictions but be a disciple or pupil of Christ. R. C. Sproul points out that in the book of Acts one sees repeatably where the *kerygma* (proclamation) is followed by the *didache* (teaching) and that both are inseparable.<sup>149</sup> As people responded to the *kerygma*, they were taught the *didache*. Paul pictures his ministry in Titus 1:1 by saying, “I have been sent to proclaim [*kerygma*] faith to those God has chosen and to teach [*didache*] them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives.”

---

<sup>146</sup> Benjamin Merkle, “Paul’s Ecclesiology,” in *Paul’s Missionary Methods: In His Time and Ours*, ed. Robert L. Plummer and John Mark Terry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 72.

<sup>147</sup> David M. Doran, Pearson Johnson, and Benjamin Eckman, *For the Sake of His Name: Challenging a New Generation for World Missions* (Allen Park, MI: Student Global Impact, 2002), 124.

<sup>148</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 180.

<sup>149</sup> R. C. Sproul, *What Is the Great Commission* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2015), 34.



Proclaiming leads to teaching, and teaching leads to making disciples. These three things are part of a healthy missional church plant. When winning converts is the goal of missions instead of making disciples, then there is an easy rush to get conversions. “Easy believism,” or “nominal Christianity,” has harmed the missional church by embracing professing converts who did not count the cost of discipleship. In doing so, the congregation has a weak foundation that keeps the church in an infancy stage. New converts were to be the foundation on which to build disciples.<sup>150</sup> There are no short cuts to spiritual maturity.<sup>151</sup> The missionary who satisfies himself with teaching but not making disciples runs the risk of making himself the role model and creating clones of himself.<sup>152</sup> Teaching takes place primarily in a community. Paul did not teach new converts at length so they could become a church—he went straight to establishing church structures so new converts could be taught.<sup>153</sup> Teaching to obey all commands assumes committed participation in a local congregation.<sup>154</sup> Paul labored to plant churches because the church is the schoolhouse.<sup>155</sup>

### **Teaching Missional**

Paul describes the proclamation in 1 Corinthians 15:1 as “the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand.” He goes on to summarize this gospel message in verses 3 and 4: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was

---

<sup>150</sup> Smith, *Church Planting by the Book*, 34.

<sup>151</sup> Jenkins, *Allez par Tout le Monde*, 151.

<sup>152</sup> Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 17.

<sup>153</sup> J. D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting, An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 106.

<sup>154</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 22.

<sup>155</sup> Sproul, *What Is the Great Commission*, 12.

buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” The proclamation of the gospel is common to all; however, but Hesselgrave says that proclamation of the gospel is one thing, but teaching the whole counsel of God necessitates greater contextual understanding.<sup>156</sup> Hesselgrave defines *contextualization* as “the attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, Word, and will of God in a way that is faithful to God’s revelation, especially as it is put forth in the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, and that it is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts.”<sup>157</sup> Contextualization is not compromising truth, but it is making sure that what the teacher is saying, and what the hearer is hearing, is one and the same. Contextualization is needed to a lesser extent if a missionary from a rural area moves to the big city to church plant, and to a greater extent the more the language, cultural, societal, economic, or educational differences exist. Missionary acculturation involves knowing how to adapt with needed flexibility without compromise. Ultimately, the Word of God is sufficient in every language and culture, but an awareness nevertheless is needed as to a cultural imprint on how truth is taught.<sup>158</sup> A common mistake, according to James Plueddemann, is for the missionary teacher to not be aware of the development of the learner and not connect biblical truth with the life of “students.”<sup>159</sup> Contextualizing begins with a realization of a cultural bias. It would be naïve and potentially destructive for a missionary to not realize he teaches through cultural lenses. “Cultural self-centeredness

---

<sup>156</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 149.

<sup>157</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, “Contextualization that is Authentic and Relevant,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 12, no. 3 (July-September 1995): 115.

<sup>158</sup> Wright, *A Practical Theology of Missions*, 260.

<sup>159</sup> James E. Plueddemann, *Teaching across Cultures: Contextualizing Education For Global Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 19. Plueddemann pictures cross cultural teaching with building a fence where the teacher builds the “posts” which connect the “rails” (the learner’s life experience), with the Word.

hinders God’s mission.”<sup>160</sup> It will hinder new converts from growing and maturing their own indigenous works by creating a sense of cultural dependency.

### **Teaching Objectives**

The apostle Paul taught and expected obedience from new converts: “We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations” (Rom 1:5); “obedience, which leads to righteousness” (Rom 6:16); “to bring the Gentiles to obedience by word and deed” (Rom 15:18); “to bring about the obedience of faith” (Rom 16:26). There is little point in teaching simply about love for God if that does not translate into obedience to God. If the goal is conversion, then there is a temptation to make salvation so simple as to expect believing, but not expect obedience. If the goal is making disciples, then obedience is necessary. A new believer has everything new: a new power, a new lineage, a new ability to understand the revealed Word, a new access to God in prayer, and a new spiritual family in the community of believers—all things new. So, why have so little expectation of new believers?<sup>161</sup> If a new convert is given new life in Christ by the Holy Spirit, then he can be expected to live a new life of obedience in Christ. Learning is more than learning truth; it is following truth. The church is where believers learn, not just from teachers, but from each other, to give, to exercise hospitality, to serve, to forgive and by practicing the “one another” ministries.<sup>162</sup> Ultimately, Paul’s teaching came full circle by teaching and training new missionaries so they could go, proclaim the gospel, and teach other converts. Paul views this not as the job of a few, but as that of the body of Christ. This is seen in the language he used by calling

---

<sup>160</sup> Bill Selvidge, “The Missio Dei and Culture,” in *Missio Dei: A Wesleyan Understanding*, ed. Keith Schwanz and Joseph Coleson (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2011), 125.

<sup>161</sup> Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 115-17.

<sup>162</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church*, 178-81.

these newfound believers brother, companion, worker, soldier, fellow prisoner, or fellow worker.<sup>163</sup>

Not one biblical text could summarize all of what Paul taught, but Colossians 1:9-14 gives an idea of his objectives. He wanted young believers to be filled with the knowledge of the Word (v. 9), wisdom (v. 9), understanding (v. 9), to walk in a manner worth of the Lord (v. 10), fully pleasing to Him (v. 10), bearing fruit (v. 10), and increasing in knowledge (v. 10). His teaching was both theological and practical by instructing believers not to avoid non-believers, but how not to be conformed to this world (Rom 12:1-2).<sup>164</sup>

Paul did not need to remain long with one church due to the simplicity of his message and his ability to teach young converts how to rely on the Holy Spirit as their source of strength. Not only did he teach truth, but he taught them how to gain further knowledge. This brevity contributed to the success of Paul's ministry.<sup>165</sup> Many young church plants remain in the infancy stage because the missionary is the only authority to teach, and the people tend to wait on him to move, which makes the work stagnant and the people incapable of independent actions.<sup>166</sup> Instead, with Paul, a new convert rapidly grows into a *mathetes* (disciple).

### **Making Disciples**

As missionaries go, the gospel is proclaimed, and believers are baptized, gathered, and taught to be disciples of Jesus Christ. A disciple is one who has placed his faith in Christ, publicly claims and follows Christ, and now is a lifelong pupil of Christ. These different GC stages reflect a growth process where the church matures to the point

---

<sup>163</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 248-49.

<sup>164</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 236-37.

<sup>165</sup> Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 75.

<sup>166</sup> Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 73.

where it no longer depends on an outside missionary source. From the moment a missionary goes, regardless of the nature of his specific responsibilities, he or she is committed to the ultimate objective of making disciples that serve within indigenous churches. This should be the constant objective in view and everything else, whether it be proclamation, planting churches, or teaching, should be toward that end. Given that the church provides the framework for teaching, so do disciples rise from the community of believers. Church planting is the catalyst for the church's disciple making mission. Church planting is discipleship, or it is not church planting.<sup>167</sup>

As reviewed previously, churches can invest in a number of worthy ministries; however, to the extent that a church is investing in missional work that purposes to fulfill the GC, it should measure its efforts in terms of how it serves to make disciples. There are four phases of ministry in the Great Commission. First is the going and proclaiming phase. One would expect the going to occur in an area with no visible gospel witness or those considered particularly unreached.<sup>168</sup> Second is baptizing or gathering of believers into a community of believers. This does not necessarily mean traditional Western structures, but it does include an intentional, organized, regular gathering. Third is the teaching phase, which are young ministries where teaching the whole counsel of God is needed. In this phase, young converts are still dependent on the missionary and his teaching. The final phase of discipleship is where new converts have not only been taught the foundational truths but more importantly perhaps have been taught to depend on the Spirit of God and the Word of God to grow in truth and knowledge. As you go, as you baptize, and as you teach, make disciples.

---

<sup>167</sup> Tony Merida and Scott Zeller, "Church Planting and Disciple Making: How Mission Makes Us More Like Christ," International Mission Board, June 20, 2019, <https://www.imb.org/2019/06/20/planting-and-disciple-making-how-the-mission-makes-us-more-like-christ/>.

<sup>168</sup> Zane Pratt, "Here's What We Mean by Unreached Peoples and Places," International Mission Board, November 22, 2016, <https://www.imb.org/2016/11/22/what-do-we-mean-by-unreached-peoples-and-places/>.

Several Bible commentators say that Paul did not appear to have a strategy, and one could argue that is intentional. One can observe that he went, depended on the Holy Spirit to open doors,<sup>169</sup> preached with authority, faced opposition, and taught others to do the same: to depend on the Holy Spirit, stand in obedience to the truth, and fight the good fight. Paul had a ministry that outlasted him because his focus was not short-term self-serving decisions, but rather making disciples that outlasted individual decisions.<sup>170</sup>

### **From Disciples to Elders**

Beyond Timothy, there is not a lot of information on the investment Paul made in other men, but there are approximately one hundred names connected to Paul in Acts and the Pauline letters. Of those, thirty-eight are coworkers of the Apostle and eight of those are women. From these, Timothy spreads the gospel through Asia; Titus does works in Illyricum (2 Tim 4:10) and Crete (Titus 1:4-5), and Epaphras works in Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea.<sup>171</sup> Paul clearly believed in the 2 Timothy 2:2<sup>172</sup> model that laid the foundation for which D. A. Carson labels the DNA of multiplication.<sup>173</sup> Paul invested in people not so they would follow him, but so they would follow Christ. Paul invested in men so that they would shepherd the flock and do the work of the ministry.

The turning point in Paul's work, as in any church plant, is when elders are established. This as a consistent pattern as described in Acts 14:23: "They had appointed elders for them in every church." Paul instructs Titus to do the same in Titus 1:5: "I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every

---

<sup>169</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 12.

<sup>170</sup> Doran, Johnson, and Eckman, *For the Sake of His Name*, 77.

<sup>171</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 249-54.

<sup>172</sup> Second Tim 2:2 says, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."

<sup>173</sup> D. A. Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: An Exposition of Matthew 5-10* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 523.

town I directed you.” These same churches did not stop at appointed elders; they sent them off as well as apostles (messengers) of the church. In Acts 15:22, Judas Barsabbas and Silas were sent; in 1 Corinthians 16:3, Paul expects the church to select messengers to go with him; in 2 Corinthians 8:19, again a messenger is appointed to travel with Paul; and finally, in Philippians 2:25, messengers were appointed by the church. Paul, as an Apostle, let these churches appoint their own men to represent them. Though Paul and Barnabas also appoint elders, there is no reason to believe the church did not have a say in who was chosen as Paul was training the church on how to select qualified elders (Titus 1; 1 Tim 3).<sup>174</sup>

Though it is a gradual transition, establishing elders should be intentional and purposeful as the missionary will see himself transition into one of three roles. He will become an elder himself, and in doing so, will share leadership responsibilities—he would help model eldership and for a limited season. He will become a helper, in submission to the elders, using his gifts and abilities to grow the church. A third option would be that he transitions to another work where the church plant is yet to be established. A missionary who does not meet the qualifications of an elder could serve under the leadership of these established elders or transition to another missional project. What would not be advisable is for the missionary to remain as lead elder or lead teacher once qualified elders have been recognized by the church. In doing so, he runs the risk of stifling church growth. Churches who do not transition to indigenous elders tend to die off with the loss of the missionary pastor.<sup>175</sup>

Failure to disciple and transition to elders will prevent a church plant from achieving needed maturity. Having invested so much into going, proclaiming, and teaching

---

<sup>174</sup> Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 59.

<sup>175</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 84, 90.

but never arriving to a mature indigenous<sup>176</sup> church that is self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending is one of the great frustrations of missions.<sup>177</sup> When the Foreign Mission Board changed its name to the International Mission Board it purposed to do two things. For one, it wanted to focus attention on what it considered unreached people groups. Second, it focused its attention on what it calls a “church planting movement.” The effectiveness of such a movement did not depend so much on sending more missionaries to start more churches as it did in starting a movement where churches that were planted multiplied themselves. The IMB realized this required a shift in strategy, re-allocating resources, and intentionality in every phase of missionary work.<sup>178</sup>

### **From Disciples to Self-Supporting**

Becoming self-supporting is determinative toward becoming self-governing and self-extending. Being self-supporting is the ability of a church to sustain itself both spiritually and physically. One would expect that every parent of a ministry would want their child to arrive at the maturity of an adult. Two things stand out that will either hinder or delay a church plant from achieving adulthood. The first problem lies in the foundation of the missionary work itself. The missionary is passionate about proclaiming, gathering, and teaching, which is to be expected and desired. However, this also translates in the missionary doing most of the work because he will have more biblical knowledge, ministry discernment, and spiritual wisdom, and overall, more ministry experience than the new converts he is teaching. One significant difference between being in a typical ministry role and being a missionary is the constant reminder for the missionary to work himself

---

<sup>176</sup> HeartCry Missionary Society, “Indigenous Missions,” accessed December 21, 2020, <https://heartcrymissionary.com/about/what-we-do/indigenous-missions/>. Indigenous works are those that are supported and governed by its own people and who will take the gospel to his or her own people.

<sup>177</sup> Stock, *A Short Handbook of Missions*, 178. Stock speaks to this problem already back at the turn of the twentieth century where he lamented that churches in Africa and Asia will still highly dependent of European missions.

<sup>178</sup> A summary of the IMB ‘s significant historical changes since the 1990s may be found at International Mission Board, “1990s,” accessed January 13, 2022, <https://www.imb.org/175/decades/1990s/>.



or herself out of a job. It is rarely something on the forefront in the genesis of a work, yet something that should shape missional work on every level. Teaching someone to be obedient and serve within his or her abilities as an infant prepares him or her for adulthood. Unfortunately, missionary zeal too often translates in the missionary doing “everything” with the hope at some point down the road to pass on responsibilities to a mature believer. Allen laments that missionary churches fail to become indigenous and attributes this to religious pride.<sup>179</sup> Johan Lukasse, who successfully planted fifteen churches in Belgium, warns that the gospel will naturally attract people in need who are not necessarily searching for Christ.<sup>180</sup> He warns against building a church plant on “high maintenance” people who are always in need; people who are listening but never learning; religious people in search of another religious experience; an inordinate amount of college students; or building a cultural church not indigenous to a specific location. In addition, he warns the missionary to not build a work with a foreign flavor, around personal cultural convictions or traditions. The point he is trying to make is not that the church should turn people away who are responding to the gospel, but the way to start a church plant will be foundational to its ability to mature and grow. The gospel is no respecter of persons and should be proclaimed to all, but some outreach ministries (college campuses, homeless shelters, prison ministries) are better suited as an extension of an established work, rather than the foundation of a nascent church plant.<sup>181</sup>

---

<sup>179</sup> Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 40. The religious pride comes from the mindset that the missionary is better trained, knows better, and in some cases culturally superior (context is 1912).

<sup>180</sup> Several biblical references speak of those who sought after Christ because they thought they could benefit from doing so, or those who had a spiritual talk but a wicked heart: Matt 15:8; Jas 1:26; Titus 1:16; John 14:23-24; Matt 6:1-2; Matt 7:21-23; John 6:26-27.

<sup>181</sup> Johan Lukasse, *Mission Possible! Implantation D'Eglise dans une Europe Post-Chrétienne* (Bruxelles, Belgique : Le Bon Livre, 1993), 123. The point Lukasse is making is not that the gospel is not capable of transforming everyone, or that some people are more worthy than others, but in his experience, a church plant needs to be intentional about how it builds its foundation. These needy situations are better addressed once a work has been established.

The second problem lies in financial ties. Allen observes that churches who receive the most help are “weak, lifeless, and helpless.”<sup>182</sup> The younger works depend on others, the weaker they are. In third-world countries in particular, the missionary comes with more resources than the average new convert. In the missionary’s desire to grow the ministry rapidly, or out of guilt for having so much while others have so little, resources are poured into the work. It is difficult to build and sustain missional compounds, buildings, properties, with foreign money and expect to produce indigenous works. Financial dependency teaches people that they cannot provide for themselves, discourages them from becoming autonomous,<sup>183</sup> and perpetuates a subservient role.<sup>184</sup>

It is interesting to observe that Paul did not give financial help to establish churches. As a matter of fact, younger church plants contributed to alleviate the suffering of the older Jerusalem church (Acts 20:1-5) who was facing a great famine. This is not to suggest there is not a place and time for financial support, but it should be considered in light of whether it helps or hinders a church from becoming indigenous. Supporting a national pastor can be helpful if limited in time and it does not discourage a church from supporting the needs of its own shepherd. Helping build a building can be helpful if it is the fruit of an indigenous vision and not the fruit of a “build and they will come” missional desire.<sup>185</sup> Missional works need to keep in mind that God does not lack the resources to fulfill His purposes. Christianity is not a rich man’s religion.<sup>186</sup> Paul commends the churches of Macedonia for their giving and overflowing wealth of generosity in the midst of extreme poverty (2 Cor 8:2). Paul taught churches from the beginning to be obedient in caring for themselves and for others in need. When a missionary is hesitant to believe

---

<sup>182</sup> Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 40.

<sup>183</sup> William S. Dillon, *God’s Work in God’s Way* (Woodworth, WI: Brown Gold, 1972), 276-78.

<sup>184</sup> Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 48.

<sup>185</sup> Yoder, *A Theology of Mission*, 88.

<sup>186</sup> Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, 41.

converts can provide for their own needs, how can he be confident they can direct their own churches?

### **From Disciples to Self-Governing**

There is but a short step between a church being self-supporting and self-governing on its way to being fully indigenous. Governing implies structure and organization. A church is not simply a gathering of two or three believers. Matthew 18:20—“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them”—is often referenced as a basic definition of church. The verse, however, begins with “for,” as an indication that it is commenting on the previous statement. Matthew 18:20 is referring to establishing two or three witnesses in confronting a believer in sin, not the establishment of a church. The issue is not in the number of believers gathered, but rather why they are gathered. The church is the God-ordained local assembly of believers who have committed themselves to each other. They gather regularly, teach the Word, celebrate communion and baptism, give, and serve together. Certainly, the church does more, but it is not less than this.

As the church grows and matures it is called to be self-governing. It will have specific attributes, including:

1. Ownership: church views itself as indigenous.
2. Membership: baptizes new converts.
3. Leadership: appoints leaders.
4. Vision: plans and projects for the future.
5. Training: oversees training of teachers and elders.
6. Shepherding: cares for widows and poor.
7. Finances: provides financial oversight and manages budgets.
8. Doctrine: establishes theological framework, adopts doctrinal statement which reflects convictions and values.

These different areas vary depending on circumstances but are all related to a church's ability to be self-governing. Missionary efforts should slowly remove the scaffolding used to establish a structure in favor of indigenous churches.<sup>187</sup>

### **From Disciples to Self-Extending**

For a long time, sometimes for years, a young church does its best to survive. Like a child who learns to ride a bike for the first time, a missionary holds the hand of that childlike work and prays it can make it on its own. One of the clear indicators that a work will be sustained is its ability to be self-extending. As the church matures, it will see beyond its own needs and see kingdom purposes for its existence. As new converts share their faith, and new believers are added to the congregation, the church will be well on its way to being an indigenous work. As new converts are obedient, the church “has an inherent, God-given power to multiply, just as all other living things that God created.”<sup>188</sup> As it grows in this way, the church will develop a structure germane to its own culture as reflected in its fellowship, worship, and evangelism.<sup>189</sup>

God's missional strategy is found in the multiplication of churches as only a church can produce a church. As the church develops its own passion for evangelism and growth, it will expand beyond its doors by becoming a sending church, establishing daughter churches, and eventually partnering with sister churches. The only way to expand and reach into every crevasse of society is for the churches that are planted to become indigenous self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending. Paul considered his mission accomplished when three goals were met: the gospel was preached, people were converted, and churches were established, and so should the church today.<sup>190</sup>

---

<sup>187</sup> Yoder, *A Theology of Mission*, 199.

<sup>188</sup> George Patterson and Richard Scoggins, *Church Multiplication Guide*, rev. ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2002), 12.

<sup>189</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 12.

<sup>190</sup> Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, 29.

The church has been graced with a mandate to carry the gospel to every nation. The Great Commission was given with the church in mind as evidenced not only in the ultimate objective of the GC, but also in the means to get there. The mission of making disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching is one the church has been divinely equipped to fulfill. As disciples are made, believers who have been taught to follow Christ will continue in obedience to the GC by proclaiming the gospel and growing the kingdom of God.

CHAPTER 5  
THE EXCLUSIVE GROUNDS OF THE CHURCH  
IN PRODUCING HEALTHY MISSIONS

This thesis sought to understand not what the church should do, but what it has been exclusively mandated and uniquely designed to do in regard to missions. The missional nature of the church flows from the exclusive nature of God Himself, His revelation and His relationship to His bride. As such, God has entrusted the church with truth and with the mission of taking that truth to the uttermost. Unfortunately, the church is often presented as a “best option,” a plan A, but justifiably disregarded if it does not live up to its task. It is a rare occurrence to find a missional book which does not affirm the primacy of the church, and yet it is equally rare to find one which does not advocate bypassing the church when judicious to do so. The term “exclusive” makes many feel uncomfortable, preferring to describe the church as important, or central, leaving room for the “what ifs” of church missional failures. To say the church is important makes it relative to other important matters; however, to say it has exclusivity puts it in a category of its own. This tension has left some, through historical pendulum swings, to either embrace a “church only” approach while others have distanced themselves from ecclesial modalities all together in favor of missional sodalities.

What is too often lost in the missional landscape is grasping and appreciating the beauty and efficacy of the church. The church is in the world and for the world as the salt of the earth and light of the world.<sup>1</sup> From the very origins of Christian community,

---

<sup>1</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1975), 30-31.

“to say church is to say mission.”<sup>2</sup> The church is the most powerful weapon in the war against secular, religious, and idolatrous cultures that are at enmity with their Creator.<sup>3</sup> Craig Ott and Gene Wilson write, “The church is the most brilliant concept ever created. It has outlasted cultures, governments, skeptics, and enemies from within and without, and it will continue to do so until Jesus returns.”<sup>4</sup> This thesis is about loving the church and compelling every pastor and every individual interested in missions to share the same love for the bride of Christ, not in an invisible form, but in its local and visible manifestation.

This final chapter will establish healthy parameters for a church mission commitment. Something that is healthy will be prosperous and bear fruit.<sup>5</sup> Dan Bouchelle defines *healthy missions* as that which aligns itself with biblical truth.<sup>6</sup> D. Ray Davis says the missionary task should be to establish healthy churches and goes on to give twelve characteristics of healthy churches regardless of context.<sup>7</sup> In the context of this thesis, *healthy* will be measured by that which aligns itself with the intended role of the church in missions. Healthy, in that experiential missiology,<sup>8</sup> pragmatism, and individualism are put aside in favor of guidelines which help the church fulfil its biblical obligations toward

---

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 7.

<sup>3</sup> R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *The Gathering Storm: Secularism, Culture, and the Church* (Nashville: Nelson, 2020), 15-16.

<sup>4</sup> Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), vii.

<sup>5</sup> Webster Dictionaries, “Healthy,” accessed January 31, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deponent>.

<sup>6</sup> Dan Bouchelle, “Building Healthy Missions Ministries,” Mission Resource Network, August 10, 2021, <https://www.mrnet.org/blog-db-1/2021/8-10>.

<sup>7</sup> D. Ray Davis, “The Missionary Task: Forming a Healthy Church,” International Mission Board, November 6, 2018, <https://www.imb.org/2018/11/06/missionary-task-healthy-church/>.

<sup>8</sup> Experiential Missiology is missions driven by experience as evidenced in history. Experience is used to shape doctrine, instead of doctrine helping to interpret experience.

the body, toward individual missionaries, and toward paramissional organizations. Healthy, strong, successful missions flows from a church which has not abdicated or delegated that which it was mandated to do. Healthy missionaries and paramissional organizations understand, support, and defer in matters that belong exclusively to the church. It may seem obsessive to focus so much on the church, but Paul's passion and obsession was the church as he was continually thinking about how to grow the community of believers.<sup>9</sup>

### **A Healthy Church**

The church is where missions begin. Once a church understands and is convictional about what it is called to do, it will know what to expect from missionaries and paramissional agencies alike. A church which lacks clarity will find itself letting individuals and agencies dictate the terms of the church's engagement. The following guidelines can help a church establish its missional commitment.<sup>10</sup> First, communication is key. The average church attendee is flooded with requests from nonprofits, mission agencies, or missionary friends and relatives. The initiatives the church is supporting and promoting can easily be lost. The church needs to communicate with congruency, meaning every facet of the ministry needs to have the same understanding of missions and pull in the same direction. It needs to communicate with consistency, meaning a lesson taught is not learned, but must be taught, retaught, and reinforced so missions can be consistently before the people. The church needs to communicate with clarity, meaning making sure missional objectives are clear and concise. It is important to be able to articulate the

---

<sup>9</sup> John Howard Yoder, *A Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 104.

<sup>10</sup> These guidelines might seem more suited for churches not associated with a broader denomination; however, regardless of denominational affiliation, a church is responsible for establishing and promoting healthy missions. SBC churches, which support the IMB, can still establish their own missional guidelines and take responsibility for missions within their own sphere of influence. Though the IMB is an extension of SBC churches, it cannot replace the church in those areas where the church has exclusivity.



message entrusted to the church.<sup>11</sup> It needs to communicate with diversity, meaning different means of communication (churchwide emails, Facebook, Instagram, church phone apps, printed newsletters) reach different generations.

Second is to educate the congregation. The average church attendee's idea of missions has been shaped by missionary stories, paramissional agencies, books, or someone they know, support, love or pray for. Educating the congregation on missions helps train and shape how missions should be viewed and understood biblically. Third is to model missions. The GC needs to be lived out at home before it can be exported abroad.<sup>12</sup> The truth that "the light that shines the farthest will shine the brightest at home,"<sup>13</sup> speaks to the fact that as a church grows in love for the Lord, it grows in love for the lost at home and abroad. A church actively committed to making disciples at home will do so abroad.

Fourth is to solidify policies. Establishing solid written policies will help navigate emotional decisions with objectivity. Much care and sensitivity will be needed when communicating to an individual that the church is not prepared to support a given project.<sup>14</sup> Those conversations are always personal, so having policies, a vetting system, and clear church missional objectives will help navigate those situations without creating offenses. It also helps upcoming believers who desire to serve in a missionary capacity to know what to expect and helps provide a compass for the church as a whole. Fifth is to build a missions team. Build missional leaders that can help connect with missionaries,

---

<sup>11</sup> Joseph H. Sherrad, *T. F. Torrance as Missional Theologian: The Ascended Christ and the Ministry of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2021), 2.

<sup>12</sup> Greg Carter, *Skills, Knowledge, Character: A Church-Based Approach to Missionary Candidate Preparation* (Valparaiso, IN: Turtle River, 2010), 29.

<sup>13</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Matthew-Galatians*, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 403-4.

<sup>14</sup> Denominational structures, such as the IMB, expect missionary candidates to be active members in good standing of a denominational church. IMB, "Team Member," accessed January 10, 2022. <https://www.imb.org/go/options/team-member/>. Elders should play a role in the vetting and approval process before an individual is entrusted to the denominational agency.

communicate to the congregation, interview and mentor potential missionaries,<sup>15</sup> visit ministries on the field, and organize short-term mission outreaches and any other missional initiative. A healthy missions program within a church is measured by the effective participation of the church as a family,<sup>16</sup> when a congregation collectively accepts the burden and responsibility for ministry to the world.<sup>17</sup>

### **Understanding Sovereign Missions**

God is sovereign (Col 1:16-17; Isa 45:7-9; Prov 16:33; Job 42:2; Acts 4:27-28). The church is not on a mission to rescue a God in trouble, unable to fulfill His purposes. He rescued us and invites us to participate in the victorious work of Christ.<sup>18</sup> Resting in the sovereignty of God should be a foundational truth on which every mission endeavor is built. The church and the missionary need to be convinced that God lacks neither the means, ability, power, resources, or will to accomplish His purposes. Ross Hastings challenges the view that the church is called to pray for a harvest, but rather, according to Matthew 9:37-38,<sup>19</sup> is called to pray for laborers. His premise is that God is already at work, has prepared hearts to receive the gospel, and calls on believers to proclaim it

---

<sup>15</sup> Eric Wright explains, “The local church is the place where future missionaries are mentored in a process of one-on-one discipleship.” Eric E. Wright, *A Practical Theology of Missions: Dispelling the Mystery, Recovering the Passion* (Leominster, UK: Day One, 2010), 228.

<sup>16</sup> Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas, *Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for Intercultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 276.

<sup>17</sup> James A. Scherer, *Missionary, Go Home!* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 37. Missions has been entrusted to the church from the resurrection of Christ, to His coming again, and as such it belongs to the church by privilege, not by right. Missionary work is a sacrificial offering as unto the Lord (38).

<sup>18</sup> Paul A. Beals, *A People for His Name: A Church-Based Missions Strategy* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 153.

<sup>19</sup> Matt 9:37-38 says, “Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

faithfully.<sup>20</sup> Packer writes that evangelism takes place when the message of the gospel is delivered to unbelieving ears, regardless of how it is received.<sup>21</sup> We are, in essence, in God's field, and laboring the harvest He has prepared, knowing that only God gives growth and produces fruit which we are called to plant and water as God's fellow workers (1 Cor 3:5-9).<sup>22</sup> Dean Blevins says that the missional church sends the church into the world and quickly discovers a God already at work.<sup>23</sup>

There is great solace in knowing that God is sovereign in missions; however, God's sovereignty does not dispense the church from being responsible for obedience to the GC mandate. John MacArthur calls this the "Twin Truths: God's sovereignty and man's responsibility."<sup>24</sup> A firm understanding of the sovereignty of God should propel the church to obey, knowing that He will be victorious and He will fulfill His purposes. When the church falls short and fails at its task, and it will, the purposes of God have not been thwarted. Attempting to resolve the tension between these "twin truths" will either lead to immobilism on the part of the church as it waits on God to do His work, or it will lead to a man-centered mission enterprise which will prove frustrating and discouraging. Some authors, in an attempt to mobilize the church to action, put the emphasis on man's responsibility to obey. Arthur Pierson describes it this way: "In the plan of God, every

---

<sup>20</sup> Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 50. Hastings says this should impact strategy as the missionary seeks evidence of what God is doing and as such reflects a desire to join Him in what He is doing.

<sup>21</sup> James I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 41.

<sup>22</sup> First Cor 3:7-9 reads, "So neither he who plants, nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building."

<sup>23</sup> Dean G. Blevins, "A Missional Catechesis for Faithful Discipleship," in *Missio Dei: A Wesleyan Understanding*, ed. Keith Schwanz and Joseph Coleson (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2011), 142.

<sup>24</sup> John MacArthur, "Twin Truths: God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility," *Grace to You*, February 17, 2013, <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/43-15/twin-truths-gods-sovereignty-and-mans-responsibility>. MacArthur references John 3:11-21 and Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus where on one hand salvation is clearly by grace alone, and yet Nicodemus is also told to believe.

believer is a witness. In the wide field of the world, every disciple is needed as a workman. Without him, God cannot do this work, unless He abandons His plan . . . both Christ and the world are waiting for disciples.”<sup>25</sup> Edwin Dargan makes several statements which seem give the impression that sin can neutralize God’s plan: “Sin has mingled with its own antidote and neutralized the healing virtue,” or “Selfishness and greed have invaded the ranks of the saints and hindered the triumphs of the cross.”<sup>26</sup> Though it may appear that sin triumphs for a season, God brings glory to Himself in every situation and every circumstance. God waits on no one and His plan is perfect in every way. The only question is whether saints are going to be a part of it and whether the church will be faithful to its calling. God has indeed given the church a vital role and God will hold it responsible when it is disobedient to its calling. Thankfully, the success of the mission depends on God, and God alone.

God Himself organizes, empowers, and ultimately accomplishes the mission. The missional task is daunting from a human perspective, but it is far exceeded by the magnitude of the biblical promise God has given to secure the final triumph of His gospel, even to the ends of the earth.<sup>27</sup> Christopher Wright states, “We are seeking to accomplish what God himself wills to happen. This is both humbling and reassuring, for we know that behind all our fumbling efforts stands the supreme will of the living God.”<sup>28</sup> Tom Wells provides an exposé on the subject of God’s sovereignty in missions. He speaks of a time where a Hindu Brahman asked William Carey that if what he was proclaiming about

---

<sup>25</sup> Arthur T. Pierson, *The Divine Enterprise of Missions* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894), 33.

<sup>26</sup> Edwin Charles Dargan, *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches* (Louisville: Charles T. Dearing, 1905), 537.

<sup>27</sup> Philip O. Hopkins, “Mission and Unreached People Groups,” in *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, ed. Bruce Riley Ashford (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 333.

<sup>28</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 129.

God be true, why had he not heard it before? Carey responded that God is never guilty of injustice and that clearly, he had not heard because it pleased God to keep back the gospel from India. In allowing India to sink so deep that His rescue would shine more brightly, and God would display His greatness.<sup>29</sup> Carey's comments would be out of touch with the idea that there are millions of unreached due to man's disobedience. Wells says, "Let us not replace the sovereignty of God by human responsibility."<sup>30</sup> The God of the Bible is not limited by human disobedience. He is self-sufficient, He is not needy, and He is King at the cross as well as at the grave.<sup>31</sup>

Missionaries must be fully confident they serve such a God and continue to promote a high view of God in missions. If not, missions can easily take on the desires, needs, and wisdom of man. All things have been created through Him and for Him (Col 1:16).<sup>32</sup> Missions is rooted in the sovereignty of God and though the church has the responsibility of declaring the Good News to every nation, Christ is the ultimate authority.<sup>33</sup>

### **Understanding Strategic Missions**

Gary Nelson, Gordon King, and Terry Smith, in their book *Going Global*, in speaking to a congregation's involvement in missions, point out that "it is not enough to do 'something' . . . it is possible to do all of the right things in all of the wrong ways, with negative results."<sup>34</sup> There was a time when the missional landscape was so uncharted and

---

<sup>29</sup> Tom Wells, *A Vision for Missions* (East Peoria, IL: Versa, 1985), 13.

<sup>30</sup> Wells, *A Vision for Missions*, 18.

<sup>31</sup> Wells, *A Vision for Missions*, 32, 47.

<sup>32</sup> David M. Doran, Pearson Johnson, and Benjamin Eckman, *For the Sake of His Name: Challenging a New Generation for World Missions* (Allen Park, MI: Student Global Impact, 2002), 49.

<sup>33</sup> Beals, *A People for His Name*, 69.

<sup>34</sup> Gary Nelson, Gordon W. King, and Terry Smith, *Going Global: A Congregation's Introduction to Mission Beyond Our Borders* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2011), 3.

unknown that “going” was the primary strategic thrust. Churches celebrated when missionaries left for the field to proclaim the gospel to the lost with few expectations beyond that. Several factors contribute to twenty-first century missions being much more strategic in nature. Churches are becoming aware that simply “going” and “doing something” is not merely enough if churches are going to successfully leave behind indigenous ministries that will outlast the missionary. The word *strategy* is a military term which speaks to having “a careful plan or method for achieving a particular goal usually over a long period of time.”<sup>35</sup> In Isaiah 36:4, Rabshakeh says to Hezekiah, “Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war?” Just talking about missions with no strategy will not be enough to reach needed objectives. This same principle is echoed in Proverbs 24:6: “Strategic planning (wise guidance) is the key to warfare.”

Strategic missions purposes to reach the GC objective of “making disciples of all nations.” “All nations” is not referring to countries but rather various ethnic groups. One could argue that there are no political nations which have not been in some way impacted by the gospel, but there remain many ethnic groups within those nations that have yet to be reached.<sup>36</sup> For the purpose of this study, missions will be broken down into three GC phases: going, baptizing/teaching, and making disciples. Each phase represents conditions on the ground, a need for missionary works to adapt accordingly, and should be measured against the goal of making disciples. A lot could be said about the role of short-term

---

<sup>35</sup> Webster Dictionaries, “Strategy,” accessed December 22, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deponent>.

<sup>36</sup> Joshua Project says current data indicates about 17,400 distinct people groups are defined as “a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these.” Joshua Project, “Has Everyone Heard?,” assessed January 1, 2022, [https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/has\\_everyone\\_heard](https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/has_everyone_heard). It is helpful to note that Joshua Project’s “first purpose is to support church planting and discipleship efforts,” which means that the statistics they provide are intended to help church planters in their efforts. Joshua Project, “What Is a People Group?,” assessed January 1, 2022, [https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/what\\_is\\_a\\_people\\_group](https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/what_is_a_people_group).

missions or tent-making in closed countries, but the primary focus here is long-term<sup>37</sup> strategies and vocational<sup>38</sup> missional commitments.

Each phase should consider the following: First, sovereignly, what is God already doing? The missionary is joining God in what He is already doing. Instead of stepping out with the idea of what one will do for God, he/she should step out seeking to find out what hearts God has prepared, what ground has been tilled, watered, and readied. The Holy Spirit has already been preparing the hearts of those on the receiving end of ministry. This should be the first prayerful step, in humility, of anyone who begins missional work. Second, providentially, what has God provided? We are not called to seek signs as God provides wisdom; discernment and will providentially open doors of ministry opportunity. God will equip each assembly with the needed skills and resources to fulfill His purposes. Providential opportunities include gifting of individual church members but extends to potential church partnership, resources, timing, and opportunities. Being sensitive to God's providential working protects from commitments that are rushed or emotional, and pushes one to patiently wait on the Lord.

Third, what is the need? As basic as it sounds, a missionary is not going to the field to meet his/her own needs, to leave a legacy, or to find fulfillment. A missionary is going to meet the needs of those God has sent him/her to serve. As a missionary prepares to go to the field, he/she naturally has a lot of ideas of what needs to be done with one-, three-, and five-year goals to accomplish them. While this is to be expected, the needs on the field should dictate missionary engagement. The needs from a missionary's perspective

---

<sup>37</sup> For congruency and clarity, it is helpful to label short-term trips as "ministry" or "missions" depending on intended objectives. A youth group going to serve in a food bank is a wonderful idea and should be called "short-term ministry," while a youth group going to assist a missionary run a Vacation Bible School could be called "short-term missions." The purpose is not to make one more valuable than the other, but it helps educate the church on what is missions.

<sup>38</sup> There are two types of vocational commitments. First are believers who intentionally live and work in a foreign culture with the desire to be a witness and support to a local assembly. Second are missionaries who can only serve in a particular field with a work visa, but their job is a means to an end which is to plant, grow, or strengthen an indigenous church.

(buildings, translation work, programs, camps, seminaries) are not necessarily that of those on the receiving end. Instead of creating ministries and convincing others of their need, there should be a constant reevaluation in light of those being served and the need to form indigenous works.

Fourth, what is being done to facilitate making disciples? This question needs to be on the forefront of every missional engagement. The goal is to make disciples of Christ that will be fully dependent on Him. This begins with the proclamation of the gospel, with a call to discipleship, not just conversion. This continues with the baptizing and gathering of believers with indigenous works and not missional structures in mind. The teaching is one that is not just a transfer of information but a training on how to learn and feed from the Word. Too many missional works consider the indigenous facet as the last one, instead of the continuous one. Missionaries can find themselves twenty years into a work only to discover they have created a church that is unable to sustain itself without the mission. The big difference between pastoral work and missionary work is that the missionary is constantly thinking about ways to work himself out of a job; therein lies the beauty of raising young spiritual children into adults who can leave and cleave to a new indigenous church family.

**Going phase.** This phase consists of sending missionaries to the most unreached areas. The term 10/40 window is widely used today to help visualize regions most in need of the gospel.<sup>39</sup> This broad description was helpful, but not sufficient to target specific ethnic groups who remained unreached. Since then, the term “unreached” has emerged to encourage the evangelical church to be strategic about where to send missionaries. Recently, the term “unengaged, unreached people group” was developed to identify those that “have little, if any, opportunity of hearing about Jesus unless someone goes cross-

---

<sup>39</sup> Luis Bush and Beverly Pegues, *The Move of the Holy Spirit in the 10/40 Window* (Seattle: YWAM, 1999).



culturally.”<sup>40</sup> These areas can be identified by having “no missionaries, and in all likelihood no outreach, no church, no Christian materials, and few, if any, Bibles in these people groups.”<sup>41</sup> The point of these definitions is not to finish the GC task, but “to make sure it starts everywhere.”<sup>42</sup>

A desire to go “where no one else has gone before” can also be blinded by a desire for purpose, value, and significance. The missionary finds his/her identity and purpose in faithfulness and obedience to Christ alone. Though like Paul, the church should desire to proclaim Christ where Christ has yet to be named, the “neediest” area is wherever God sends. An unhealthy focus on the “unreached” can lead to a two-tier approach to missions characterized by David Platt’s statement: “Unreached peoples are unreached for a reason. They’re hard, difficult, and dangerous to reach. All the easy ones are taken.”<sup>43</sup> Such a statement serves to get people’s attention, but it is unhelpful in assessing where a congregation should send missionaries. The idea of unreached is not a static position as seen in Europe, the heart of the Reformation, where countries like Germany, France, and Italy have an average of 1.6 percent evangelicals.<sup>44</sup> Though these countries do not fit the definition of “unreached and unengaged,” few would argue that there is not a great need. The idea of “unreached” does not always fit into a narrow definition of need. Pockets of areas in the US desperately need missional engagement. Areas of Africa, South America, or Asia have a long history of missionary commitment, and yet have places still in great need of evangelists. Perhaps a better approach to determine where to send considers

---

<sup>40</sup> Kate Shellnutt, “Why Missions Experts Are Redefining ‘Unreached People Groups,’” *Christianity Today*, April 22, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/may/redefining-unreached-people-groups-frontier-unengaged-missi.html>.

<sup>41</sup> Joshua Project, “Has Everyone Heard?”

<sup>42</sup> Shellnutt, “Why Missions Experts Are Redefining ‘Unreached People Groups.’”

<sup>43</sup> David Platt, Twitter Post, March 13, 2015, <https://twitter.com/plattdavid/status/576307049694363648>.

<sup>44</sup> Joshua Project, “People Groups, Region: Western Europe,” accessed January 2, 2022, <https://joshuaproject.net/regions/10>.

“callsourcing,” which calls on utter dependence on the sovereign hand of God as He leads and guides where to serve through His Spirit. Listening to God’s call and providential leading will be “vastly superior to our categories and statistics.”<sup>45</sup>

Investing in the “going phase” of missions is rewarding and demanding. Keeping the end in view will impact how a ministry begins,<sup>46</sup> and shape methodologies, attitudes, and dispositions as a foreign church planter.<sup>47</sup> A missionary in the going phase will have to be more established, independent, an evangelist, disciplined, and spiritually strong as a family, as he will not likely have the support found in a more established work. The terrain can be difficult, the culture austere, the ostracism and isolation hard to bear for an inexperienced younger missionary/couple. The going phase would not preclude a single woman given the right circumstances where she could team up with a pioneering team; however, it would seem more judicious to encourage a single woman toward a ministry where her teaching skills can serve a community of believers. Targeting “unengaged and unreached” people groups is certainly a worthy goal. Though, it cannot be a stand-alone criterion, but supported by God’s providential leading and provision.

**The baptizing/teaching phase.** This phase consists of sending missionaries to areas where the gospel has been proclaimed. The church is in its infancy stage with primarily first-generation young believers thirsty to grow and learn. These new converts have few points of spiritual contact within their own culture and family, so the spiritual community becomes the schoolhouse. It does not take long to investigate a field and talk to existing nationals or missionaries on the ground to find out where to find isolated believers in search of a pastor/teacher. They meet in homes or other rudimentary facilities

---

<sup>45</sup> Josh Baylor, “The Danger of Focusing Only on Unreached People Groups Part 1,” *Journal of Biblical Missiology*, October 5, 2020, <https://biblicalmissiology.org/2020/10/05/the-danger-of-focusing-only-on-unreached-people-groups-part-1/>.

<sup>46</sup> Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church, and the Causes which Hinder It* (Yuma, CO: JawboneDigital.com, 2018), 29.

<sup>47</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 16.

and are an easy prey to all wind of doctrine. First generation converts tend to be more volatile as they are learning to face trials in newness of life. Teaching the whole counsel of God is best understood when taught by someone who speaks the indigenous language and is knowledgeable about contextualization, not in compromising the gospel but teaching which understands the culture differences.

The baptizing/teaching phase requires not just a missionary evangelist but a missionary teacher. The evangelist has a primary passion of sharing the gospel and seeing new converts join the body. The shepherd, on the other hand, will bring stability and maturity to a congregation through the systematic teaching of the whole counsel of God. As believers are disciplined, key potential leaders will quickly emerge who can receive targeted training to be elders.

**The making disciples phase.** This phase consists of sending missionaries to areas where the church is identifiable yet still dependent on outside help either financially or spiritually.<sup>48</sup> The task will be to assist the church in becoming self-supporting by establishing elders and develop a ministry model which is indigenously sustainable; assisting in becoming self-governing by helping establish policies and procedures innate to the church; and assisting in becoming self-extending by helping cast a vision beyond its own immediate needs to that of its Jerusalem and beyond.

Just like parenting, which at some point transitions from instruction to coaching, so goes missionary work. It is an emotional experience to watch a child grow into adulthood, where they were once dependent now they go on confidently without looking back. So it is with a church-planting ministry. The missionary knows, as a parent does, that the church cannot grow into full maturity, and some lessons cannot be learned until

---

<sup>48</sup> Elbert E. Smith, *Church Planting by the Book* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2015), 60. Smith points to the fact that financial resources did not flow into these churches, but rather from them.

the church is fully autonomous. At some point, the missionary presence will stunt the development<sup>49</sup> and keep the church from reaching full maturity.

**The post-discipleship phase.** This phase consists of sending missionaries to areas where they will be partnering with sister churches. According to Craig Ott, the coming of age of churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have grown into equal partners and no longer mission churches.<sup>50</sup> These indigenous churches have their own leadership and God-given vision. The missionary task is to help those ministries, in a collaborative effort, achieve certain goals in which the missionary is uniquely qualified to assist. Financial resources are often a consideration, but those should be part of a greater strategic objective. Missionaries can see themselves partner in missional projects, schools, seminaries, or various ministry outreaches that would necessitate readily available resources. It is always encouraging and a great blessing to be a part of what God is doing around the world. The key here is partners who respect the leadership and direction of the indigenous church where partnerships and not dependencies are created.

Paul's missionary church planting was not without opposition. He went, preaching with authority, knowing that some would plant, others would water, but God would provide the increase (1 Cor 3:6-7). Paul went knowing that God preceded him but if the resistance was too great, he did not hesitate to move on to more fertile ground.<sup>51</sup> The missionary landscape is rapidly changing, necessitating that the church to be

---

<sup>49</sup> J. D. Greear, *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches that Send* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 286.

<sup>50</sup> Craig Ott, preface to *The Mission of the Church*, ed. Craig Ott (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), xvi.

<sup>51</sup> Len Tang and Charles E. Cotherman, eds., *Sent to Flourish: A Guide to Planting and Multiplying Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019), 57-58. Tang and Cotherman point to the fact that something is wrong, or something is missing, when there is no fruit. The entire book gives a description of the different fields: empty field with no gospel witness (71), a seeded field, a developed field, and a fourth field where disciples are developed (75).

increasingly more strategic. The landscape has changed geopolitically,<sup>52</sup> economically,<sup>53</sup> and missionally with the center of missional gravity shifting more and more away from the US.<sup>54</sup> There was a time when most mission works began in the “going phase,” but today, with the spread of the gospel and the effective work of the modern missionary movement, many areas of the globe have a gospel witness to build on. Those areas still unengaged and unreached often have other established ministries closer to that culture that have been trying to reach that community.

The church has the tools and the means of being better informed as to the missional needs on the field, and the church should avail itself of such to be more strategic with its investment of resources.<sup>55</sup> Sending more missionaries and pouring more resources is not the answer if it does not produce the result of planting, growing, or strengthening churches. Strategy notwithstanding, as Timothy Tennent writes, “Mission is first and foremost about God and his redemptive purposes and initiatives in the world, quite apart

---

<sup>52</sup> Edmund Clowney says that the exclusion of Christian missionaries is forcing agencies to find less direct ways of representing Christ abroad, particularly through indigenous partnerships. Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 214.

<sup>53</sup> The IMB stats that, on average, a couple needs \$120,000 a year of financial support. IMB, “How Much Does It Cost, on Average, to Support a Missionary,” assessed January 3, 2022, <https://www.imb.org/faq/how-much-does-it-cost-on-average-to-support-a-missionary/>.

<sup>54</sup> According to Gina Zurlo, Todd Johnson, and Peter Crossing of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, North American and Europe send 53 percent of cross-cultural missionaries, while countries like Brazil, South Korea, the Philippines, and China send a large number as well. Gina A. Zurlo, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing, “World Christianity and Mission 2021: Questions about the Future,” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 45, no. 1 (December 2020), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2396939320966220>. According to Tim Challies, in 2017 South Korea sent out 27,436 missionaries second only to the United States. They serve in 170 countries throughout the world with 65 percent serving in parts of Asia due to cultural proximity. Tim Challies, “Which Country Sends the [Second] Most Missionaries?” February 21, 2018, <https://www.challies.com/articles/which-country-sends-the-second-most-missionaries/>.

<sup>55</sup> David Hesselgrave provides a rating sheet for church-planting priority. David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 105.

from any actions or task or strategies the church may undertake. To put it plainly, mission is far more about God and who he is than about us and what we do.”<sup>56</sup>

A healthy mission program is measured not so much by the congregation’s ability to send, but rather to worship. At its heart, worship is rooted in love: the love of a great God that makes possible love for a great God. Missions is an expression of a church’s worship to God and an outflow of its love for God.<sup>57</sup> Andrew Murray says no amount of organization, zeal, discipline, or leadership will overcome the presence of a beloved King for whom the believer’s heart beats: “Why, with millions of Christians in the world, the army of missionaries fighting the hosts of darkness is so small. This answer is lack of heart. The enthusiasm of the kingdom is missing because there is so little enthusiasm for the King.”<sup>58</sup> The missionary problem is a personal one. Motivating a church to missions has less to do with guilting people into action but rather growing them in love for the King. The more believers are fixed on the majestic character of God, the stronger their passion for world evangelization will be.<sup>59</sup>

### **A Healthy Missionary**

A missionary is first and foremost a member of a local church. A missionary should be tied to the church, either within the framework of a sending church or an indigenous church within a specific field of service. Depending on the nature of one’s ministry, there could come a time where a missionary goes from working under the authority of a sending church to serving within the established framework of an

---

<sup>56</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century*, Invitation to Theological Studies Series 3 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 54-55.

<sup>57</sup> Mike Casper, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church’s Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 26.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Murray, *Key to the Missionary Problem* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade), 7-8.

<sup>59</sup> John Piper, “A Pastor’s Role in World Missions,” *Desiring God*, October 31, 1984, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/a-pastors-role-in-world-missions>.

independent church plant. Either way, the church is always in view and central to one's work.

A member is, by definition, someone that is part of a whole, or part of a body. The New Testament Epistles do not constantly remind the readers of their need to be part of a local assembly; there is an underlying assumption that they are. So should it be with missionaries; it should be an underlying assumption that they are healthy members of a church. The reality to the contrary is demonstrated by the many books and articles that articulate a reminder that missionaries need the local church. David Burnette points out that “the local church is indispensable to the life and ministry of a missionary should go without saying. Unfortunately, though, some missionaries and churches in our day have failed to make this vital connection.”<sup>60</sup> A proper understanding of the purpose, function, and role of the church is foundational to anyone who would aspire to being a messenger of the church. Colton Corter explains why the missionary needs a biblical understanding of the church: First, the church gives the missionary his/her job description by bringing clarity to the missional mandate. Missionaries are, as ambassadors of Christ, messengers of the church. Second, the church gives the missionary the platform to promote the gospel by what it proclaims and by what it demonstrates. Third, the church preserves the gospel.<sup>61</sup> It is imperative that missionaries have a healthy ecclesiology if they are expected to produce healthy missiology. The harvest is ready for laborers, and they must come from local churches.<sup>62</sup> When the church sends someone to minister cross-culturally, it should be evident that they are sending a healthy church member.

---

<sup>60</sup> David Burnette, “Why Missionaries Need Local Churches,” *Radical*, February 12, 2020, <https://radical.net/why-missionaries-need-local-churches/>.

<sup>61</sup> Colton Corter, “Why Missionaries Need a Biblical Understanding of the Church,” *Radical*, February 2, 2021. <https://radical.net/articles/why-missionaries-need-a-biblical-understanding-of-the-church/>.

<sup>62</sup> Michael Griffiths, *Envoyer, C'est Partir un Peu: Dans un Monde en Mutation, Comment l'Eglise Peut-elle Accompanyer et Soutenir Ceux qui Sont Envoyés en Mission* (Vevey, Switzerland: Editions des Groupes Missionnaires, 1997), 37.

## **A Healthy Missionary Is Affirmed by the Church**

The gifting and calling of a missionary are to be observed and affirmed by the church. Agencies alone are not equipped to evaluate the qualities needed to be a missionary.<sup>63</sup> It would be a mistake to send people cross-culturally that have not proven themselves within their immediate sphere of influence. The goal should be for the church to send well-prepared, their very best,<sup>64</sup> people abroad knowing that they will face an onslaught of spiritual challenges.<sup>65</sup> This is not to suggest that only well-seasoned candidates will be sent to the field, as some lessons can only be learned on the ground. Given the right context and preparation, part of one's training and maturing can take place on the field. The church should expect the agency to place an individual in a situation where this maturing can take place.

The church and its elders should be able to observe the following: First is a passion for the lost. An individual who does not see the heathen at home will not see them overseas.<sup>66</sup> Though the Lord does place a burden for specific peoples, the field is the world, and a passion for the lost does not discriminate geographically.

Second is a humility in service. The life of a missionary, though at times glamorized from a supporting church's perspective, is a life of obedience, service, and dying to self. It will take humility to face mockery of the heathen, disappointments and betrayals of professing believers, and conflicts with coworkers. Humility should be observed in the church, with the willingness to serve in whatever capacity, in being slow

---

<sup>63</sup> David L. Frazier, *Mission Smart: 15 Critical Questions to Ask before Launching Overseas* (Memphis: Equipping Servants, 2014), 5.

<sup>64</sup> Bland Mason, "Generosity as a Church: Releasing Your Best," Send Network, accessed January 4, 2022, <https://www.namb.net/send-network/resource/generosity-as-a-church-releasing-your-best/>.

<sup>65</sup> J. Herbert Kane, *The Making of a Missionary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 5; Jerry Ranking, "Let Us Not Forget That Missions Is Spiritual Warfare," in Barnett, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 342. Kelly O'Donnell says spiritual, emotional, interpersonal, and physical stresses begin to multiply and continue "unabated throughout one's career." Kelly O'Donnell, *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost for World Evangelization* (Elizabethton, TN: William Carey Library, 2013), 386.

<sup>66</sup> Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 575.



to anger, quick to forgive, and not thinking highly of oneself. Missions is about bringing glory to God, made manifest, “He must increase; I must decrease” (John 3:30). Third, an unwavering trust in the sovereignty of God. This is a key component to evangelism and how one is to trust the Lord to do His will and fulfill His purposes in all circumstances. There will be many times where the missionary will, in the midst of the storm, find a restful trust in God. The missionary life is one of uncertainty, as one learns to be faithful and patiently wait on the Lord to provide.

Fourth is pure motives. The missionary is to serve without selfish motives.<sup>67</sup> Glorifying God is the one pure motive of missions (Matt 5:16; 1 Cor 10:31). The motive for missions is not zeal, passion, or guilt, but a conviction that God is worthy to be known and praised. Several other motives, some seemingly righteous, can easily attach themselves to the heart of man. Missions is not about rescuing a God unable to make it without man; not an opportunity to bring attention to oneself; not a search for affirmation or self-worth; not a desire to make a difference for God; not an opportunity for a missionary kid to return to a place of familiarity; not a place for financial gain or an opportunity to just do something for God. Proper motives are what sustainability and missional perseverance is built upon. We see the importance of this in Matthew 10:1-16 where the twelve Apostles are commissioned. From this passage we learn that an apostle was to serve without selfish motives (Matt 10:8b). Peter, in exhorting elders in the church, says to make sure they are serving out of pure motives (1 Pet 5:1-4). The missionary should willfully submit and desire such examination knowing that one can easily be deceived (1 Cor 4:5; Ps 19:12; Jer 17:9). It seems taboo and at times offensive to question the motives of someone wanting to serve, however, though the desire to be a missionary is honorable, it is not necessarily indicative of righteous motives.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Frazier says the first question to ask a missionary candidate is “why are you going?” Frazier, *Mission Smart*, 17.

<sup>68</sup> Don N. Howell, Jr., *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 141.

Fifth is gifting for ministry. Nothing can be more frustrating than trying to serve in a capacity where one is not gifted or prepared. The church is to examine the giftings of an individual to ensure he/she is equipped for the expected mission. A church planter would be expected to have the gift of preaching, which is “the ability to communicate biblical truth in powerful and relevant ways.”<sup>69</sup> A church builder should be expected to have the gift of teaching and shepherding a flock to maturity. The church is the place to exercise spiritual gifts and examine the fruit thereof. Hudson Taylor says the missionary should experience “blessings in the Lord’s work at home,” meaning one’s giftings should bear fruit at home before leaving for the field.<sup>70</sup> The church sent Barnabas (meaning Son of Encouragement) based upon one of his spiritual gifts (Acts 4:36). The church also knew him as a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith (Acts 11:24).

Sixth is a commitment to discipleship. The ultimate objective of the Great Commission is that of making disciples. The missionary should be obviously a disciple in that he has a steady spiritual walk with God. He should also be a discipler, which does not come with a title but is one who intentionally pours into the life of others.<sup>71</sup>

Seventh is proven character. A missionary needs to be a person of great character. As Yoder puts it, “the problem for the missionary is not finding a place to go, it is being the kind of person worth being there.”<sup>72</sup> They will find themselves in situations where no one is looking over their shoulder, telling them when to get up, or what to do for the day. Strong godly character will be needed to weather the storms of ministry. Proven integrity will be needed to sustain the pressures of mission work. Character and

---

<sup>69</sup> Wright, *A Practical Theology of Missions*, 175.

<sup>70</sup> Hudson Taylor, quoted in Wright, *A Practical Theology of Missions*, 182.

<sup>71</sup> George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 297-98.

<sup>72</sup> Yoder, *A Theology of Mission*, 421.

integrity can only be demonstrated through testing.<sup>73</sup> A missionary should not be a novice as such character comes with experience, time, and trials. Paul praises Timothy for his proven character after serving with him for twelve years (Phil 2:22). Paul spent nearly ten years in preparation for being sent by Antioch (Acts 9:30; 11:25-26).<sup>74</sup> There is wisdom in sending missionaries at an age where they more easily learn a language and adapt to culture; however, in situations where missionary candidates are young and have yet to be proven, it would be judicious for the sending church to see that they serve with, and perhaps answer to, a veteran missionary who can mentor them.

Eighth is a love for God. A love for people is driven by a love for God. Biblical leaders had a constant desire to protect God's honor, reputation, and bring Him glory. Such devotion would free them to lead, love, and serve people. Those attributes are seen in Moses (Exod 32:11-14), Joshua (Josh 7:9), Samuel (1 Sam 12:22), Daniel (Dan 5:23), and Nehemiah (Neh 12:31, 40).<sup>75</sup> A love for God is cultivated by obedience to His Word. One cannot expect obedience in the greater things if not proven in the smaller steps of the Christian walk. The church should be able to observe this love for God demonstrated not only in words, but in deeds.

Ninthly is faithful. First Corinthians 4:2 says, "It is required of stewards that they be found faithful." Clyde Meador reminds the missionary, "We are inadequate; but God is adequate. We are called not to be supermen and superwomen, but to be faithful and respond to His mission and task as He calls and allows us."<sup>76</sup> Missionaries are not so much called to be bright visionaries with brilliant plans, as much as they are to be faithful

---

<sup>73</sup> Rom 5:3-5 says, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

<sup>74</sup> Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 297-98.

<sup>75</sup> Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 298.

<sup>76</sup> Clyde Meador, "Where Do You Fit in the Mission of God?" in Barnett, *Discovering the Mission of God*, 613.

to the divine mandate. Churches can be easily drawn to missionaries that are charismatic, confident, or seemingly successful, but the real measure of success is how faithful they are to God's plan.<sup>77</sup> It is common to find someone who believes he has found a better plan than the church; one that is more efficient, more effective, or more expedient. In doing so, one attaches himself to sodalities of like-minded people instead of trusting God and being faithful to His plan.

### **A Healthy Missionary Is Sent by the Church**

A church will have missionaries they send from their own congregation and missionaries they simply support financially. A supporting church should be convictional about the role of a sending church, meaning it should ensure that any missionary it supports has been properly affirmed and sent by a local church. For this to happen, direct communication with church leadership is a must. As a sending church, the church takes responsibility for identifying, preparing, affirming, and sending according to an Acts 13 pattern.<sup>78</sup> Church leaders, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, pray, fast, and laid hands-on Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3). These men were sent with the full approval and blessing of the church.<sup>79</sup> For the missionary, establishing and maintaining an intentional relationship with a sending church is a healthy foundation which will not crack under the weight of ministry.<sup>80</sup> The Association of Baptists for World Evangelism says that a study of 40,000 missionaries from 600 mission agencies, indicates that 43

---

<sup>77</sup> Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 300.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Picirilli believes this laying on of hands was a way to identify with those being sent, commissioning and entrusting them to God on their journey. Robert E. Picirilli, *Paul the Apostle, Missionary, Martyr, Theologian* (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 78.

<sup>79</sup> Mack Stiles, "Eight Types of People Churches Should Send to the Mission Field," Southern Equip, March 5, 2021, <https://equip.sbts.edu/article/eight-types-of-people-churches-should-send-to-the-mission-field/>.

<sup>80</sup> Jason Hunsucker, "How to Be Sent Well, Part one," The Upstream Collective, August 6, 2019, <https://www.theupstreamcollective.org/post/how-to-be-sent-well-part-one?lang=en>.

percent quit and leave the field prematurely. The article points to reasons for such high attrition numbers and speaks to the importance of being sent out by the church as a remedy to this problem: “It’s clear in the book of Acts that missionaries are sent by churches. God’s plan for church growth is that churches grow out of churches.”<sup>81</sup> Hesselgrave agrees by attributing missional success to the backing of a sending church.<sup>82</sup> A church which sends will be more likely to take responsibility for and ownership of the missionary.<sup>83</sup> Such an understanding generates a greater sensitivity to missionary needs, whether financial, emotional, or spiritual. It incentivizes the church to pray and care for these sent ones. It helps the church focus on what it is to do through the missionary, not just what it can do for the missionary.<sup>84</sup> As the missionaries return to visit, they find themselves drawn to and investing in their sending church.

A church which sends will want to establish an accountability relationship out of a desire to be involved in the ministry. This type of relationship is seen in the church at Philippi with Paul, which included encouragement (Phil 2:1-2), financial help (Phil 4:15-16), and sending help (Phil 2:25) to assist with the ministry so that the church would be a true partner with Paul in ministry (Phil 1:5).<sup>85</sup> This type of accountability from a missionary is not just voluntary, it is intentional. The missionary puts himself in a place

---

<sup>81</sup> ABWE Editorial Staff, “The Single Reason Most Missionaries Don’t Last on the Field (and How to Fix It),” September 18, 2019, <https://www.abwe.org/blog/single-reason-most-missionaries-don-t-last-field-and-how-fix-it>. The mission points to not having the backing of a mission agency as critical. They point to a sending church and a paramissional partnership as essential to success.

<sup>82</sup> Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, 425.

<sup>83</sup> Steve Beirn with George W. Murray, *Well Sent: Reimagining the Church’s Missionary-Sending Process* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2015), 60-61. Sending stimulates the church toward a global focus, helps it not be self-centered, and ultimately makes the church stronger. It is no longer a place on a map, it is personal and a subject of prayer.

<sup>84</sup> Tom Julien, *Antioch Revisited: Reuniting the Church with Her Mission* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 2006), 2.

<sup>85</sup> Erich Sauer, *From Eternity to Eternity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954), 61-62.

where he genuinely submits to the leadership<sup>86</sup> of the church and makes himself accountable.<sup>87</sup> As both the church and missionary grow in their commitment to each other, so does the relationship.<sup>88</sup>

David Meade laments in his book *Here to There* that eight out of ten who claim they want to make it to the mission field never do.<sup>89</sup> He gives advice to these mission seekers on how to convince the church to get behind their call and send. Perhaps so many start and do not finish that quest because they did not belong on that journey to begin with. The better advice is to be a part of a healthy church and submit to its leadership. Some might hesitate out of fear that a church would keep them from pursuing their heart's desires, but one also must trust God to lead in the lives of those He has placed in the church. In the situation where a church is not interested in being part of the GC mandate, it might be time to find a church that is. However, the impetus is not to find a church which will support one's desires, but a healthy biblical church to which one can freely submit.

### **A Healthy Paramissional Organization**

The mission agency is a facilitator, not a sender. Paul Beals calls agencies “service organizations,” which implement the sending initiated by the church<sup>90</sup> and in doing so let the church be the church.<sup>91</sup> The purpose of this section is to set healthy

---

<sup>86</sup> Jonathan Leeman says, “People don’t join churches, they submit to them.” Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 91.

<sup>87</sup> Beirn and Murray, *Well Sent*, 191-92.

<sup>88</sup> Daniel Montgomery and Mike Cospers, *Faithmapping: A Gospel Atlas for Your Spiritual Journey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 135.

<sup>89</sup> David Meade, *Here to There* (Newnan, GA: Propempo International, 2016), 7.

<sup>90</sup> Beals, *A People for His Name*, 133, 136-37.

<sup>91</sup> Peter Beyerhaus and Henry Lefever, *The Responsible Church and the Foreign Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1964), 10.

working parameters that allow both the church to fulfill its biblical obligations and the agency to fulfill its mission.

The current missional context, unfortunately, is one where the church's engagement is often limited to paying and praying.<sup>92</sup> Agencies have become the dominant figure ever since they controlled missional money, personnel, and infrastructures.<sup>93</sup> Have agencies, as Tom Julien would suggest, supplanted the church not out of desire to do so, but necessity of efficiency?<sup>94</sup> Some have suggested that churches should see agencies as raised by God to partner with the church,<sup>95</sup> while others say there is no place for paramissional organizations; that they are, as George Peters writes, an "unfortunate and abnormal historical development."<sup>96</sup> Sam Metcalf has suggested that the tension between church and agencies is the fruit of "narrow-minded" pastors with an "aberrant ecclesiology," which he calls the "supremacy of the local church."<sup>97</sup> He suggests and encourages the one that does not "fit" within the context of the local church to pursue "greater" things on the outside.<sup>98</sup> Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost see the need for apostolic roles independent of the church as key to "unlocking the power" of the New Testament church.<sup>99</sup> Is there something better, more powerful, than the church that Paul labored to

---

<sup>92</sup> Albert McClellan, *The Missions Tasks of a Church* (Nashville: Convention, 1969), 15.

<sup>93</sup> Yoder, *A Theology of Mission*, 172.

<sup>94</sup> Julien, *Antioch Revisited*, 59. Julien advocates for a partnership where the missionary is spiritually accountable to the church while the agency has organizational accountability.

<sup>95</sup> Julien, *Antioch Revisited*, 58-59.

<sup>96</sup> Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 214.

<sup>97</sup> Sam Metcalf, *Beyond the Local Church: How Apostolic Movements Can Change the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 64.

<sup>98</sup> Metcalf, *Beyond the Local Church*, 15-16. Metcalf says that an attempt to be faithful to the local church will blind and cripple individuals.

<sup>99</sup> Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, *The Faith of Leap: Embracing a Theology of Adventure and Risk* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 82. The confusion comes from a lack of distinction between Apostles, the twelve, and apostles, messengers of the church.

plant and establish wherever he went? This seems hardly consistent with the biblical narrative.

The relationship between paramissional agencies and sending churches have at times been contentious, but they need not be. The church should be clear as to its missional objectives and biblical obligations and find an agency willing to work within that framework.<sup>100</sup> Given the many variables entailed in working with an agency, the following parameters remain broad in nature. First, does the agency recognize the overarching authority of the church? Mack Stiles says a healthy paramissional ministry will understand that it is not a church and will not attempt to act like one. A paramissional ministry who does not make that distinction will be bound to produce unhealthy fruit by practicing things best left for the church.<sup>101</sup>

Though every agency will have written policies that mention the importance of the church, Peter Greer and Chris Horst say the culture of an agency will predict behavior. A mixture of attitudes, actions, and beliefs by agency leaders will shape the culture as one that gives deference to the church, or one that sees itself as functioning outside the boundaries of the church.<sup>102</sup> The following are sample questions that can help ascertain the culture *vis-à-vis* the church. Are agency leaders active in a local church? Can a missionary be approved by the agency without a home/sending church? Will the board agree to send a missionary cross-culturally that has not been affirmed or deemed ready by a sending church? Under what circumstances is the home church notified of issues pertaining to a particular missionary? Can a church representative attend the agency missionary candidacy process? How does the agency respond when a sending church notifies the agency that a

---

<sup>100</sup> A Southern Baptist Church has the option of engaging the IMB as to a specific area of ministry they would like to be engaged in, or they have the freedom to seek an agency that would support a desired agenda.

<sup>101</sup> Mack Stiles, "Nine Marks of a Healthy Parachurch Ministry," 9Marks, March 1, 2011, <https://www.9marks.org/article/journalnine-marks-healthy-parachurch-ministry/>.

<sup>102</sup> Peter Greer and Chris Horst, *Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2014), 155.



particular missionary no longer has the support, financial or otherwise, of their sending church?

Second, is there theological congruency between the agency and the church? The church is sending doctrinal truth, so examining the theological positions of an agency is not a secondary matter. Agencies tend to be broad in beliefs and pragmatic in the application of truth in order to “become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some” (1 Cor 9:22). Generally speaking, the church, as the guardian of truth, is going to be more sensitive to the purity of the gospel and the exactitude of its teaching. Assuming the agency has a position that the Word of God is inspired, infallible, complete, and sufficient. The following are sample questions that can help ascertain the doctrinal congruency of an agency.<sup>103</sup> How are issues of contextualization handled? What are examples of issues that would be considered cultural and not biblical? When it comes to ecumenism, what criteria is used for establishing partnerships on the field? What position does the agency take regarding the charismatic movement often present on the mission field? Finding men to shepherd the flock can be a challenge, what happens if there are only women to choose from? What is the agency’s position on divorce and remarriage and how that impacts training elders? The list of theological questions will be indicative of the sending church’s position in areas the church considers primordial.

Third, does the agency provide an adequate level of financial transparency? Money is not neutral, and Jerry White says it is one of four critical issues between the church and agencies<sup>104</sup> as it impacts relationships, motivations, and decisions. The potential conflict of interest comes from the fact that agencies do not generate income; they are dependent on the church’s giving either directly from churches or as a percentage of missionary income. The church has an obligation to ensure that the offerings given as

---

<sup>103</sup> These questions presuppose a traditional Baptist theological position. Questions would need to be tailored to reflect the church’s doctrinal and convictional positions.

<sup>104</sup> Jerry White, *The Church and the Parachurch: An Uneasy Marriage* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1983), 31.

unto the Lord are well invested for the kingdom; therefore, questions of money should not be frowned upon. The following are sample questions that can help ascertain the financial transparency of an agency. What is the missionary budget and what is it based on? What is the breakdown as to how the agency spends the funds it receives? Does the agency fund missionary projects and infrastructures, and if so, what criteria does it use to determine what to fund? Does the agency finance and own the church buildings being planted overseas? There is a danger that money can be used as a means of control. It is hard to invest financially in a ministry and not want to maintain control. Peter Beyerhaus and Henry Lefever say money, if not careful, can replace the sword in controlling works on the field.<sup>105</sup>

Fourth, is the agency committed to fulfilling the GC by investing in making disciples? The objective of a missionary work is to birth a church with new converts committed to be followers of Christ. Every phase or aspect of missionary work should be measured by that ultimate goal. The following are sample questions that can help ascertain an agency's commitment to making disciples as evidenced by planting, establishing, or strengthening indigenous churches. What are the agency's ministry goals? What constitutes a church plant? Some consider any house gathering a church plant while others put a number of baptized believers as a criterion. How do ministries (schools, hospitals, translation work) fit into the Great Commission mandate? How does the agency partner with indigenous works? How do missionaries transition from a leading role to a supporting role? When is a church considered planted? How is the agency strategic in ensuring a church plant becomes financially and spiritually indigenous?

The answer to some of these questions will be in writing, but most will be observed on the field and best understood by sitting down with missionaries on the ground. A field visit is a must for the candidate possibly accompanied by a church elder familiar

---

<sup>105</sup> Beyerhaus and Lefever, *The Responsible Church*, 37.

with missions, particularly where the church is going to be responsible for sending a missionary.<sup>106</sup>

Mission agencies who love the church and understand its primacy can certainly be helpful in assisting a congregation in fulfilling the GC mandate. Stiles says a healthy paramissional organization “knows that it exists primarily to protect the church . . . not primarily to ‘step in’ and ‘do the job’ which the church is failing to do.”<sup>107</sup> He says a good model for parachurch ministries can be found in Acts 6, where deacons were appointed to come alongside elders to free them up to preach the gospel. So do parachurch ministries come alongside, not to do what the church was uniquely designed to do, but to free the church to do so.<sup>108</sup> As they come alongside the church, they can help assist in major decisions,<sup>109</sup> provide field support, specific training, help with cultural adaptation, provide medical assistance, help with communication, and provide field accountability, to name a few areas.<sup>110</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The passion for this research was born out of love for Christ, His bride, and His mission. This bride is not some mystical, invisible concept. She is real and visible in every gathering of those who profess Christ as their Lord and Savior. Christ redeemed His bride, equipped her, and sent her on a mission to make disciples of every nation. It would be easy to be disillusioned with the church when faced with its shortcomings, incompetence, ineffectiveness, or even disobedience. In doing so, one could lose sight of its beauty, efficacy, miraculous existence, giftedness, uniqueness, or power. The church,

---

<sup>106</sup> Sending, as opposed to supporting a missionary that has been affirmed and commissioned by another congregation.

<sup>107</sup> Stiles, “Nine Marks of a Healthy Parachurch Ministry.”

<sup>108</sup> Stiles, “Nine Marks of a Healthy Parachurch Ministry.”

<sup>109</sup> Beirn and Murray, *Well Sent*, 190-91.

<sup>110</sup> Griffiths, *Envoyer, C'est Partir un Peu*, 39.

like each individual member, is being completed and sanctified to be conformed to the image of Christ.<sup>111</sup> One must be confident that He who began a good work, will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6). In the words of Jan Hus, “Every earthly pilgrim ought to faithfully love Jesus Christ, the Lord, the bridegroom of that church, and also the church herself, His Bride.”<sup>112</sup>

Few engaged in missions would not recognize the importance of the church, and yet many are quick to bypass and even usurp the church when it is perceived to be a hindrance. Yet, the truth remains that the church is God’s chosen instrument to proclaim, model, and carry the gospel to the uttermost parts of the world, and so should it be for every believer passionate about doing the same. God’s design in instituting the church cannot be improved upon, only conformed to, and obeyed.<sup>113</sup> Hesselgrave points out, “Both a mission less church or a churchless mission is out of step with the plan of God.”<sup>114</sup>

As missionaries are sent in obedience to the GC mandate, there is great rejoicing over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7). As believers are baptized, there is great hope in seeing the visible gathered body, knowing it is a precursor to the bride of Christ being called out.<sup>115</sup> As the gospel is proclaimed, more and more churches are established from which the gospel sounds forth. As long as there are men and women in darkness, there will be a church that God uses to respond to the call of sending truth, through faithful servants, to the uttermost. The mission, in its purpose and design, is ultimately God’s. The promise to build His church will find its completion when the last unbeliever answers the

---

<sup>111</sup> Sauer, *From Eternity to Eternity*, 70. Sauer compares the physical body, which is the instrument where the soul and spirit are revealed, and the body of Christ where His life and truth is revealed.

<sup>112</sup> Jan Hus, *De Ecclesia: The Church*, trans. David Schley Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915), 1.

<sup>113</sup> Greear writes, “You can’t farm out obedience to the Great Commission.” Greear, *Gaining by Losing*, 217.

<sup>114</sup> Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, 39.

<sup>115</sup> Pierson, *The Divine Enterprise of Missions*, 92.

call and enters the fold. With this promise comes the thrill of mission, not in that it might succeed, but that it will.<sup>116</sup>

As the church sends missionaries, it follows in the footsteps of the Son of God who came to earth over two thousand years ago on a mission of redemption. Kevin DeYoung writes, “God is a missionary God. The Bible is a missionary book. The gospel is a missionary message. The church is a missionary institution.”<sup>117</sup> May every believer be constrained by the love of God for His Son and His bride as the church is found faithful to its calling of making disciples of all nations.

---

<sup>116</sup> Kevin DeYoung, “Five Surprising Motivations for Missions,” Cross, 2013, <https://crosscon.com/resources/kevin-deyoung/five-surprising-motivations-for-mission-session-iii/>.

<sup>117</sup> Kane, *The Making of a Missionary*, 1.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ABWE Editorial Staff. "The Single Reason Most Missionaries Don't Last on the Field (And How to Fix It)." September 18, 2019. <https://www.abwe.org/blog/single-reason-most-missionaries-don-t-last-field-and-how-fix-it>.
- Akin, Daniel L., ed. *10 Who Changed the World*. Nashville: B & H, 2012.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *A Theology for the Church*. Rev. ed. Nashville: B & H, 2014.
- Allen, Roland. *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours, A Study of the Church in the Four Provinces*. Columbia, SC: ReadaClassic.com, 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997.
- Allison, Davis, and Dale Allison Jr. *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments*. Vol. 2. Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1991.
- Allison, Gregg R. *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Allison, Gregg R. *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016.
- Anderson, Stanley E. *The First Church*. Little Rock, AK: The Challenge Press, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Your Baptism Is Important*. Little Rock, AK: Seminary Press, 1958.
- Anyabwile, Thabiti M. *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Ashford, Bruce, ed. *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*. Nashville: B & H, 2011.
- Bannister, Andy. "Isn't Christianity Arrogant?" Ravi Zacharias International Ministries. Accessed January 22, 2021. <https://www.rzim.org/read/a-slice-of-infinity/isnt-christianity-arrogant>.
- Barclay, William B. *1 & 2 Timothy*. An EP Study Commentary. Faverdale North, UK: Evangelical, 2005.
- Barnett, Betty. *Friend Raising: Building a Missionary Support Team That Lasts*. Seattle: YWAM, 2003.
- Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Edited by William F. Arndt and Felix Wilbur Gingrich. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

- Bavinck, J. H. *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*. Translated by David H. Freeman. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960.
- Baylor, Josh. "The Danger of Focusing Only on Unreached People Groups Part 1." *Journal of Biblical Missiology*, October 5, 2020. <https://biblicalmissiology.org/2020/10/05/the-danger-of-focusing-only-on-unreached-people-groups-part-1/>.
- Beals, Paul A. *A People for His Name: A Church-Based Missions Strategy*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995.
- Beaver, Pierce R. *Pioneers in Mission: The Early Missionary Ordination Sermons, Charges, and Instructions*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1966.
- Beirn, Steve, and George W. Murray. *Well Sent: Reimagining the Church's Missionary-Sending Process*. Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2015.
- Bevans, Stephen, and Roger Schroeder. *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004.
- Beyerhaus, Peter, and Henry Lefever. *The Responsible Church and the Foreign Mission*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1964.
- Blackaby, Henry T., Richard Blackaby, and Claude V. King. *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. Nashville: B & H, 2008.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Matthew*. The New American Commentary, vol. 22. Nashville: B & H, 1992.
- Blue Letter Bible. "Assembly." Accessed January 17, 2022. [https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/search.cfm?Criteria=assembly%2A+G1577&t=KJV#s=s\\_primary\\_0](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/search.cfm?Criteria=assembly%2A+G1577&t=KJV#s=s_primary_0).
- Boer, Henry R. *Pentecost and Missions*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.
- Boothe, Charles O. *Plain Theology for Plain People*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017.
- Bouchelle, Dan. "Building Healthy Missions Ministries." Mission Resource Network, August 10, 2021. <https://www.mrnet.org/blog-db-1/2021/8-10>.
- Bradley, Zack. *The Sending Church Defined*. Edited by Rodney Calfee. Knoxville: Upstream Collective, 2020.
- Brown, Jeannine K. *Matthew*. Teach the Text Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. Eerdmans Classic Biblical Commentaries Series. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984.
- Bruner, Frederick D. *The Gospel of John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012.
- Burch, Sharon Peebles. "Christian Particularity Does Not Depend on Exclusive Truth Claims: Teaching Enthusiastic Witness in a Pluralistic World." *Religious Education* 95, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 299-307.

- Burgess, Joseph A. *A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16:17-19 from 1781 to 1965*. Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, 1976.
- Burnette, David. "Why Missionaries Need Local Churches." *Radical*, February 12, 2020. <https://radical.net/why-missionaries-need-local-churches/>.
- Burns, E. D. "Are We All Missionaries." *Founders Ministries*. Accessed November 20, 2021. <https://founders.org/2020/08/19/are-we-all-missionaries>.
- Bush, Luis, and Beverly Pegues. *The Move of the Holy Spirit in the 10/40 Window*. Seattle: YWAM, 1999.
- Caldwell, Richard. *Pastoral Preaching: Expository Preaching for Pastoral Work*. Spring Hill, TN: Rainer, 2016.
- Calvin, John. "Isaiah 49:1-26." *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*. Accessed August 14, 2021. <https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom16/calcom16.ii.i.html>.
- Carson, D. A. *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: An Exposition of Matthew 5-10*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Matthew*. In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, 1-599. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.
- Carter, Greg. *Skills, Knowledge, Character: A Church-Based Approach to Missionary Candidate Preparation*. Valparaiso, IN: Turtle River, 2010.
- Caruthers, Ken. "Is Every Christian a Missionary?" *9Marks*, December 7, 2015. <https://www.9marks.org/article/is-every-christian-a-missionary>.
- Challies, Tim. *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Which Country Sends the [Second] Most Missionaries?" February 21, 2018. <https://www.challies.com/articles/which-country-sends-the-second-most-missionaries/>.
- Childs, Brevard S. *The Book of Exodus*. The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974.
- Christianson, Eric S. *Ecclesiastes through the Centuries*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007.
- Clowney, Edmund P. *The Church*. *Contours of Christian Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995.
- Corbett, Steve, and Brian Kikkert. *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself*. Chicago: Moody, 2012.
- Corter, Colton. "Why Missionaries Need a Biblical Understanding of the Church." *Radical*, February 2, 2021. <https://radical.net/articles/why-missionaries-need-a-biblical-understanding-of-the-church/>.
- Cosper, Mike. *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.



- Cronshaw, Darren. "A Commission 'Great' for Whom? Postcolonial Contrapuntal Readings of Matthew 28:18-20 and the Irony of William Carey." *Transformation* 33, no. 2 (April 2016): 110-23.
- Culver, Robert D. *A Greater Commission: A Theology for World Missions*. Chicago: Moody, 1984.
- Curtis, A. Kenneth, Stephen J. Lang, and Randy Petersen. *The 100 Most Important Events in Christian History*. Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1991.
- Curtis, Edward M. *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*. Teach the Text Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- Cyril of Alexandria. *Commentary on John*. Vol. 2. Translated by David R. Maxwell. Edited by Joel C. Elowsky. *Ancient Christian Texts*. Edited by Thomas C. Oden and Gerald L. Bray. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015.
- Danker, Frederick W. *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Dargan, Edwin C. *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches*. Louisville: Charles T. Dearing, 1905.
- Dastmard, Marziyeh, and Abbas Izadpanah. "The Relationship of Religion and Spirituality in the School of Thought of William James." *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 6, no. 6 (December 2019): 730-38.
- Davis, D. Ray. "The Missionary Task: Forming a Healthy Church." International Mission Board, November 6, 2018. <https://www.imb.org/2018/11/06/missionary-task-healthy-church/>.
- Dever, Mark. *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible*. Nashville: B & H, 2012.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.
- Dever, Mark, and Paul Alexander. *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005.
- Dever, Mark, and Jonathan Leeman. *Understanding the Great Commission*. Nashville: B & H, 2016.
- DeYoung, Kevin. "Five Surprising Motivations for Missions." Cross, 2013. <https://crosscon.com/resources/kevin-deyoung/five-surprising-motivations-for-mission-session-iii/>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will*. Chicago: Moody, 2009.
- DeYoung, Kevin, and Ted Kluck. *Why We Love the Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion*. Chicago: Moody, 2009.
- Dibelius, Martin, Hans Conzelman, Philip Buttolph, and Adela Yarbro. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Edited by Helmut Koester. Philadelphia: 1517 Media, 1972.
- Dillon, William S. *God's Work in God's Way*. Woodworth, WI: Brown Gold, 1972.

- Doran, David M., Pearson Johnson, and Benjamin Eckman. *For the Sake of His Name: Challenging a New Generation for World Missions*. Allen Park, MI: Student Global Impact, 2002.
- Dorani, Daniel M. *Matthew*. In *ESV Expository Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew-Luke*, edited by Lain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton, Jr., and Jay Sklar, xx-489. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021.
- Dulles, Avery. "On Relativism." *Nova et Vetera* 15, no. 3 (2017). Accessed January 28, 2022. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/666155/pdf>.
- Dunn, James, D. G. *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970.
- Early, Joseph, Jr. *Readings in Baptist History: Four Centuries of Selected Documents*. Nashville: B & H, 2008.
- Eby, David. *Power Preaching for Church Growth: The Role of Preaching in Growing Churches*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2009.
- Elmer, Duane. *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006.
- Feldmeth, Nathan P. *Pocket Dictionary of Church History*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008.
- Ferguson, Sinclair G. *Devoted to God's Church: Core Values for Christian Fellowship*. East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 2020.
- Finn, A. Nathan, and Keith S. Whitfield. *Spirituality for the Sent: Casting a New Vision for the Missional Church*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017.
- Flett, John G. *Apostolicity: The Ecumenical Question in World Christian Perspective*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016.
- Forsyth, Peter T. *Missions in State and Church: Sermons and Address*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908.
- Frazier, David L. *Mission Smart: 15 Critical Questions to Ask before Launching Overseas*. Memphis: Equipping Servants, 2014.
- Garrison, David. "Church-Planting Movements." In *Discovering the Mission of God: Best Missional Practices for the 21st Century*, edited by Barnett Mike, 451-65. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012.
- Gary, Nelson, Gordon W. King, and Terry Smith. *Going Global: A Congregation's Introduction to Mission beyond Our Borders*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2011.
- Gehring, Roger. *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004.
- Geisler, Norman L. *Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- Gladd, Benjamin L. *From Adam and Israel to the Church: A Biblical Theology of the People of God*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019.

- Glover, Robert Hall. *The Bible Basis of Missions*. Chicago: Moody, 1946.
- Greear, J. D. *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches Who Send*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.
- Greer, Peter, and Chris Horst. *Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2014.
- Griffiths, Michael. *Envoyer, C'est Partir un Peu: Dans un Monde en Mutation, Comment l'Eglise Peut-elle Accompanyer et Soutenir Ceux Qui Sont Envoyés en Mission*. Vevey, Switzerland: Editions des Groupes Missionnaires, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Get Your Church Involved in Missions*. Robeson, PA: OMF Books, 1981.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- Guder, Darrell L., ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.
- Guinness, Os. "Church Growth: The Movement of the Nineties." Ligonier, January 1, 1992. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/church-growth-the-movement-of-the-nineties>.
- Guthrie, Donald. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.
- Hale, Thomas. *On Being a Missionary*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995.
- Hale, W. Samuel, Jr. *The First Century Mission and the Twenty-First Century Church. A Guide for Implementing Mission Ministries in the Local Church*. Kearney, NE: Morris, 2001.
- Hamilton, Victor P. *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.
- Hammett, John S., and Benjamin L. Merkle, eds. *Those Who Must Give an Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline*. Nashville: B & H, 2012.
- Hampshire, Robert. "What Is Ministry?" Christianity.com, March 16, 2020. <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/church/what-is-ministry.html>.
- Harnack, Adolf. *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*. Vols. 1-2. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908. Reprint, Breinigsville, PA: Andesite, 2019.
- Harper, Brad, and Paul L. Metzger. *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009.
- Harrison, Everett F. *Acts: The Expanding Church*. Chicago: Moody, 1975.
- Hastings, Ross. *Missional God, Missional Church, Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012.
- Hay, Alexander R. *New Testament Order for Church and Missionary*. Audubon, NJ: New Testament Missionary Union, 1947.

- Haykin, Michael A. G. *The Missionary Fellowship of William Carey*. Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2018.
- HeartCry Missionary Society. "Indigenous Missions." Accessed December 21, 2020. <https://heartcrymissionary.com/about/what-we-do/indigenous-missions/>.
- Hesselgrave, David J. *Communicating Christ Cross Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Contextualization That Is Authentic and Relevant." *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 12, no. 3 (July-September 1995): 115-19.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980.
- Hirsch, Alan, and Michael Frost. *The Faith of Leap: Embracing a Theology of Adventure and Risk*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- Hoke, Steve, and William David Taylor, eds. *Global Mission Handbook: A Guide for Cross-Cultural Service*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009.
- Howell, N. Don, Jr. *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003.
- Hrywna, Mark. "The NPT 2019: Top 100: An In-Depth Study of America's Largest Nonprofits." November 4, 2019. <https://www.thenonproffitimes.com/report/npt-top-100-2019-an-in-depth-study-of-americas-largest-nonprofits/>.
- Hughes, R. Kent, and Bryan Chapell. *1-2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Hull, Bull. *The Disciple Making Church*. Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 2008.
- Hunsucker, Jason. "How to Be Sent Well, Part one." The Upstream Collective, August 6, 2019. <https://www.theupstreamcollective.org/post/how-to-be-sent-well-part-one?lang=en>.
- Hus, Jan. *De Ecclesia: The Church*. Translated by David Schley Schaff. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915.
- Internal Revenue Service. "SOI Tax Stats—Charities & Other Tax-Exempt Organizations Statistics." Accessed August 31, 2021. <https://www.irs.gov/statistics/soi-tax-stats-charities-and-other-tax-exempt-organizations-statistics>.
- International Mission Board. "How Much Does It Cost, on Average, to Support a Missionary?" Assessed January 3, 2022. <https://www.imb.org/faq/how-much-does-it-cost-on-average-to-support-a-missionary/>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "1990s." Accessed January 3, 2022. <https://www.imb.org/175/decades/1990s/>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Team Member." Accessed January 10, 2022. <https://www.imb.org/go/options/team-member/>.
- James, William. *Pragmatism*. New York: Longmans, Green, 1907.

- Jeffress, Robert. "Absolute Truth Is Revealed and Exclusive." *Pathway to Victory*, July 1, 2016. <https://ptv.org/devotional/absolute-truth-is-revealed-and-exclusive/>.
- Jenkins, Omri. *Allez par Tout le Monde: La Grande Mission de l'Eglise*. Chalon-sur-Saône, France: Europresse, 1997.
- Joshua Project. "Has Everyone Heard?" Accessed January 1, 2022. [https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/has\\_everyone\\_heard](https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/has_everyone_heard).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "People Groups, Region: Western Europe." Accessed January 2, 2022. <https://joshuaproject.net/regions/10>.
- Julien, Tom. *Antioch Revisited: Reuniting the Church with Her Mission*. Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 2006.
- Kane, J. Herbert. *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission, A Panoramic View of Missions from Pentecost to the Present*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Life and Work on the Mission Field*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Making of a Missionary*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975.
- Kimble, Jeremy M. *40 Questions about Church Membership and Discipline*. Chicago: Kregel, 2017.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J., and Peter T. O'Brien. *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*. Edited by D. A. Carson. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001.
- Kuyper, Abraham. *Common Grace: God's Gifts for a Fallen World*. Vol. 2. *The Doctrinal Section*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019.
- Lawless, Chuck, and Adam W. Greenway. *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God's Mandate in Our Time*. Nashville: B & H, 2010.
- Leeman, Jonathan. *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus*. 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches Series. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Lightfoot, J. B. *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*. New York: MacMillan, 1903.
- Lukasse, Johan. *Mission Possible! Implantation D'Eglise dans une Europe Post-Chrétienne*. Bruxelles, Belgium: Le Bon Livre, 1993.
- MacArthur, John. "Twin Truths: God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility." *Grace to You*, February 17, 2013. <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/43-15/twin-truths-gods-sovereignty-and-mans-responsibility>.
- Marcel, Pierre Charles. *The Relevance of Preaching*. Translated by Rob Ray McGregor. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1963.

- Mason, Bland. "Generosity as a Church: Releasing Your Best." Send Network. Accessed January 4, 2022. <https://www.namb.net/send-network/resource/generosity-as-a-church-releasing-your-best/>.
- Mathison, Keith. "General and Special Revelation: A Reformed Approach to Science and Scripture." Ligonier Ministries, May 18, 2012. <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/general-and-special-revelation-reformed-approach-science-and-scripture>.
- Matthews, Reginald L. *Missionary Administration in the Local Church*. Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist, 1970.
- McClellan, Albert. *The Missions Tasks of a Church*. Nashville: Convention, 1969.
- McConnell, Mez, and Mike McKinley. *Church in Hard Places: How the Local Church Brings Life to the Poor and Needy*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.
- McGavran, Donald A. *Understanding Church Growth*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- McGilvray, Walter. *Expository Lectures on the Epistle of Jude (1845)*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2008.
- McKinion, Steven A. *Life and Practice in the Early Church: A Documentary Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.
- McKinley, Mike. "Missions Is Church Planting, or It's Not Really Christian Missions." International Mission Board, October 26, 2017. <https://www.imb.org/2017/10/26/mission-church-planting/>.
- McKnight, Scot. *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014.
- Meade, David. *Here to There: How to Get to Your Mission Field*. Rev. ed. Newnan, GA: Propempo, 2013.
- Merida, Tony, and Scott Zeller. "Church Planting and Disciple Making: How Mission Makes Us More Like Christ." International Mission Board, June 20, 2019. <https://www.imb.org/2019/06/20/planting-and-disciple-making-how-the-mission-makes-us-more-like-christ/>.
- Metcalf, Sam. *How Apostolic Movements Can Change the Word, Beyond the Local Church*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015.
- Millard, Erickson. *Christian Theology*. Vol. 3. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985.
- Mohler, R., Albert. Jr., ed. *Confessing the Faith: The Living Legacy of Southern Seminary's Abstract of Principles*. Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Press, 2016.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gathering Storm: Secularism, Culture, and the Church*. Nashville: Nelson, 2020.
- Montgomery, Daniel, and Mike Cospers. *Faithmapping: A Gospel Atlas for Your Spiritual Journey*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.



- Moreau, Scott A., Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee. *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004.
- Mortensen, Viggo, and Andreas O. Nielsen, eds. *Walk Humbly with the Lord, Church and Mission Engaging Plurality*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010.
- Mounce, William D., and Zondervan Staff. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian, 2006.
- Murray, Andrew. *Key to the Missionary Problem*. Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1988.
- Murray, Iain, ed. *The Reformation of the Church: A Collection of Reformed and Puritan Documents on Church Issues*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965.
- Myers, Jeremy. *Skeleton Church: A Bare-Bones Definition of Church*. Dallas: Redeeming, 2016.
- Neill, Stephen. *A History of Christian Missions*. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Nicole, Jules M. *Précis D'Histoire de l'Eglise*. Nogent-sur-Marne, France: Editions de l'Institut Biblique, 2005.
- Niehaus, Jeffrey J. *The Common Grace Covenants*. Vol. 1, *Biblical Theology*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014.
- O'Brien, P. T. *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995.
- Olson, Gordon C. *What in the World Is God Doing?* Cedar Knolls, NJ: Global Gospel, 2003.
- Osborne, Grant R. *Ephesians Verse by Verse*. Oak Harbor, WA: Lexham, 2017.
- Osborne, Kenan B. *A Theology of the Church for the Third Millennium*. Studies in Systematic Theology 2. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Ott, Craig, ed. *The Mission of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016.
- Ott, Craig, and Wilson Gene. *Global Church Planting, Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.
- Packer, James I. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Why Preach?" In *The Preacher and Preaching*, edited by Samuel T. Logan, 1-30. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986.
- Packer, James I., and Carolyn Nystrom. *God's Will: Finding Guidance for Everyday Decisions*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.
- Patterson, George, and Richard Scoggins. *Church Multiplication Guide*. Rev. ed. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2002.
- Payne J. D. *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.

- Pelikan, Jaroslav. "In Memoriam Faculty." Yale Department of History Newsletter. Spring 2007.
- Peters, George W. *A Biblical Theology of Missions*. Chicago: Moody, 1972.
- Picirilli, Robert E. *Paul the Apostle, Missionary, Martyr, Theologian*. Chicago: Moody, 2017.
- Pierson, Arthur T. *The Divine Enterprise of Missions*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894.
- Piper, John. "A Pastor's Role in World Missions." Desiring God, October 31, 1984. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/a-pastors-role-in-world-missions>.
- Pirollo, Neal. *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2017.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Serving as Senders Today: How to Care for Your Missionaries as They Prepare to Go, Are on the Field and Return Home*. San Diego: Emmaus Road, 2012.
- Platt, David. *Follow Me: A Call to Die. A Call to Live*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2013.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Twitter Post, March 13, 2015. <https://twitter.com/plattdavid/status/576307049694363648>.
- Plueddemann, James E. *Teaching across Cultures: Contextualizing Education for Global Mission*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018.
- Plummer, Robert L., and Terry John Mark. *Paul's Missionary Methods, In His Time and Ours*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012.
- Pratt, Zane. "Here's What We Mean by Unreached Peoples and Places." International Mission Board, November 22, 2016. <https://www.imb.org/2016/11/22/what-do-we-mean-by-unreached-peoples-and-places/>.
- Rayburn, Robert G. *O Come Let Us Worship*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.
- Rogers, Joyce, and Julie-Allyson Ieron. *The Life of Adrian Rogers and His Philosophy of Preaching*. Nashville: B & H, 2005.
- Salmon, George. *The Infallibility of the Church. Lectures Delivered in the Divinity School of the University of Dublin*. 4th ed. London: John Murray, 1914.
- Samaritan's Purse. "About Us." Accessed January 12, 2022. <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/our-ministry/about-us/>.
- Saucy, Robert L. *The Church in God's Program*. Chicago: Moody, 1972.
- Sauer, Erich. *From Eternity to Eternity*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954.
- Scherer, James A. *Missionary, Go Home!* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964.
- Schmalz, Matthew. "What Is the Great Commission and Why Is It So Controversial? The Conversation, February 8, 2019. <https://theconversation.com/what-is-the-great-commission-and-why-is-it-so-controversial-111138>



- Schnabel, Eckhard, J. *Early Christian Mission*. Vol. 2, *Paul & the Early Church*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Paul the Missionary, Realities, Strategies and Methods*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008.
- Schreiner, Thomas, R. *1 Corinthians*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Romans*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018.
- Schwanz, Keith, and Joseph Coleson. *Missio Dei: A Wesleyan Understanding*. Kansas City, KS: Beacon Hill Press, 2011.
- Shellnutt, Kate. "Why Missions Experts Are Redefining 'Unreached People Groups.'" *Christianity Today* 63, no. 4 (May 2019). <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/may/redefining-unreached-people-groups-frontier-unengaged-missi.html>.
- Sherrad, Joseph H. *T. F. Torrance as Missional Theologian: The Ascended Christ and the Ministry of the Church*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2021.
- Sills, David M. *The Missionary Call: Find Your Place in God's Plan for the World*. Chicago: Moody, 2008.
- Smietana, Bob. "Church Discipline Focus of New Survey." *Baptist Press*, April 5, 2018. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/church-discipline-focus-of-new-survey/>.
- Smith, Elbert E. *Church Planting by the Book*. Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2015.
- Smither, Edward L. *Mission in the Early Church: Themes and Reflections*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014.
- Speer, Robert. *Christianity and the Nations*. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1910.
- Spencer, Aida B. *1 Timothy*. New Covenant Commentary Series. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013.
- Sproul, R. C. *What Is the Great Commission?* Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2015.
- Spurgeon, Charles H. *Spurgeon's Sermons*. Vol. 10. Edited by Anthony Uyl. Woodstock, Ontario: Devoted, 2017.
- Stackhouse, Max, L. "Protestant Echoes of the Constantinian Era." In *Religion and Public Education*, edited by Theodore R.Sizer, 287-315. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967.
- Steffen, Tom, and Lois McKinney Douglas. *Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for Intercultural Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Facilitator Era: Beyond Pioneer Church Multiplication*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011.
- Stiles, Mack. “Eight Types of People Churches Should Send to the Mission Field.” *Southern Equip*, March 5, 2021. <https://equip.sbts.edu/article/eight-types-of-people-churches-should-send-to-the-mission-field>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Nine Marks of a Healthy Parachurch Ministry.” *9Marks*, March 1, 2011. <https://www.9marks.org/article/journalnine-marks-healthy-parachurch-ministry/>.
- Stock, Eugene. *A Short Handbook of Missions*. London: Longmans, Green, 1904.
- Stott, John R. W. *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Message of 2 Timothy*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1973.
- Strauch, Alexander. *Acts 20: Fierce Wolves Are Coming, Guard the Flock; A Study of Paul’s Final Charge to the Ephesian Elders*. Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth, 2021.
- Stuart, Douglas K. *Exodus*. *New American Commentary*, vol. 2. Nashville: Holman, 2006.
- Sunquist, Scott W. *Why Church? A Basic Introduction*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019.
- Tang, Len, and Charles E. Cotherman. *Sent to Flourish: A Guide to Planting and Multiplying Churches*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019.
- TEAM. “Our Values.” Accessed January 12, 2022. <https://team.org/about-us/team-our-values>.
- Tennent, Timothy C. *Invitation to Theological Studies Series*. Vol. 3. *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010.
- Terry, John Mark. *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*. 2nd ed. Nashville: B & H, 2015.
- Time Staff. “Ralph Winter: Influential Evangelicals.” *TIME*, February 7, 2005. [http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1993235\\_1993243\\_1993320,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1993235_1993243_1993320,00.html).
- Torrance, Thomas F. “The Deposit of Faith.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36, no. 1 (1983): 1-28.
- Tozer, A. W. *The Pursuit of God*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2008.
- Volbeda, Samuel. *The Pastoral Genius of Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960.
- Volf, Miroslav. “Theology, Meaning & Power: A Conversation with George Lindbeck on Theology & the Nature of Christian Difference.” In *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals and Postliberals in Conversation*, edited by Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm, 45-66. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.

- Vu, Michelle A. "Ralph D. Winter Remembered as 'Giant' in Mission Field." *Christian Post Reporter*, May 22, 2009. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/ralph-d-winter-remembered-as-giant-in-mission-field.html>.
- Wagner, Peter C. *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*. Ventura, CA: Regal House, 1990.
- Walsh, James Edward. *Blueprint of the Missionary Vocation*. Maryknoll, NY: Maryknoll, 1950.
- Waltke, Bruce K. *Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?* Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002.
- Warren, Max. *I Believe in the Great Commission*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose-Driven Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.
- Weatherford, Carolyn. *God Has Done His Part: Bible Teachings on Support of Missions*. Nashville: Convention, 1977.
- Webster, Douglas D. *Selling Jesus: What's Wrong with Marketing the Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992.
- Wells, Tom. *A Vision for Missions*. East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 1985.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *Genesis 1-15*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
- The Westminster Confession of Faith. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1882. <https://archive.org/details/westminsterconfe00macp/page/30/mode/2up>.
- White, Jerry E. *The Church and the Parachurch: An Uneasy Marriage*. Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1983.
- Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ*. Chicago: Moody, 1996.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *Matthew-Galatians*. The Bible Exposition Commentary, vol. 1. Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1996.
- Winter, Ralph. "History of the Parachurch." Campus Crusade for Christ. Accessed September 23, 2020. <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/history-of-the-parachurch.html>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission." *Missiology* 2, no. 1 (1974): 121-39.
- Woods, Edward J. *Deuteronomy*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013.
- Wright, Eric E. *A Practical Theology of Missions: Dispelling the Mystery, Recovering the Passion*. Leominster, UK: Day One, 2010.

Yoder, John Howard. *A Theology of Mission, A Believers Church Perspective*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014.

Youngblood, Kirk. *Free to Be Wise: A Guide to Biblical Decision Making*. Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2012.

Zacharias, Ravi, and Norman Geisler. *Is Your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

Zurlo, Gina A., Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing. "World Christianity and Mission 2021." *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 45, no. 1 (December 2020). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2396939320966220>.

ABSTRACT

THE EXCLUSIVE MISSIONAL NATURE  
OF THE CHURCH

Jeffery Dean Abbett, DEdMin  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. John M. Klaassen

This DEdMin thesis identifies those missional tasks that are exclusively the responsibility of the local church. The church is first and foremost a visible gathering with a visible ministry. As such, the church is God's chosen instrument to respond to the Great Commission.

Chapter 2 focuses on the significance of Matthew 16:13-19 and the promise made to Peter that Christ will build His church. This promise is essentially a visible, structured gathering of believers who, with all its imperfections, remains the inescapable instrument designed to proclaim and carry the gospel to the uttermost.

Chapter 3 demonstrates that the church is uniquely qualified and equipped to guard, defend, and proclaim the truth. The church, as the pillar of truth, preserves the theological integrity of the mission. This chapter focuses on Paul's first letter to Timothy where he instructs Timothy on how to establish elders that will be tasked, amongst other things, to teach the truth and guard the church from error.

Chapter 4 focuses on the Matthew 28:19-20 Great Commission where the disciples are instructed to go and make disciples of every nation. The chapter looks at the one mandate—make disciples—with three supporting commands of going, baptizing, and teaching. The chapter demonstrates that only the visible gathering of believers is equipped to fulfill the Great Commission.

Chapter 5 takes the lessons learned regarding the exclusivity of the church in missions and develops from there a healthy missional model to be implemented in the local church. *Healthy* is used to describe that which aligns itself with the exclusivity of the church explained in chapters 2-4. A church's missional program, a missionary, or a paramissional organization is considered healthy to the extent that it aligns itself with the exclusive nature of the church in fulfilling the Great Commission.

## VITA

Jeffery Dean Abbett

### EDUCATION

BA, Tennessee Temple University, 1990

MRE, Liberty University, 1994

### MINISTERIAL EXPERIENCE

Missionary to France, 1995-2013

Pastor of Missions, Timberlake Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, 2013-

Administrator, Timberlake Christian School, Forest, Virginia, 2013-