

***MISSIONAL MADNESS:  
HOW THE MISSIONAL MOVEMENT ABUSES THE GREAT COMMISSION***

*Biola Magazine*: “Is the Mission of Christianity Evolving?”

Extreme Homemakover is not the central mission of the church, yet there are many churches that view the mission of the church in that way. What *is* the mission of the church? Wrong answers are prevalent in many places, including in our own churches.

The mission and sole purpose of the church is not to protect truth or to worship or to fellowship. If these were the purpose, then the Lord would take us home where we would enjoy those things in perfection.

The primary purpose of the church is evangelism. The aforementioned are all practice, but the “game” of ministry is evangelism.

Evangelism is given to the church as our mission — what we are supposed to do. The main way that we glorify God is in evangelism (cf. MacArthur on Mt. 28). Cf. 2 Cor. 4:15 — divine mathematics: the more people that are saved, the more glory is given to God.

The missional church movement is invading churches and purporting that it is foundational to church movement. Bad ecclesiology and bad eschatology have combined into the one missional movement. An example is Tim Keller.

The concept of missional is not compatible with a view that sees a distinction between what God is doing in Israel and the church.

Missional used to mean, “what is God doing to bring about the process of redemption?”

Now missional is the middle ground between focusing on evangelism and focusing on mercy ministry — there is no tension between the two (McLaren). Or, doing church in a way that the church looks like the culture in dress... (Driscoll). Or there is no distinction between what the church does for those inside and those outside the church (Stetzer). Or the idea of doing ministry that kingdom-like conditions are brought together for those who are outside the church (Keller). The shift is from evangelism to social engagement and influence (e.g., Stetzer and Driscoll).

Leslie Newbigen was also influential in the early parts of this movement, though his approach may not be as dangerous as some would make it out to be. But his followers went further than he did (e.g., McLaren and Keller). “Missional” gets rid of the distinctions between those inside and those outside the church. Further, the idea is that just preaching the gospel and loving people is inadequate for reaching people. They encourage enfolding people into the context of the church and making them a part of the community (Stetzer).

People must join the church *before* they believe in Jesus...” (Driscoll; his italics). For Driscoll, missional isn’t theological, it’s practical.

In reality, the gospel transcends culture rather than being encapsulated into the culture.

For Tim Keller, missional is a theological issue — sin produces alienation from God, self, others and nature, and thus the goal of the church is to correct the physical needs that come from that alienation from nature.

Again, the missional movement is rooted in a misunderstanding of the relationship between the OT and the NT. They have misunderstood what God is working and doing in the world. The gospel, for the missional movement, means to bring kingdom-like effects in their lives. None is as well-developed in his theology as Tim Keller (an “optimistic amillennial” — very similar to a post-millennial position).

Keller says that giving the gospel (evangelism) and the sandwich (“sandwichism”) are both equally part of the mission of the church.

Does the NT command the church to be involved in social change? Many agree that the NT does not command it, so they go the OT, which is why good dispensationalism clarifies the issue.

What is God’s mission in the world?

- **The promise of redemption.** (Gen. 3:15)
- **The need for grace** (Gen. 11:1-9)
- **The plan for redemption** (Gen. 12:1-3)
- **The isolation of Israel**
- **The witness of Israel** — they were to be holy so that the world would be attracted to her (Dt. 4:5-8). Israel’s great commission is to keep the Law in such a way that the nations hear of it and come to Israel to see if it is true. Israel was to engage in cultural transformation of Israel — stay in the land, not go to the other nations, and keep the Torah in such a way that the world is attracted to God (e.g., 1 Kings 8:41-43).

Did this ever happen in the history of Israel? One time, when the Queen of Sheba came (1 Kings 10:8-9) — this was saving faith, Jesus said.

God has always been after the nations, not only the Jews. In Luke 2:29-32, there is foreshadowing that the manner of God’s method of evangelism is changing. Israel was to attract the nations to it — they were supposed to transform their own society as an attraction — but that changed radically in the church. Cf. Mk. 16:15; Luke 24:45-48; Jn. 20:21; Mt. 28:19; Acts 1:8.

Evangelism is an issue of obedience, not desire and skill. It is what the Lord has given us to do.

- **God radically changes the global mission in the NT with God’s command, “go into all the world.”**

“Silver and gold I do not have (for you)” (they did have finances for the church). As the gospel goes forward, there should be no hunger in the church. This is not a call to the streets to eliminate hunger. Not all widows received food from the church — there was a list and they had to meet a certain criteria! The mission of the church is not to feed hungry people. The mission of the church is to preach the gospel.

The mission of the church is being hijacked by the missional movement.

Applicational questions:

- Is the church called to transform society? Israel: “Yes.” Church: “No.”
- Is the church called to minister to the poor? Israel: “Yes.” Church: “No.” Christians: “Maybe” (e.g., 1 Tim. 5:8, 17; Mt. 12:33-34).

Main point: The church has been given a mission: evangelism; and this is unique in the history of the world. A soup kitchen without the gospel is ineffectual and misses the point of the mission of the church. The church’s goal is not to eliminate hunger and poverty.