

**Summary:** *God has appointed the particular times and places of people such that they should minister within that specific environment. Life should be intentional.*

The word "missional" is used by many people in many different ways. Like several terms in the world of "religion," perception often biases the actual meaning. One of the drawbacks of a fluid language is that words are often highjacked so that they no longer carry the intended message, or they are made so ambiguous that significance is sacrificed.

The mission of The Village Church is the overarching purpose and desire which founds everything which we do. We exist "to bring glory to God through lives changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ." Therefore, our goal is ultimately the glorification of God. Although God is glorified through various means, one of the primary ways is worship. Since not all people are worshippers of the true God, we pursue this mission through the means of The Great Commission.<sup>1</sup> In other words, discipleship is the instrument through which we work to bring glory to God. As John Piper has said, "Missions exist because worship doesn't."<sup>2</sup>

One of the core values of The Village Church is missional living. By this we mean that God has appointed the particular times and places of people such that they should minister within that specific environment. Life should be intentional. This theme runs throughout the biblical text, but is particularly evident in Acts 17 which states that God "made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place." We, The Village Church, minister primarily within the greater DFW area because God has appointed that we live here.

In addition to designating particular times and places, God has also created His people with distinct skills and gifted them with various gifts which are to be used to His glory. Being a teacher, doctor, cook, janitor or lumberjack is not contrary to the call for radical God-centeredness in your vocation. Like Oholiab and Bezalel from Exodus 36, each of us has been gifted in certain ways to contribute to the purposes of the Lord.

In order to be missional, we must engage culture through its individual domains. Practically, that means that doctors are to be doctors to the glory of God and use that position in ways which serve the kingdom. Artists are to be artists to the glory of God and use that position in ways which serve the kingdom. We

are all ministers within the unique contexts of our time, place, talents, abilities, etc.

This understanding of mission is a radical call to purpose and intentionality. It means that our lives are not lived for the sake of self, but rather for the good of others to the glory of God. This might mean that we go to the same Starbucks to form relationships, workout without an i-Pod to engage those around us, and play in the front yard rather than the back in order to be available for the neighbors.

There have historically been two major problems in the landscape of modern evangelicalism in particular which make the idea of missional living difficult to embrace. The first of these is the exaltation of vocational ministers and the consequent devaluation of the "lay person." However, there is no biblical segregation of classes of Christians.<sup>3</sup> In reality, the Scriptures portray all believers as "priests" and "ministers" who are called by God to do the work of ministry. The role of pastors within a local church is not to assume all ministerial duties, but rather to equip the saints so that they themselves may do the work of ministry.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, all who have been called to belief in the gospel have also been called to ministry. We are all partakers in the mission which is the glory of God accomplished through the means of the gospel.

The second problem which we must recognize and fight against is the elevation of the spiritual over the material. While social gospel promoters of the late 19th century erred in promoting social reform to the exclusion of personal conversion, modern evangelicalism has swung the pendulum too far in rejecting the social gospel. Now we tend to focus all evangelistic efforts on the spiritual needs of society, as though

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go there-fore 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. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

<sup>2</sup> Piper, John. *Let the Nations Be Glad!*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003, page 1.

<sup>3</sup> There are times when Scriptures speaks of different levels of maturity, but not "classes."

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 4:11-12 *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...*

people are disembodied spirits. We must learn to integrate and engage both the spiritual and physical needs of the communities of this world.

Here at the church we have a number of examples of how integrated missional living is played out. We have a few businessmen who work downtown and frequently throw a few bucks together and buy cheeseburgers and toiletries for the homeless and disadvantaged in the downtown area. We have doctors and dentists who travel to Kenya or Romania each year to donate their time and particular expertise in order to push back the darkness in those areas. Whether within the DFW area or elsewhere, whether using our distinct job or merely the opportunities that it affords, we are all called to this mission, the glory of God through lives changed by the gospel of Jesus.

The glory of God should transcend all that we do. Our hope and passion is for Him to receive worship from those who have been drastically and eternally affected by the gospel of His Son. In order for this to happen, we must live with the mission in heart, head and hand.

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