



worldoutreach  
SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

## SERIES FIVE

### MODULE THREE: FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MISSIONAL CHURCH

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## ***Outline Session 1 - 2***

1. Five Characteristics of a Missional Church (Part 1)
2. Five Characteristics of a Missional Church (Part 2)
3. Five Characteristics of a Missional Church (Part 3)

# SESSION ONE: FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MISSIONAL CHURCH (PART ONE)

## What *is* mission?

Mission' is an activity of God Himself. Mission is the loving work of God to bring humankind to himself.

We derive the term 'mission' from the Latin '*missio dei*' which means 'the mission of God' or 'the sending of God'.

- '*missio*' is the Latin form of the Greek '*apostolos*' meaning 'sent' (to send on a mission as an envoy, to speak for the one sending him, and having the sender's own authority).

As a missionary God, the Father *sent* his Son

- Jesus came as a missionary – he is the sent one.
- The Father and Son then sent the Holy Spirit – as the Agent of the Trinity to direct and empower God's mission through the church.
- John 20:21 states that Jesus said: '*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*'
- As followers of Jesus, we are sent ones (John 20:21).

John Stott defines 'Mission' is a 'comprehensive word that embraces everything which God sends his people (the church) into the world to do'.

According to Lesslie Newbigin: 'The Church is sent into the world to continue that which he came to do, in the power of the same Spirit, reconciling people to God.'

J. Andrew Kirk wrote that '...it is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, but that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God's mission.'

Alan Hirsch summarised Kirk's point by saying: 'It's not that God's church has a mission, but that God's mission has a church...The church is the *result* of God's mission in the world.'

Mission is both local and global (some now use the hybrid word *glocal*)

## What are the characteristics of a missional church?

A missional church is a *biblical* church.

- The book of Acts is not just descriptive, but as *prescriptive*.
- We regard Scripture as the place from where we derive our models of church, ministry & mission.

Darrell Guder, wrote: ‘Mission is not just a program of the church. It defines the church as God’s sent people.

Either we are defined by mission, or we reduce the scope of the gospel and the mandate of the church. Thus, our challenge today is to move from church with mission to missional church.”

FIVE key and core characteristics of a missional church:

**1. A MISSIONAL CHURCH IS COMMITTED TO GOSPEL MINISTRY (evangelism) THROUGH PERSONAL (word and deed) WITNESS AND PUBLIC PROCLAMATION (locally, nationally and globally)**

A missional church serves God’s missional purposes by *bringing* and *demonstrating* good news in *word* and *deed* locally, nationally and globally.

One of the big shifts of thinking is not seeing evangelism as an event, but as a lifestyle.

Our focus is not so much on bringing people *to* church, but on equipping to church to *go*.

Today, there is a big difference between an ‘attractional’ church and a ‘missional’ church.

- An attractional church seeks to reach out to the culture and draw people *into* the church by designing their services and programs in such a way as to ‘attract’ attendees.
- Missional churches engage the world the same way Jesus did—by *going* out rather than just *reaching* out.

The ultimate goal of a missional church is not just evangelism, but discipleship.

- People become Christians through evangelism, but they become mature (Christlike) through discipleship.
- Missional churches don’t just focus on ‘decisions’, but ‘disciples’. It’s not just growth in the number ‘OF’ people, but the transformational growth ‘IN’ people.

## SESSION TWO: FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MISSIONAL CHURCH (PART TWO)

Last session, we defined 'mission' as, to quote John Stott, a 'comprehensive word that embraces everything which God sends his people (the church) into the world to do'.

Then we looked at a first characteristic of a missional church, which was that:

**1. A missional church is committed to gospel ministry (evangelism) through personal (word and deed) witness and public proclamation.**

**2. A MISSIONAL CHURCH ACTIVELY ENGAGES IN COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION THROUGH WORD AND DEED (locally, nationally and globally)**

Community transformation generally involves two things: social action and social justice.

### Social action

- Being missional involves demonstrating our faith through acts of care, compassion and mercy.
- This is essentially the point of Jesus words about being 'salt and light' in Matthew 5:13-16.
- One of the key messages of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) is that compassion is more than sentiment or emotion; rather compassion is 'love in action'.
- Good news and good works are inseparable.
- The gospel shouldn't just be a *declaration*, but a *demonstration*.
- True mission should always be incarnational.

### Social justice

- In Scripture, we learn that God is just and hates injustice and oppression.
- In the Old Testament, he required his people to exercise justice – to advocate or defend what was right.
- In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus are seen as our advocates. When we were and are utterly powerless, they advocate for us.
- Part of our mission as the people of God in the earth is to be an advocate for justice and morality.

How can we advocate?

- Defend the rights of the powerless or underprivileged.
- Advocate for justice on behalf of the oppressed or repressed.
- Be a prophetic, biblical or moral voice on ethical or social issues.

### **3. A MISSIONAL CHURCH TREATS ITS CONTEXT AS A CONSTANTLY CHANGING MISSION FIELD (and adapts accordingly)**

Missional churches tend to reimagine themselves as being an alien subculture within a cross-cultural host community. In other words, the missional faith community views itself to be a missionary community living in a mission field that is constantly changing.

#### **Four characteristics of the traditionally held definition of a 'mission-field'.**

- A. A substantial presence of beliefs and religions other than Christianity and Judaism exist in the community.
- B. Languages other than their 'our language' are spoken. (Newbigin) Churches must be 'culturally bilingual'.
- C. Cultural worldviews differing from historic western, Judeo/Christian values prevail.
- D. High levels of social need and justice issues exist among large population groups and need to be addressed by both church and society.

Missional churches consider engagement in social concerns within their own communities to be as significant as the social engagement traditionally supported in foreign missions.

### **4. A MISSIONAL CHURCH ACTIVELY ENVISIONS, EQUIPS, AND MOBILISES ITS PEOPLE FOR MISSION**

One of the key characteristics of a missional church in all the literature is that its focus is 'going out' not just 'bringing in'.

#### **Three key words in activating people for mission.**

- A. Envisioning – the Pastor casts the vision for mission
- B. Equipping – practical, hands-on training for people in the church on how to do mission and be involved in mission. Howard Hendricks, once said, 'There is a lot of exhortation, but no explanation.'
- C. Mobilising – those who've been 'envisioned' for mission and 'equipped' for mission are 'deployed' in mission.

Pathway of mobilisation:

- The lost get saved,
- The saved get disciple/pastored,
- The pastored get envisioned,
- The envisioned get trained,
- The trained get mobilised.

The cycle repeats itself.

## SESSION THREE: FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MISSIONAL CHURCH (PART THREE)

So far in this module, we've covered 4 (of 5) characteristics.

### 5. A MISSIONAL CHURCH EMBRACES THE MANDATE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION TO GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL PEOPLE GROUPS

Global or cross-cultural mission is called 'missions'. 'Missions is any activity in which Christians are involved for world evangelisation to other cultures or ethnicities that may involve crossing cultural or international boundaries.'

#### Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)

##### *... go and make disciples ...*

The two words that are the key to understand this whole passage are 'make disciples'. The other commands: 'Go...baptize...teach' all flow out of the central command to 'make disciples'.

##### *...of all nations ...*

The word 'nations' does not mean 'countries' (geo-political states), but in the original Greek – the language the NT was written in – the word 'ethne' was used.

- 'ethne' is where the English term 'ethnic group' comes from.
- Jesus was referring to ethnic groups (people groups).
- There are more than 17,000 distinct people groups on earth.
- Of these 17,000, at least 6000 – 6700 are counted as 'unreached' or 'least-reached.'

#### What is an unreached people group?

- An identifiable people group which has never been reached with the Gospel.
- Any ethnic or ethnolinguistic people group without enough Christians to evangelise, disciple and plant churches without external help.
- An ethnic group without an indigenous, self-propagating Christian church movement.

Here's the shocker: the number of people living in unreached people groups added together is between 2.7 – 2.8 billion individuals, or about 41% of the world's population!

- 2.3 billion people in the world who call themselves 'Christian'
- Approximately 2/3's of them are nominal.
- This still leaves a mission's task force which consists of 700,000,000 believers in 4,000,000 congregations.
- That means: (approx.) **580** churches for one unreached people group!

- We are living in the first generation since Jesus suffered, died and was raised to life that has the potential to fulfil the Great Commission within our lifetime.

Missional churches are not just committed to their locality, surrounding area, shire/state, and nation, but also the unreached people groups of the world.

### THREE REASONS WHY MISSIONS STILL RELEVANT TO THE MODERN CHURCH?

#### 1. Missions involves more than *just* evangelism

‘Evangelism’ is when a Christian or Christians explain the gospel to unbelievers, and help them to start following Christ. Missions *includes* evangelism, but is much wider. For instance, it may involves living with the people, learning their language and culture to understand how best to present the Gospel, translate the Bible, baptise, disciple, establish self-sustaining churches, raise up local leaders and set up bible schools.

#### 2. Missions involves more than *just* caring for orphans and for humanitarian aid

The vast majority of funds today for ‘missions’ go to different forms of humanitarian aid, leaving relatively little available for church planting or ‘frontier’ missions.

While the Bible clearly states that we should look after widows and orphans in their distress with love and compassion, we should not do so to the exclusion of, or in priority over, fulfilling the Great Commission. We should do all we can to alleviate human suffering, but prioritise and emphasise the eternal destiny of those who have never heard about Jesus.

#### 3. Because we are commissioned to go and be involved in missions

Jesus repeated the Great Commission on a number of occasions, even wording it differently to make it clearer (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 17:18; 20:21).

In Acts 1:8), Jesus envisages the gospel going out from each church in concentric circles ...

- ‘*Jerusalem*’ best represents your church's immediate location,
- ‘*Judea*’ – the neighbourhoods around you,
- ‘*Samaria*’ – people further away including people of a different culture that may be living in your vicinity,
- and the ‘*ends of the earth*’ – least-reached people groups / those of a different culture.

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