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A STRATEGY FOR SENDING MISSIONARIES FROM THE  
VILLAGE CHURCH IN DALLAS-FT.WORTH

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

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

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by  
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May 2016

**APPROVAL SHEET**

A STRATEGY FOR SENDING MISSIONARIES FROM THE  
VILLAGE CHURCH IN DALLAS-FT.WORTH

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To our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and to our missionary model, Paul the Apostle.

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## PREFACE

I would like to thank several individuals who contributed to this project. First, I would like to thank Josh Patterson, Lead Pastor of Ministry Leadership at The Village Church, for encouraging me to consider developing a sending strategy for our church. His challenge gave me ample motivation. Second, I would like to thank Dan Dumas, Senior Vice President for Institutional Administration, for leading our Executive Leadership Cohort and inspiring success. Third, I would like to thank Dr. Michael S. Wilder, Associate Vice President for Doctoral Studies, for his leadership over the doctoral program. I am grateful to be included among this family of doctoral students. Fourth, I would like to thank my supervisor, J. T. English, for his guidance, direction, and friendship. Fifth, I would like to thank my fellow cohort members: Trevor Joy, Beau Hughes, Matt Younger, Jared Musgrove, Ronnie Parrott, Rob Wilton, and Scott Lehr. Each has sharpened us all. Lastly, I would like to thank my family—my parents, Reid and Pat Lancaster, for their support and encouragement; our daughters, Sage and London, for their beautiful distractions from my studies; and my wife, Tarrah, for her loving patience. Thank you all.

Adam Lancaster

Flower Mound, Texas

May 2016

CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

**Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop a strategy for sending missionaries from The Village Church in Dallas-Ft. Worth.<sup>1</sup> The strategy was built on theology and based in dynamics that argue for local church responsibility in identifying, training and sending apostolic ministers—evangelists and church planters.<sup>2</sup>

**Goals**

The goals for this project were as follows: (1) to develop a process and (2) to create a plan to communicate the process. Both the process and plan, upon implementation, will make up the key components to a sending strategy.

The first goal was to develop a process that would aid the potential missionary in several important areas: exploration of a call to ministry, preparation for ministry, immersion into ministry experiences, and association into an ongoing partnership after

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<sup>1</sup>Strategy, in this case, is a process for sending based on philosophical convictions and not a detailed, tactical plan for engagement after being sent. The convictions, like all good strategies, are centered on positional trade-offs. Porter states, “The essence of strategy is choosing what *not* to do.” Michael E. Porter, “What is Strategy?” in *Harvard Business Review* 2, (November-December 1996): 61. Therefore, the process will be informed by the conviction to (1) encourage obedience to a call in leaders rather than to recruit volunteers, (2) narrow assignments to evangelism and church planting as opposed to broadening them, and (3) establish greater accountability to the work.

<sup>2</sup>While this project did not detail a strategy for sending church planters necessarily, missionaries were assigned the task of evangelism and church planting outside the scope of the local church. A potential church planter will have different requirements from the potential evangelists, and must be trained accordingly.



being sent. The measurable for the four-stage process will be its adoption and implementation by The Village Church (TVC).

The second goal was to create a communication plan directed to the adult membership of TVC for the purpose of informing them of the process, in the hopes of growing the congregation's understanding of missions, while also reinforcing the responsibility of all to participate in sending. This goal included writing a short lecture on sending theology and dynamics that included a short presentation of the process for anyone from among TVC congregation who may be interested in being sent. The motivation behind the second goal was to keep gospel-centered multiplication before TVC, and to both encourage and challenge those who might serve as missionaries. The measurable is an informed congregation and a filled pipeline.

By accomplishing these two goals (1) developing a process built on theology and based in dynamics and (2) creating a plan to communicate the process, The Village Church will be armed with a sending strategy that is faithful to Scripture, relevant to the ministry context, and fruitful in its effect.

### **Context**

In order to understand the project's goals, it is necessary to review the context in which TVC has operated over the last decade. The congregation's history began in August 1977, when Lakeland Baptist Church in Lewisville, Texas, planted a neighborhood church in the nearby town of Highland Village, establishing Highland Village First Baptist Church (HVFBC). For thirty years, the church quietly served its lakeside community.

Even so, there would be dry times—even dark days, including a psychological breakdown by the last pastor. There would also be a growing conviction in some members to make a controversial shift in ecclesiology. A change in direction was greatly needed.

In November 2002, HVFBC called Matt Chandler as their fourth senior pastor. Under Chandler's leadership, changes came. The church returned to biblical principles that led to new energy and a new direction, specifically as it related to missions and sending. A fresh path would be cut and the church, in faithfully following the course, would begin to flourish. HVFBC, now calling itself The Village Church would grow from 168 attendees in the worship gathering to over 1,000 attendees in the first year. The following ten years saw a continued, steady, numerical growth of 1,000 people per year. God continues to bless TVC presently, as it now has five campuses serving almost 12,000 people across the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

Nationally, Dallas/Forth Worth is a major hub, drawing residents from all over who relocate to the "Metroplex." North Texas boasts several of the fastest growing cities in the country and many major corporations are building offices in the area. While newcomers to the area have diversified the demographics, and new ideas have challenged old traditions, the area still hangs on to its evangelical conservatism. Weekly church attendance is, in many ways, still a social obligation. Nominal Christianity is a regular challenge within this outpost along the so-called Bible belt. The ministry of TVC has often worked to dispel common notions of comfort and safety within a cultural Christianity that has no love for or commitment to Christ.

### **History of Sending**

For the purposes of this project, it is important to note the church's history of sending. TVC has a tradition of both sending and being sent.<sup>3</sup> The narrative began in 1845 when the newly formed Southern Baptist Convention assembled a missionary organization to take the gospel out West. In 1869, thirteen families settled in the Texas

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<sup>3</sup>See "The Village Church History," accessed November 1, 2014, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/about/history>.

plains and established the Holford Prairie Church. The church grew to 37 people by 1882 and moved into town, creating First Baptist Church of Lewisville. After nearly one hundred years of faithful service to the community, First Baptist Church of Lewisville planted a church just down the road, Lakeland Baptist Church, in 1962. Already mentioned, Lakeland Baptist Church, in 1977, planted Highland Village First Baptist Church in Highland Village. After several years of new leadership, the year 2005 saw The Village Church plant its first church, Providence Church, in the city of Frisco, and then its second in 2006, Cityview Church in Keller. Multiplication efforts continued in 2007 with the opening of its first multisite campus in Denton, and in 2008 with the relocation of the Highland Village congregation to Flower Mound. Another multisite campus—Dallas Northway—was established in 2009. The year 2011 saw another church planted, The Door in Coppell, followed by another multisite campus in 2013, this one in Ft. Worth. The Village Church sent one of its pastors to plant Declaration Church in Bryan-College Station in 2014. And most recently, also in 2014, a multisite campus was opened in the city of Plano.

TVC has also sent several missionary units, primarily to East and South Asia, East Africa and Central America. In the early years, China was a focus, with some additional activity in Burma. The following were sent to those areas: Michelle Colon (China 2006-2008), Ty and Mande Clark (China 2006-2008), Jason Clarke (China 2006-2008), Trent and Joni Merchant (China 2007-2008), Drew Spear (China 2007-2008), Rachel McRoy (China 2007-2008), and Rich and Heather Caudle (China 2006-2008), Pete and Kimberly Craig (China 2009-Present), Aaron Fair (Burma 2012-Present), and Andrew Turner (Burma 2012-Present). Later, Guatemala became a focus: Kevin and Charissa Brimage (Guatemala 2009-2010), Susan Jones (Guatemala 2010-2012), Hannah McGlothlin (Guatemala 2010-2012), Alisha Brain (Guatemala 2010-2012), Scott Wiseman (Guatemala 2007-2010), KC Reed (Guatemala 2012-2013). More recently many have gone to Africa: Kristi Moore (Liberia, 2003-2006), Manal Fashi (Ethiopia

2012-2014), Shane and Allyson Smith (Ethiopia/Kenya 2008-Present), Amanda Goble (Kenya 2010-2011), Bob and Julie Mendonsa (Kenya 2008-Present). Over the years, other missionaries have gone out to various locations. Those missionaries are: JD and Kacy Neinast (Honduras 2010-2012), Ellen Hollis (Thailand 2013-Present). Ruth Burks (South Sudan 2013-Present), Stephanie Cox (Kenya 2013-Present), and Nathan and Brittany Garrett (Romania 2013-Present).

TVC has been blessed to see so many go out.

### **Philosophy of Ministry**

Gospel multiplication has become a part of TVC heritage and tradition. This was no accident, but is due to a theology that drives a philosophy that informs ministry practice.<sup>4</sup> Fundamentally, TVC looks to Scripture for a theological basis for its mission. The church has taken up the mission of God in Christ—the mission to go and tell. Disciples are to make disciples of all nations, to baptize them and teach them to obey (Matt 28:19–20). Even with the gathering gifts of Pastor Matt Chandler, TVC is foundationally a “go and tell” ministry rather than a “come and see” programmatic offering. There are no clever marketing campaigns drawing the masses, and there is no smoke and lights to capture their attention once they are drawn. Rather, the church is committed to taking the gospel to the people. The gospel has won the hearts of the church, and it has been the gospel that has kept them in the fold.

This “go and tell” theology drives our philosophy of ministry. If the church were a house, for example, then the walls and the other supporting structures would be the church’s theology. Inside the house is the furniture. The furniture is the church’s philosophy of ministry. A church is free to move around its furniture, so long as it

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<sup>4</sup>See Josh Patterson, “Our Philosophy of Ministry” (sermon, The Village Church, March 2, 2008), accessed November 9, 2014, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/sermon/our-philosophy-of-ministry/>.

remains within the walls.<sup>5</sup> There are many philosophies of ministry, and it could be argued, by this analogy, that one is no better than the other. In any case, a church does well to choose one and be faithful. TVC has arranged its house in a way that reflects a “go and tell” theology. For instance, being on mission means being strategic about discipleship. TVC is intentional in the way it facilitates the making of disciples within our unique context.

Our context’s cultural climate is consumeristic and the church is in no way exempt. Recently, an overabundance of goods and services in the church marketplace has given churchgoers unprecedented power and influence over philosophies of ministry, and many churches have made it their mission to meet every felt need. The Dallas/Ft. Worth “Metroplex” is, in many ways, a buffet where hungry churchgoers can have their fill of multiple worship styles or programmatic offerings. It is common for consumers to continue with a congregation until they are full, and then move on to the next “meal” provided by the next church. A church can either set out more and better options on the buffet table, or they can address the issue.

TVC, with conviction, has chosen to confront the consumer culture. In 2007, the church, after much prayer and a series of pastoral meetings with lay leaders, slowly began to shut down most of its programs. For example, where there was a men’s Bible study that met on a weekday morning, eventually there would be nothing. Where there were regular single’s group outings, the outings stopped. Where the youth gathered for a separate weekend worship service, the event was soon ended. For the sake of alignment, the bulk of the many, varied programs all but ceased. TVC stopped being a church of individual, compartmentalized ministries, and instead became unified around one discipleship process that utilized the church’s strongest and most developed

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<sup>5</sup>Former pastor Jeremy Pace made this house/walls/furniture imagery popular among TVC staff.

department—Groups.

### **Groups and Missions Departments**

The challenge before any large church is to try to feel small. Size can make it difficult for attendees to be known; people can easily hide in a weekend gathering. TVC encourages its people into small home groups and recovery groups where they can be cared for and counseled by a group of 12 to 15 faithful brothers and sisters. These weekly get-togethers provide a context for biblical community where members can share their lives.

Strategy always requires making choices. Scaling back programs and bolstering the Groups Department was a shift in emphasis and priority that informed everything from resourcing to staffing. A new commitment to Group Leaders and Group Leader Coaches meant a new commitment to equipping them well for the role. New staff members were hired to oversee training, while previously specialized pastors became generalists in new roles in order to accommodate the change. Currently, one thousand groups across multiple campuses serve up to six thousand people. Approximately sixty-five percent of the church's membership belongs to a group. This strategic organization allows for a great many people to be shepherded well by competent leaders.

The strategy also informed the mission. Large churches with a mission function often have Missions Departments. Before the organizational shift toward Groups, TVC was no different. Our hard-working, effective Missions Department accomplished much at times, but like the other fruitful but potentially insular ministries, it was somewhat detached and misaligned. Missions also, for the sake of alignment, needed to be integrated into group life. TVC, with a newly operating discipleship process that directed ministry in and through Groups, needed a sending strategy to match its distinctive philosophy of ministry.

## **Rationale**

The great irony is that in all of TVC's sending, no real strategy exists. It would appear, with this storied history of missions and church planting, that all our goals have been met, but direction and focus is, in fact, still lacking. Progress toward any unified vision has been, and continues to be, slow. Presently, there is no clear process for sending missionaries. Even with all our successes, for a church our size, there are relatively far too few movements toward multiplication. For a church that boasts an incarnational philosophy of ministry, the congregation too readily relies on the attractational pull of our gifted preacher to gather new attendees. The Village Church needs a strategy for sending missionaries to better and more fully take the gospel outside the scope of our local church.

Early attempts at integrating missions into the Groups Department were difficult. The abrupt dismantling of the Missions Department sent Missions Pastors to several other campuses, while other pastors left the staff altogether. Those who remained joined their respective Groups Departments, functionally becoming Groups Pastors. While it was assumed that the former Missions Pastor (now Group Pastors) would become something of a subject matter expert who would encourage the other Groups Pastors toward mission, urgent needs often divided interests. The fervor for missions, specifically sending, would fade among a team preoccupied with the all-consuming ministry of shepherding the flock. Someone in the department desperately needed to carry the mantle and champion the cause. Recent additions to the staff have filled some of the void, although hiring personnel—in and of itself—is insufficient. The church needs a sound sending strategy. This project was necessary toward that end.

Additionally, it seems that among many evangelicals there is general confusion regarding the church's role in sending. Missions, for some churches, is merely a duty contracted out to third parties or worse, simply a line item in the budget. The hope of this project was to convince any reader that missions means sending, and that the primary

responsibility for sending belongs to the local church. As TVC faithfully stewards any influence it may have within evangelical circles, it is hoped this research will benefit those outside its walls as well.

### **Definitions**

While the second chapter promises to define mission, missions, and missionaries in detail, initial definitions will be presented here.

*Mission.* The definition of mission developed by George W. Peters was initially used in this project and later built upon. He understands mission to be “God in action on behalf of the salvation of mankind.”<sup>6</sup> This idea is further detailed in the terms “Mission of God” and “Mission of the Church,” where the latter is an extension of the former. It will be emphasized in the project that there is but one mission to which missions serves.

*Missions.* George W. Peters’ definition of missions (plural) is also used in this project: “Missions is a specialized term...mean[ing] the sending forth of authorized persons...to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ...to win converts...and to establish functioning, multiplying congregations.”<sup>7</sup> Missions in this project, therefore, is narrowed to evangelism and church planting. The term refers to these functions rather than to the geographic place or location where those functions take place.

*Missionary.* If missions is the sending forth of an authorized person to do a particular assignment, it is the assignment that determines the fitness of the title. The title “missionary,” then, is reserved for the one who performs the sender’s assignment. I agree with Peters when he writes, “not everyone is a ‘missionary’ in the technical and biblical

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<sup>6</sup>George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 9.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 11.



sense of the word...just as not all Christians are preachers of the gospel or pastor-teachers of the gospel.”<sup>8</sup> Missionaries are apostolic ministers, or evangelists and church planters.

*Apostolic ministers.* Apostolic ministers are fully authorized representatives who continue the role (not the office) of the original apostles in evangelism and church planting.

*Evangelists.* Evangelists are those who, with priority and emphasis, by motivation and intent, verbally witness to Christ in order to make converts.

*Church planters.* Church planters are pastor/elders who gather converts into churches for discipleship in order to lead them into maturity and multiplication.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

Much could be explored within the context of sending missionaries. However, the project was both limited by circumstances beyond my control, and also necessarily delimited in order to narrow and focus the project.

First, strategy in this case, entailed only a process for sending (with communication plan and supporting curricula) and not a detailed, tactical plan of engagement after being sent. For example, the strategy stops short of selecting target areas or prioritizing groups of people.<sup>9</sup>

Next, it should be noted that the process was not intended to be a residency or

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<sup>8</sup>Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 249.

<sup>9</sup>David Hesselgrave lists several important missions priorities: home missions, responsive or resistant peoples, unreached people groups, urban or rural areas (*Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000, 62-65]). Rather than extend the scope of this project to assign a people-group focus, I will presume that the grammatical linking of Jerusalem, Samaria, and the ends of the earth in Acts 1:8 makes them all equally important. I agree with Hesselgrave that “balance is needed . . . The question of priorities should never be settled on the basis of simple slogans ‘Why should anyone hear the gospel twice before everyone has heard it once?’” (ibid., 64). A balanced people-group strategy is important, but will not be addressed in this project.

internship, nor did it promise to provide all that is needed in every area of training. The sending process offers only preliminary steps with the understanding that missions agencies and organizations, church planting networks, and residencies will finish the training. A strategic church does well to not try to be everything to everyone sent, but instead utilize strategic partnerships.

A more holistic and longer-term project might assess and record the results of those working their way through the stages, or the effect of the communication plan by way of increasing awareness and participation. However, the long-term effect of the two goals simply could not be fully realized in a short time.

Further, a full implementation and execution of the project would mean being at the mercy of the individuals involved—their interest in missions and church planting, their ability to hear and respond to the opportunities presented, and their obedience to the call. My desire is to see hundreds enter the process, but expectations must remain modest. Christ himself recognized the inherent limitation: “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” (Matt 9:37–38). I will be hopeful, but there will be no naiveté regarding the countless voices that compete for the ear of Christians—voices that often drown out the Spirit. My work, beyond praying for laborers, is in developing a sending process and creating a communication plan, and is not in detailing long-term results.

Finally, TVC’s philosophy of ministry presents itself as a limitation to developing a sending strategy in that it necessarily must fit within a discipleship structure that has been unified around Groups. Communication, training, shepherding and care must all work in conjunction with Groups pastors. While the limitation is not negative, it does present challenges in light of traditional “Missions Department” models.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology for this project involved interaction with Scripture

and numerous scholarly resources as well as my observations of and experiences with multiple missionaries, church planters, and sending pastors. The information gathered served the process and plan that made the strategy. The project will be presented to TVC leadership as a proposal toward needed change.

## CHAPTER 2

### SENDING THEOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

The thesis of this project was that TVC, as a local congregation, has a biblical mandate to send missionaries. In order to fulfill that mandate, three moves were made toward developing a sending theology: (1) *define* several words—namely, mission, missions, and missionaries; (2) *warn against* the continued influence of Enlightenment ideals on those considering a missionary call; and lastly (3) *encourage movement* from individual “going” to “being sent” by the local church. The resulting sending theology will give foundation for presenting several pertinent sending dynamics in chapter three on the way to offering a sending strategy in chapter four.

#### **Enlightened Missions**

Long after the Apostle Paul would ride a horse across the desert, missionary William Carey would ride a wave to India. Where Paul began a mission to the Gentiles, Carey would sail across the ocean under the flag of the newly formed Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen. His combined bravery and gifted administration would make him a hero, and later—to contemporary Christians—something of a legend. This was occurring while a new day was dawning in Europe, the Enlightenment—the Age of Reason, and with its new paradigms, even for missions. Carey, like Paul, would lead his respective revolution, Paul as an “Apostle to the Gentiles,” and Carey as the “father of modern missions.”

Revolutions love slogans, and Carey’s campaign “expect great things from

God; attempt great things for God” has fanned the flame of missions—then and today.<sup>1</sup> As children of the Enlightenment, contemporary evangelicals are greatly inspired by heroes and their battle cries. While there is nothing necessarily suspect in admiring valor, it does touch on something deep within the modern psyche. Individualism, unlimited human potential, and national expansion are dominant genes of the Enlightenment, and they have been given new life in many Christians who may be interested in missions. When one combines these Enlightened European qualities with a distinctively American DNA made up of the need for achievement, a pioneering spirit, disdain for authority, and frustration with bureaucratic interference, the result is a distinctively modern, Western, American, evangelical way of understanding missions. “Enlightened Missions” is the condition of some current and potential missionaries who have been influenced by these qualities. This condition, one could imagine, challenges the local church’s responsibility to corporately send missionaries.

While it may be overreaching to try to connect Carey to paradigmatic moves in eighteenth century culture, and I do not make him the cause of “Enlightened Missions,” but certainly he, like many at the time, felt the seismic shifts toward individualism. No irreverence is intended here, and this does not discredit his valuable achievements. Further, Carey is not responsible for all who might follow him in their current practices. Neither would many blame his initial proactivity in forming a mission society amid stale churches of the time. We contemporary Christians are the ones who made him a hero and wrapped him (and others like him) in what I call “missions mystique.” What remains today (and I pin this primarily on the continued influence of Enlightenment ideals, and

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<sup>1</sup>William Finmore, among others, attributes the more accurate quote, “expect great things; attempt great things,” to Carey’s sermon to the Baptist Association at the Friar Lane Baptist Chapel in Nottingham, England on May 30, 1792. See William Finmore, *The Story of a Hundred Years: 1823-1923* (Oxford: At the University Press, 1923), 14.

not necessarily on Carey, who was faithful) may be a legacy of misunderstanding missions within the local church. George W. Peters lends support, “The history of the church in missions is in the main the history of great personalities and of missionary societies. Only in exceptional cases has it been the church in missions.”<sup>2</sup> There may be no greater contributor to the church’s recent history of great personalities and of missionary societies than the Enlightenment. During the eighteenth century, it came to be believed that there was nothing that could not be solved by pure reason—even the problem of the heathen. Revolutions in science and technology authorized the intellect and motivated the will. If a problem invited solving, someone would be “will”-ing to accept. The more challenging the problem, the more heroic the problem-solver. Missions, however, cannot amount to this heroic volunteerism. The mystique must fade. Francis M. Dubose explains:

(1) There is an “attitudinal” almost “mystical” connotation among those who share the more traditional views [of Enlightened missions]. Such statements as “I believe in missions” or references to “being on mission” symbolize a commitment that transcends the need for clarification of a concept. (2) Traditional mission has had a decided “geographical” connotation. It was something one always went somewhere else to do; the farther away graphically, the greater the mission connotation. (3) Related to this has been the romanticized view. The farther away and the stranger or more exotic the place and circumstance the more significant the mission connotation.<sup>3</sup>

Clarification of a concept is needed, and where a traditional, North Atlantic mission administration that has been influenced by Enlightenment ideals provides the only descriptions, there is real danger. The principles behind individualism, disdain for authority, and frustration with bureaucratic interference all have merit in many circumstances, but there are also legitimate deficiencies that have been passed down.

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<sup>2</sup>George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 214.

<sup>3</sup>Francis M. DuBose, *God Who Sends: A Fresh Quest for Biblical Missions* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983), 17.

These stumbling blocks have littered the path that leads to local church responsibility. Could we drop the attitudinal, mystical, romanticized connotations? I suggest the better way forward is to understand that missions is not where you go, but what you're sent by whom to do.

Unfortunately, where Enlightenment ideals have held sway, the church and missions are all too often marked by the fact that it has, as Tom Julien has noticed, "focused on what the church did *for* the missionary, more so than *through* the missionary."<sup>4</sup> The mission, however, does not belong to the individual. It belongs to God, in Christ, with the church acting as the mediating sending authority.<sup>5</sup> The point here is not to indict generations of faithful missionaries and missionary agencies, but to spur on the church toward greater participation.

With this potential pitfall that I have labeled "Enlightened Missions" in mind, I will re-introduce the main thesis: the local church is a sent people that sends persons to evangelize and plant churches. With that, I will also issue the challenge: the local church leadership must identify, prepare, and send missionaries. Where history has seen a tradition of going persons (heroic volunteers) from going people (missions societies), there must be more sent people (local sending communities) sending persons (evangelists and church planters).

Ahead with our descriptions: What is mission or missions? Who is a missionary? These terms, in the minds of many, are often more concerned with where one goes than what one actually does—geography over function. The further from home or the more exotic the destination, then the greater the mission. The missionary, compelled to go to a particular location, often responds to this highly personal, inward

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<sup>4</sup>Tom Julien, *Antioch Revisited: Reuniting the Church with Her Mission* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2006), 2. Italics his.

<sup>5</sup>Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 218.

call by approaching the local church for support, looking for recognition rather than affirmation or preparation. The assumption is that the person is indeed called and will likely go; the presumption is that the church should celebrate.

Is this faithfulness? If mission means sending (as I will argue), then sending always presupposes (1) a sender, (2) someone being sent, and (3) an assignment. Each role must reflect good theology. No more assumptions; no more presumptions. Volunteerism, however, is a well-worn Western value, while respecting and responding to authority is not. Missions in the church will continue to be about individual “going” rather than corporate “sending” where congregations remain passive financiers and where “called” individuals, bent on a mysterious Macedonian call, head out apart from church leadership or the sending community.

### **For the Glory of Him Who Sends**

In order to substantiate the claim that the local church has a responsibility to send missionaries, I intend to base my descriptions in a sending theology. Any description, of course, must be directed doxologically—for we are dealing first and foremost with the God of Glory whose plan from eternity was a crucified Christ.<sup>6</sup> The gospel is most glorious, and it is God’s gospel-shaped (and therefore apostolic, as I will explain soon) nature that shines brightest. Only a doxological mission can combat what David Bosch says was “attributed to the influence of the Enlightenment . . . [That it] put humans rather than God in the center; all of reality had to be reshaped according to human dreams and schemes. Even in Christian circles human needs and aspirations,

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<sup>6</sup>Stephen R. Holmes argues, “Reformed theology at its (supralapsarian) best has been insistent that God’s first and best thought was the gospel history of Jesus, and that all else that God does flows from his first decision that this should happen. . . . The basic reality of God’s action is the gospel; creation happens so that Christ may be crucified for the sins of the world and rise again from the dead.” Stephen R. Holmes, “Trinitarian Missiology: Toward a Theology of God as Missionary,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8, no. 1 (2006): 85.



although originally couched in purely religious terms, began to take precedence over God's glory."<sup>7</sup> There can be no greater motivation than God's glory, for there is no greater goal for missions.

### **God as Missionary**

With the motivation settled, one needs a motif to guide the descriptions of mission, missions, and missionaries. The motif should rise from the biblical narrative, rather than being read into the text—having decided upon it beforehand. Missions motifs are many, and before the selection is revealed and the choice is substantiated, it is necessary to first affirm another motif, but with qualifications.

The mission of God or *missio Dei* has in the last century revolutionized thinking about missions. It returned the mission to God and His purposes from that of Christendom and colonialism. It retrieved the mission from heroic volunteers and triumphant churches. But it is in some ways deficient, and therefore my affirmation cannot come without a strong suggestion: mission cannot be grounded primarily in God's acts, but instead, in His very being. For God is not simply missional, He is missionary. The difference will become clear.

The theological concept "mission of God," popularized in its Latin form, dates back to Augustine's work on the Trinity.<sup>8</sup> Aquinas also used *missio* to describe Trinitarian procession of the Son and the Spirit.<sup>9</sup> It was, however, the contemporary use

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<sup>7</sup>David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 286.

<sup>8</sup>See Augustine, "On the Holy Trinity," in Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series 1*, vol. 3, accessed July 30, 2015, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf103>. Edward W. Poitras concedes that while the *missio Dei* was not a dominant theme, there was an "affirmation of the centrality of the Triune God in mission." Edward W. Poitras. "St. Augustine and the Mission Dei: A Reflection on Mission at the Close of the Twentieth Century," *Mission Studies*, 16-2, no. 32 (1999): 30.

<sup>9</sup>See Aquinas, "The Mission of the Divine Persons (Eight Articles)," question

of the phrase by the International Missionary Council's 1952 World Mission Conference in Willingen, Germany that coaxed it out from medieval obscurity.<sup>10</sup> The Trinitarian basis of mission was thus established against an ecclesiological or soteriological basis, as many in those days were seeking to "say old things in a new way, to restore a worn-out word [mission] to its original power, to revive it and give it a new function."<sup>11</sup> Missions, in the context of Trinity rather than strictly "church" or "salvation," would now be understood as the Church's participation in the sending of God. "The *missio ecclesiae* comes from the *missio Dei alone*," Hartenstein would summarize Willingen, "The sending of the Son to reconcile the universe through the power of the Spirit is the foundation and purpose of the mission."<sup>12</sup> The renewed emphasis was much needed.

At Willingen, "[Increasingly] it was recognized that the church could be neither the starting point nor the goal of mission. God's salvific work precedes both church and mission. We should not subordinate mission to the church nor church to mission; both should, rather, be taken up into the *missio Dei*."<sup>13</sup> The emphasis on God's

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43 of the First Part (QQ.1-119) of *Summa Theologica*, accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa/home.html>. See also John F. Hoffmeyer, "The Missional Trinity," *Dialog*: 40, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 108.

<sup>10</sup>Tormod Engelsen notes that it was not introduced within the documents from the conference itself, but by Karl Hartenstein, who coined the phrase in a concluding report when he made mission to be "participation in the sending of the Son, in the *mission Dei*, with an inclusive aim of establishing the lordship of Christ over the whole redeemed creation." See Tormod Engelsen, "Missio Dei: The Understanding and Misunderstanding of a Theological Concept in European Churches and Missiology," *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 367 (2003): 482.

<sup>11</sup>H. H. Rosin, *Missio Dei* (Leiden: Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, 1972), 20, cited in Arthur F. Glasser and Donald A. McGavran, *Contemporary Theologies of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 92.

<sup>12</sup>Wilhelm Richebacher, "Missio Dei: The Basis of Mission Theology or a Wrong Path?" *International Review of Mission*, 92, no. 367 (2003): 590.

<sup>13</sup>Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 370.

mission, however, for some, meant a de-emphasis on the church as God's gospel agent. Instead, the church should now simply point to what God is doing in the world and allow the world to set the agenda for missions.<sup>14</sup> Progress would signal the realization of the Kingdom on earth. In the wake of two World Wars, it was clear that lasting peace would not be found in the institutional church; instead, *shalom* would come about according to God's divine purposes unfolding in history. J. C. Hoekendijk even suggested the ineffectual church should secularize and turn itself "inside out."<sup>15</sup> In a 1967 report, the World Council of Churches would agree, "We have lifted up humanization as the goal of mission because we believe that more than others it communicates in our period the meaning of the messianic goal."<sup>16</sup> The move toward social justice and humanitarian aid gained strength in the following year at the World Council of Churches meeting in Uppsala, Sweden. Christianity, the conference argued, would again remake the world; only now "development" would replace "Christian culturing" as the basis of mission.<sup>17</sup>

Donald McGavran, however, in opposition (like many other evangelicals of the day), would disagree with any direction that states, "Mission is everything God is seeking to do in the world . . . [and that] The church's mission should reflect His concerns and actively relate itself to His sense of priorities."<sup>18</sup> They listed the order of priorities as God—world—church. McGavran and others understood that this was clearly the wrong order. A mission of God with Christ's church following behind eventually eliminates the

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<sup>14</sup>World Council of Churches, *The Church for Others and the Church for the World* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967), 15, 20.

<sup>15</sup>J. C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966).

<sup>16</sup>World Council of Churches, *The Church for Others and the Church for the World*, 78. See also Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 383.

<sup>17</sup>Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 326.

<sup>18</sup>Glasser and McGavran, *Contemporary Theologies of Mission*, 65.

need for a savior. If God is at work everywhere among all religions, where is the exclusivity of Christianity? John V. Taylor warned, “There is a real danger ... [where] the blanket phrase *Missio Dei*, which is meant to establish the divine initiative, is worded so vaguely that it includes the whole action of God throughout time and space, as though, if he chose, God might have accomplished the renewal of man without Jesus Christ.”<sup>19</sup> When we speak of *missio Dei*, we must clearly point to Christ.

Restoring some balance, the missional church of today has grabbed hold of this motif and accepted her missionary nature like none before, and in her Trinitarian emphasis the transformation of missions from ecclesio-centricity to theo-centricity is made complete. Even so, the Trinity—under the banner of *missio Dei*—cannot be abstractly overemphasized to the exclusion of the distinct roles within each Person of the Godhead.<sup>20</sup>

This project is suggesting that God as missionary is a better starting point than God on mission. It is the deeper ground to the better motif of apostolic sending. Along these lines, Stephen R. Holmes laments the popular acceptance of *missio Dei* in missionary circles but the reluctance of the same groups to attribute missionary to God’s character—“God *has a mission*, but God *is not missionary*.”<sup>21</sup> The implications are at the core of a potential deficiency in the missional church, namely, an inadequate Trinitarian

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<sup>19</sup>John V. Taylor, *The Uppsala Report* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), 23.

<sup>20</sup>Sending is evident in the distinct roles of each person. The eternally unbegotten Father is the One who sends. The Father eternally sends the eternally begotten Son. The eternal procession of the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. Mission is more than the broadly Trinitarian, external works of God, but rooted in His eternal being that is Three-in-One.

<sup>21</sup>Stephen R. Holmes, “Trinitarian Missiology: Toward a Theology of God as Missionary,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8, no. 1 (2006): 72-90. Italics his.

missiology. Consequently, one last step is required toward my thesis—a sent people must also send persons.

God is missionary at His center, and so should be His church.<sup>22</sup> The missionary church participates in the Trinitarian sending and being sent, not as anomalous, “one-off” sendings according to the *missio Dei*, but as normal expression of *vita Dei*. John G. Fleet agrees, “God’s missionary activity is fuller and more representative of his nature than can be told by simple reference to any particular act of sending.”<sup>23</sup> While we will point to

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<sup>22</sup>Central to the ideal of God as missionary is the sending of the Father, the Son’s being sent, and the connection of the actions to Jesus’ sending of his disciples in John 20:21—“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” Stephen R. Holmes, highlights the apparent continuity of the apostolic mission of the disciples with Jesus’ mission, but in doing so, grounds the activity not in the temporal sendings of the incarnation or Pentecost, but first and foremost, in the very life of God. Stephen R. Holmes, “Trinitarian Missiology: Toward a Theology of God as Missionary,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8, no. 1 (2006): 72-90. The difference is of no small consequence, as Holmes maintains, “The fundamental difference between asserting that God has a mission and asserting that God is missionary is that in the former case the mission may be incidental, disconnected from who God is; in the latter case, mission is one of the perfections [of] God . . . a church might worship a God who has a mission, but it is conceivable that such a God could be worshipped by a non-missionary church; if God is properly described as “missionary”, however, he can only be worshipped by a missionary church” (89). A missionary God requires a missionary church, and a missionary church sends missionaries, or apostolic ministers. When Jesus sends his disciples in the way that he himself was sent, he was not pointing only—even primarily—to an economic event within the Trinity, or something foreign to the eternal life of God, instead he was connecting the church’s mission to something essential to God’s nature. The church is invited to participate in the giving/receiving, self-sacrificial love that is enjoyed within the Trinity. The historic and temporal sending of the Son was but a form of the eternal generation that has always been. This inner-Triune love is missionary in that there is, from eternity, a sending and being sent that is inherently cruciform. Holmes explains, “To speak of God as missionary, then, is to assert that in the eternal begetting of the Son, and the eternal procession of the Spirit, there is not a just a movement of orientation, but also a movement of purposeful sending.” 86. Because of this, Holmes is able to insist on a “reading back of the apostolic mission into the eternal life of God. The sending of the Son and Spirit, the gospel story . . . is neither something foreign to God, nor is it an afterthought . . . Rather, God’s own life is gospel shaped” (83).

<sup>23</sup>John G. Flett, “Missio Dei: A Trinitarian Envisioning of a Non-Trinitarian Theme,” *Missiology* 37, no. 1 (2009): 10.

particular sendings below—even emphasize their importance; we cannot begin there, but rather we must begin with the eternal life of God, where we find a giving/receiving, self-sacrificial love that crescendos in a crucified Christ.

God’s Trinitarian sending centers on Christ. God sent His Son, Jesus to seek and save the lost. John’s gospel, more than any other, carries the theme. God is the Sender (John 4:34; 5:23-24, 37; 6:38-39, 44, 57; 7:16; 18, 28-29; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 9:4 11:42; 12:49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:8; 21, 23, 25), and Christ identifies Himself with his being sent (John 5:38; 6:29; 10:36; 17:3). Albert Curry Winn writes, “Jesus does not appear on the scene as a volunteer. He is on no self-appointed rescue effort. He lives and speaks and acts out of a profound sense of mission, a conviction that he has been sent . . . the sense of having been sent lies at the core of Jesus’ self-understanding.”<sup>24</sup> He acknowledges that His will is not His own but that of God—“I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me” (John 5:30). He claims his words are not his own but those of the Sender—“My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me” (John 7:16). Lastly, He knows his work is not his own, but that of His Father—“For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me” (John 5:36). God the missionary is actualized in Jesus. Winn even believes if Christians should “set out to rethink the Doctrine of Christ in a missionary way . . . it would be a Christology of verbs instead of a Christology of nouns.”<sup>25</sup> Jesus is the Sent One. God in sending Christ is eternally missionary.

John’s gospel gives further evidence, also highlighting the sending of the Holy Spirit to reconcile the world to God, to comfort and counsel the disciples, and to

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<sup>24</sup>Albert Curry Winn, *A Sense of Mission: Guidance From the Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 21-22.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 38.

empower missionary activity. John first connects the person and work of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' ministry of reconciliation in John 3:3-5. Jesus answered Nicodemus, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." This new birth of water and Spirit is necessary because, as F. F. Bruce writes, "The kingdom of God is a spiritual order which can be entered only by spiritual rebirth."<sup>26</sup> The Spirit is sent by the Father through the Son to regenerate lost souls.

Later in John's gospel, Jesus' in his farewell discourse also presents the Holy Spirit as sent as a helper and the communicator of truth—"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:15-27).<sup>27</sup> The *παράκλητος* is the Spirit of truth who will "teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (verse 26). He is a communicator of truth. Andreas Kostenberger explains that truth according to John includes several aspects: "truthfulness as opposed to falsehood . . . truth in its finality as compared to previous, preliminary expressions . . . truth [as] an identifiable body of knowledge . . . [and] truth [as] a sphere of operation, be it for worship or sanctification."<sup>28</sup> The work of the Holy Spirit includes legal counsel and advocacy, as well as the primary communicator of truth.

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<sup>26</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 84.

<sup>27</sup>*παράκλητος* is difficult to translate due to no clear English equivalent. The NIV uses the term 'Counselor', the NASB decided on the 'Helper', the King James Version uses 'Comforter', while the NLT prefers 'Encourager' or 'Advocate'. Wesley J. Perschbacher defines the term as, "one called or sent for to assist another...one who pleads the cause of another." Wesley J. Perschbacher, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 308. William Barclay explains, "It really means someone who is called in . . . to give witness in a law court . . . an expert called in to give advice...a person called in to put new courage into minds and hearts." William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 1. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 194. In the legal sense, counselor is a sufficient rendering, as long as one sees that the Spirit's ministry extends beyond that of a legal adviser or advocate.

<sup>28</sup>Andreas Kostenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*, *Encountering Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids:

Further, the παράκλητος is sent to, “convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin (verse 9).” This work of the Spirit is what Bruce calls the “Spirit’s prosecuting ministry.”<sup>29</sup> The verb ἐλέγχω means to convict, refute, confute, or to expose, to find fault with, and to correct.<sup>30</sup> D. A. Carson clarifies, “He convicts the world of its sin because the people who constitute the world do not believe in Jesus. If they did believe in Jesus, they would believe his statements about their guilt and turn to him . . . He convicts the world of its righteousness because Jesus is going to the Father . . . [and] the Paraclete convicts the world of its judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”<sup>31</sup> God is a righteous judge, and according to John the role of Holy Spirit includes convicting the world of sin.

Finally, John’s gospel reveals that the Spirit is sent to empower disciples. Jesus says to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven” (John 20:17-23). D. A. Carson believes this “is to be regarded as a symbolic promise of the gift of the Spirit later to be given [at Pentecost].”<sup>32</sup> However, Gerald Borchert does not consider this dispensation a separate act but believes, “John viewed the resurrection, the gift of the Spirit, and the ascension of Jesus as a unified event.”<sup>33</sup> Regardless, it is clear, as Bruce notes that an active role of the Spirit is to empower the disciples as they are sent into the world as missionaries and what

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Baker, 1999), 157.

<sup>29</sup>Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 319.

<sup>30</sup>Perschbacher, *Analytical Greek Lexicon*, 134.

<sup>31</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 1991), 537-38.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 651.

<sup>33</sup>Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 308.



is described here is not some impersonal spiritual gift.<sup>34</sup> The gospel of John concludes its treatment of the Holy Spirit in a bold proclamation of the Spirit's power sent to empower the believer to change the world for Christ.

This is this kind of sending love—that the Father would send the Son, that the Son would be sent, and that the Spirit would be sent by the Father and through the Son—that fuels a missionary people. Mission as sending is thereby constitutional, it is what the church is composed of, and not simply what the church does. This is more than missions as task, project or event, but something elemental.<sup>35</sup>

While the *missio Dei* motif created necessary distance from a nineteenth century North Atlantic missions administration, its broad Trinitarianism may not be gospel-shaped enough. And while the missional church externalized an ingrown ecclesial institution, it takes a God as missionary to ground the better missions motif of apostolic sending.

### **Missions as Apostolic Sending**

Sending, as a motif, points to the plain meaning of the word “mission.” Beginning with words themselves and their biblical equivalents seems as good a place as any to start a meaningful description of important concepts. Mission comes from the Latin word *missio*, which means, “a sending,” and its verb form *mitto*, meaning, “to send.” From the word mission, Christians have constructed the words *missions*, *missionary*, *missiology* and *missional*. Scripture reflects this plain meaning; the verb

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<sup>34</sup> Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 392.

<sup>35</sup>Flett believes that only when this deeper ground is established, can the church act accordingly in correspondence (if not continuity) to Christ: “As God’s apostolic mission is not a second step beside who he is from all eternity, so the missionary act is not a second step beside an otherwise defined being of the church. The Christian community is a missionary community, or it is not the Christian community.” Flett, “*Missio Dei*,” 6.

ἀποστέλλω and its synonym πέμπω both appear consistently in the Greek texts of the Old and New Testaments. “Send” or “to send” appears 135 times in the New Testament as ἀποστέλλω, ἐξαποστέλλω 13 times, and πέμπω 80 times. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word that most closely corresponds to mission or sending is שלח. While the Hebrew influence is less significant, the Latin and Greek sources have greatly contributed to the rich tradition of mission’s varied vocabulary. Plainly, missions means sending, but is it the better missions motif? Not everyone believes it to be so.

Bosch is not fully convinced. He believes, “It is unwarranted to single out the verb ‘send’ as *the* key verb in scripture . . . the point is that the word ‘send’ is a very common word in any language . . . [can we] erect an enormous superstructure on a somewhat incidental word [?]”<sup>36</sup> More recently Christopher J. H. Wright has also grown “dissatisfied with accounts of mission that stress only the ‘roots’ of the word in the Latin verb *mitto*, ‘to send,’ and which then see its primary significance in the dynamic of sending or being sent.”<sup>37</sup> He finds the motif too narrow and exclusive, preferring “its more general sense of a long-term purpose or goal that is to be achieved through proximate objectives and planned actions” reason being that in “a broad mission . . . there is room for subordinate missions.”<sup>38</sup> Bosch finds the motif too simple and Wright believes it to be too narrow. Regardless, clarity and focus is exactly what the local church needs to grow in faithfulness.

This idea of sending is everywhere in Scripture,<sup>39</sup> so much so that Dubose

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<sup>36</sup>David J. Bosch, “Mission in Biblical Perspective: A Review Essay,” in *International Review of Mission* 74, no. 533 (1985): 533-34. Italics his.

<sup>37</sup>Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 23.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Gen 3:23; 19:29; 24:7, 40; 45:5, 7–8; Exod 3–7; 8:21; 9:14; 15:7; 23:20, 27–28; 33:12; Lev 26:25; Num 21:6; 20:16; 16:28–29; Deut 9:23; 28:20, 48; 34:11; Josh 24:2, 5–6; 6:8; Judg 6:14; 9:23; 1 Sam 12:8, 11; 15:1, 18, 20; 16:1; 20:22; 2 Sam 12:1; 2

would conclude, “We seem to say it best with mission, and the Bible seems to say it best with the ‘sending’ . . . we may, therefore, legitimately and meaningfully express what we mean by our favorite term mission through what the Bible means by its favorite term sending.”<sup>40</sup> However, this is where Bosch again balks: “[there is] a tendency in Dubose to regard the concept of sending as the essence not only of mission but of the entire theology of scripture . . . It becomes an over-arching concept that threatens to swallow up everything.”<sup>41</sup> This much is true potentially, and this is also why the more general sending in Scripture must give way to the more narrowed, apostolic sending.

The writer of Hebrews would have his audience consider Jesus an apostle who was faithful to Him by whom He was appointed (Heb 3:1). He was God’s commissioned agent in the tradition of Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel. Jesus came to earth to forgive sins as God, the Son being a fully authorized representative. In a similar authorization and commissioning, Christ sent out his own apostles (John 17:18; 20:21). Like Jesus (John 7:16), their words were not their own, but God’s (Matt 10:20). Just as the old rabbinic saying, “The one sent by a man is as the man himself,” the apostolic ministry was transferred from Christ to the Apostles, and even now to the apostolic church.<sup>42</sup> The church is apostolic less because of historical succession and more because Jesus was the

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Kgs 17:25; 15:37; 24:2; 1 Chr 21:15; 7:13; 2 Chr 32:21; 36:15; Neh 6:12; Job 5:10; 38:35; Pss 105:17, 26, 28; 135:9; 78:45; 110:2; 111:9; 20:2; 57:3; 78:25; 104:10, 30; 18:4; 106:15; Jer 1:7; 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Hag 1:12; Zech 2:8, 9; 4:9; 6:15; Mic 6:4; Isa 9:8; 10:6, 16; Ezek 5:17; 14:19, 21; 39:6; Hos 8:14; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12; 2:5; 4:10; Mal 3:1; Matt 11:10–15; Mark 1:2–8; Luke 7:18–28; John 1:6–8; 3:17; 4:34; 5:30, 36; 6:38–40; 9:4; 7:16–18; 8:26–29; 12:49; 14:24; 17:8; 20:21; Rom 10:15, 1 Pet 1:12; Rev 6.

<sup>40</sup>Dubose, *God Who Sends*, 37.

<sup>41</sup>Bosch, “Mission in Biblical Perspective,” 534.

<sup>42</sup>Robert J. Scudieri, *The Apostolic Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Missionary* (Chino, CA: Lutheran Society for Missiology, 1995), 9.

archetypical Apostle of whom the church represents and because of the New Testament apostles of whom the church models. Robert J. Scudieri explains, “When we call the church apostolic we are talking about more than our pedigree; we are declaring the church’s missionary task. Of course apostolic means that the church continues to believe the *doctrine* of the first apostles. But it means something more. It means that the church continues to *do* what the apostles did, because the church also has been sent by the same Sender (Matt 24:14).”<sup>43</sup>

Carl E. Braaten charges the church to build on the foundation of those apostles who “were missionaries in the broadest sense of the word, founders of believing communities. Preaching was at the core of their assignment . . . A church has a right to call itself apostolic only if it carries on the work of the apostles—going into all the world in order to make disciples in all the nations by teaching and baptizing.”<sup>44</sup> This foundation gets at the “missionary identity . . . rooted in apostolic function,” that according to Alan R. Johnson, “focus[es] on how apostles both conceived their task and what they actually did . . . [it] becomes the template for self-understanding that shapes all missionary activity and the reasons for that activity.”<sup>45</sup> Apostolic sending, focused on function rather than office, gets to the heart of a biblical description of missions.

Bosch brings us back to the present dilemma, “We have reached the stage at which almost anybody using the concept mission has to explain how it is understood, if serious confusion is to be avoided.”<sup>46</sup> Explanation—I argue—must include a narrowing

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<sup>43</sup>Scudieri, *The Apostolic Church*, 3. Italics his.

<sup>44</sup>Carl E. Braaten, *Apostolic Imperative: Nature and Aim of the Church’s Mission and Ministry* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 126.

<sup>45</sup>Alan R. Johnson, *Apostolic Function in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carrey Library, 2009), 52-53.

<sup>46</sup>David J. Bosch, “Theological Education in Missionary Perspective,” *Missiology* 10, no. 1 (1982): 3.

and focusing of the term, where the alternative only leads to Stephen Neill's concern, "If everything is mission, nothing is mission."<sup>47</sup> Mission, then, is even more than the initial description borrowed from Peters, ' "God in action in behalf of the salvation of mankind," but the giving/receiving, self-sacrificial, gospel-shaped, apostolic sending of God. It is not the generic sending of the missional church, but the apostolic sending of the missionary church. Therefore, to bring it all together, the mission of the church is to take up the mission of God, or, even better, to correspond with God who is missionary. Missions (plural) then, "is a specialized term . . . mean[ing] the sending forth of authorized persons . . . to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ . . . to win converts . . . and to establish functioning, multiplying congregations."<sup>48</sup> Missions cannot be everything if it is to be something. This is not only reasonable, but helpful for pastors trying to be faithful to send.

### **The Sending Church**

The earliest confessions described the Church as one, holy, catholic, and only later—at the Council of Constantinople in AD 381—added apostolic. It seems the sending and being sent aspect of the church has always been something of an add-on. Even the Reformation criteria—the *notae ecclesiae* that were intended to mark the true church: preaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of discipline—were somewhat vague and unverifiable when it came to their actual functioning in the world. Apostolicity, however, should turn those marks outward. Jürgen

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<sup>47</sup>The fuller quote is pertinent: "There is a great deal of talk to-day about the 'theology of mission'. This may be a good thing; but I apprehend certain dangers . . . The first is that we may cast our net too wide and so make the enquiry almost meaningless. If everything is mission, nothing is mission. If everything that the Church does is to be classed as 'mission', we shall have to find another term for the Church's particular responsibility for 'the heathen', those who have never yet heard the Name of Christ." Stephen Neill, *Creative Tension* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1959), 81-82.

<sup>48</sup>Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 11.

Moltmann suggests, “We cannot therefore merely give the marks of the church bearings that tend in an inward direction, understanding them in light of word and sacrament; we must in some degree give them outward direction and see them in reference to the world. They are not merely important for the internal activities of the church; they are even more important for the witness of the church’s form in the world.”<sup>49</sup> This is why a missionary church must express its apostolicity in being a “people” rather than a “place.” The church is foremost the sent *people* of God (1 Pet 2:9-12). Johannes Blauw writes, “There is no other Church than the Church sent in to the world, and there is no other mission than the Church of Christ.”<sup>50</sup> Charles Van Engen imagines the attributes (one, holy, catholic, apostolic) in action, with apostolicity as the church’s proclaiming, witnessing force.<sup>51</sup>

God the missionary sends his missionary church into the world, who then sends missionaries. The pattern is clear from the New Testament. Christ commissioned his followers to the making of disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19), empowering them with His Spirit (Acts 2). God would use the early church in Jerusalem and in Antioch in this way to further his mission. The fellowship of believers would become the sending church.

The book of Acts is a key stop in the biblical narrative of God’s sending. For the reader attuned to this idea of sending, the account slows with the church in Jerusalem sending Barnabas to Antioch to gather and disciple those scattered by the persecution over Stephen, and then pauses on a certain meeting that took place at the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1–3). While opinions vary as to the significance of these few verses

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<sup>49</sup>Jurgen Moltman, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 342, cited in Charles Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 67.

<sup>50</sup>Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Missions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 120-21.

<sup>51</sup>Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People*, 68.

within the scheme of Acts, most understand it to be paradigmatic. Some see this event as the beginning of Gentile inclusion or, more generally, the expansion of the gospel into the larger world. Others see it as a start to the first of three journeys undertaken by Paul. But there also appears to be another, perhaps more practical, purpose: a turn toward the church's sending. Ernest Best believes, "the incident represents the first deliberate and professional missionary activity."<sup>52</sup> Before, the Jerusalem Church took the gospel with them as they fled persecution. It was "not a planned activity . . . [but] the incidental result of outside circumstances."<sup>53</sup> Now, the church in Antioch, no longer harassed, was at a crossroads. New conditions meant new opportunity—an opportunity for strategy. The church leaders would respond. They exercised discernment in and through the practice of prayer and fasting, they transferred authority with the laying on of hands, and they sent out from among their own, claiming responsibility for those they released.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Ernest Best, "Acts 13:1–3," *Journal of Theological Studies* 11, no. 2 (1960): 345.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Some precautions are in order: Charging the church with something based on the observation of narrative passages is challenging, and some even find the story unconvincing as it relates to sending. Peter Wagner writes, "The argument that Paul and his co-workers were sent out by the church in Antioch is far from conclusive." Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 188. Harold Cook is stronger in his removal of the church from sending responsibility: "There is absolutely no indication that these men were acting on behalf of the church. Nor did their ministry *in* the church necessarily qualify them to act *for* the church" (italics his). Harold Cook, "Who Really Sent the First Missionaries?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1975): 233-39. Some scrutinize the sender, and others the word "sent." According to the passage, the Spirit instructed the leaders to "set apart" the missionaries (v. 2), where they subsequently "sent them off" (v. 3). The Jerusalem church also previously "sent" Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22). And yet, in the following verse, the emphasis was on the Spirit's sending (v. 4), and even the church's sending (*apoluo*) in v. 3 generally means to "set free" or "release." This leads some to say, "Nowhere in the New Testament . . . is [the word] used with the sense that is anything like 'authoritatively commission' . . . [rather] the Antioch church . . . release[d] them from their local responsibilities and allowed them to return to the kind of work that had brought them to Antioch in the first place." Joseph C. and Michele C, "Field-governed

Sending presupposes a sender—the local church, who is both invested and connected like the Antiochene Church. What’s more, sending also presumes an assignment defined by the role rather than the geography. A missionary, then, according to our description, is an evangelist or church planter that is sent by a local church as an extension or a generation<sup>55</sup> of its body, outside the scope of that local church, on an assignment to witness to Christ, make converts, and to gather them into churches.

With the above understanding of mission, missions, and missionaries in regards to sending and not simply “going,” the church might better understand its leadership role and rescue the generally well-intentioned but eager volunteer from isolated decision making. The sending community in collaboration with local church leadership can affirm a call to gospel ministry, train toward an assignment, and prepare the missionary for a healthy handoff and continued partnership with a sending agency or organization.

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Mission Structures, Part 1: In the New Testament,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 18, no.2 (Summer 2001): 62. Jack Chapin goes further in commenting on the word *expempe* (being sent out) in Acts 13:4. He writes, “A third strong verb seems to describe the termination of their present relationship with the Antioch church . . . The same word [*expempe*] is translated, ‘Escape’ in Acts 17:10. In effect God the Spirit was telling them all, ‘Release them. Let them go. Break out of here, fellas!’” Jack Chapin, “The Sender: Local Church and Mission Agency—What’s the Best Relationship?” *Mission Frontiers*, January-February 1998, accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/the-sender>). Regardless, if the missionary band were not taking orders from the church, they did feel accountable to it as evidenced by the gathering of the entire church—not just the leaders—to hear the missionaries’ report upon returning—Acts 14:26-28. See Richard Longenecker, *The Acts of the Apostles*, in vol. 13 of the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 417. Clearly, Antioch was considered a home base (Acts 15:35), and they seemed to sense a responsibility to their local membership, if not in decision-making authority, then in accountability.

<sup>55</sup>The evangelist, who is sent on assignment only to return and report, operates as an extension—he or she is an arm that reaches out but never detaches. The church planter, however, is a generation of the local church, a bud that grows into a new body elsewhere.



## Parachurch Partnership

The local church must participate in the sending process. The church leaders at Antioch did this, as did the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:22, Acts 15:22), the church in Philippi (Phil 2:25), as well as others (2 Cor 8:33), and the gospel went forth. Attempts at obedience throughout history have had both successes and setbacks. God has proved faithful in either case, as He tends to accomplish His will regardless, but how often has the church relied on heroic volunteers and missionary societies? Have parachurch ministries proliferated because the church has stagnated? Orlando Costas concedes as much, but warns that we might hesitate to make a theological principle out of a “missiological failure.”<sup>56</sup> Is the church failing in her mission? Has she been disobedient or has she just lacked creativity?

Surely ingenuity is a virtue, but one must ask where Enlightenment ideals of expediency have pressed too far into new shapes. How should the church view those entrepreneurs of the past, and even those who have now come alongside the “para” church? The prefix here is either descriptive or derogatory depending on the definer. Noel Jason calls the parachurch “helpers” of the local church specialized in knowledge and skill, “alongside” yet subordinate.<sup>57</sup> Jerry White, however, misdirects the question by asking, “what is the church?” rather than “what is the parachurch?” In doing so, he implies that the parachurch is a structure “outside” rather than alongside the local church (he calls it para-local church).<sup>58</sup> Answering his own question, he believes the universal

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<sup>56</sup>Orlando Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1974) 168-69, 171, cited in Mark Vanderwerf, “The Two Structures of God’s Mission” in *Global Missiology* 3, no. 8 (2011): accessed on April 1, 2015, <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/589/1493>.

<sup>57</sup>Jason Noel, “The Relationship between Church and Para-Church: Biblical Principles,” in *The Church: God’s Agent for Change*, ed. Bruce J. Nicholls (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 202.

<sup>58</sup>Jerry White, *The Church & The Parachurch: An Uneasy Marriage* (Portland,

church is both local church and para-local church together. Faithful Christians have, for centuries, operated these successful ministries in the context of missions. Many are convinced of their theological legitimacy, while others argue they are unbiblical, or at least extra-biblical. What no one can argue is that parachurch ministries have proven effective in spreading the gospel.

Agreement may come with clear roles and responsibilities. The mission of church leadership, the laity, and entrepreneurial church members who have found evangelistic opportunities in business is the same – the desire is to make disciples. However, to reinforce my thesis that the local church should take the lead, hearing from those who use Scripture to justify parachurch priority will be helpful. Ralph Winter’s popular theory of God’s two redemptive structures argues that these ministries are equal expressions of the universal church.

### **Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission**

Ralph D. Winter, in an address to the All-Asia Mission Consultation in Seoul, Korea, in August 1973, described what he deemed two important structures of God’s redemptive mission—modalities and sodalities.<sup>59</sup> He argued that the Apostle Paul—steeped in Judaism—fashioned the Christian church after the Jewish synagogue and patterned his missionary band after Jewish proselytizing practices. It is supposed that

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OR: Multnomah Press, 1983), 19.

<sup>59</sup>Ralph D. Winter, “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 244-53. Winter first introduced the idea of the two structures as being the “warp” and “woof” or the longitudinal and lateral threads holding together the Christian movement. Ralph Winter, “The Anatomy of Christian Mission,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (1969): 74-89. Also see, Ralph Winter and R. Pierce Beaver, *The Warp and the Woof: Organizing for Mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1970), 25.

Paul, who regularly visited these synagogues on his journeys, established synagogue-type fellowships that would later develop into what became known as the New Testament Church. Additionally, and in a similar way, Paul likely followed the pattern of Jewish evangelists who were known to “travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte (Matt 23:15)” in his team missionary ministry. These two structures, according to Winter, would continue to be employed throughout history as every Christian generation sought to borrow the New Testament functions without being beholden to its early forms.<sup>60</sup>

Theologians have, over the years, questioned the validity of a second structure that claims to be, along with the local congregation, a visible expression of the invisible church. Peters—calling them “accidents of history”—worried that “establish[ing] exegetically the Biblicism of a missionary society seems to be going beyond clear scriptural evidence.”<sup>61</sup> Roland Allen, before him, observed, “There was no special organization for missions in the Early Church; the church organization sufficed. It was simple and complete,” while charging additional structures with being a “form characteristic of Western people in this age . . . [taking] the form of elaborate organization.”<sup>62</sup> Harry Boer scathed, “The Protestant churches have, since their inception, wandered far from the missionary ideal set forth in the New Testament. They have through default permitted to come into being that characteristic phenomenon known as the missionary society . . . The missionary society is, scripturally speaking, an abnormality . . . [even if] a blessed abnormality.”<sup>63</sup> More recently, while acknowledging the organizations’ historicity, even their effectiveness, Bruce Camp writes, “one does not

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<sup>60</sup>Winter, “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission,” 246.

<sup>61</sup>Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 224, 226.

<sup>62</sup>Roland Allen, *Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1962), 96-97.

<sup>63</sup>Harry Boer, *Pentecost and Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 214.

establish a doctrine by historical occurrence alone. My concern is not with the historical argument for the existence of sodality structures; it is with the proposed theological justification of sodalities that suggests that they are other expressions of the universal church.”<sup>64</sup> This last concern is the issue. While the church is free to experiment with “means” of reaching the lost, it is not free to claim its ministries are divine institutions.

Winter believes he has support in Paul’s missionary band being “something definitely more than the extended outreach of the Antioch church . . . it was not simply the Antioch church operating at a distance from its home base. It was something else, something different.”<sup>65</sup> That something different he later identifies as a church—“I am suggesting that Paul’s missionary band was as much the church (that is, the *ecclesia*) as were the synagogue structures . . .”<sup>66</sup> Charles Mellis agrees in his study on the parachurch, *Committed Communities*, “. . . it is my thesis that the two structures together constitute the Church.”<sup>67</sup> This same constitution of the universal Church, according to Samuel F. Metcalf, correctly divides “the church in local form and the church in mobile or mission form.”<sup>68</sup>

But is this position correct? Many dispute the claim and disagree with the distinction. Camp, for instance, points out Paul’s missionary band was never called a church, and John S. Hammett notes that parachurch structures are potentially un-church-

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<sup>64</sup>Bruce K. Camp, “A Theological Examination of the Two-Structure Theory,” *Missiology* 23, no. 2 (1995): 200-201.

<sup>65</sup>Winter, “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission,” 245.

<sup>66</sup>Ralph Winter, “Paul and the Regions Beyond,” *Asia Missions Advance* 9 (July 1979), 13. See also Bruce K. Camp, “A Theological Examination of the Two-Structure Theory,” *Missiology*, 23, no. 2 (1995): 199.

<sup>67</sup>Charles J. Mellis, *Committed Communities* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 7.

<sup>68</sup>Samuel F. Metcalf, “When Local Churches Act Like Agencies,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (1993): 148.

like in their absence or irregularity in preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, and exercising discipline—all commonly understood marks of the church.<sup>69</sup> Further, it seems that Mellis’ insistence that the local church is merely a “nurture” structure where the sodality is a “service” or “missions” structure is unfounded.<sup>70</sup> Camp affirms:

Both the narrative and doctrinal sections of the New Testament assert that church structures are responsible for the nurture of believers and responsible for mono-cultural and cross-cultural outreach. The Bible does not teach or allow for a distinction between local and cross-cultural witness in the sense that a church can do one and not the other.<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps most importantly, the parachurch does not have the ecclesial status of divine institution. A.H. Strong says the church alone is “of divine appointment,” and that other structures “lack the transcendent element—they are instituted and managed by man alone.”<sup>72</sup> What then is the parachurch ministry if not an expression of the universal church equal to the local congregation? They are businesses doing gospel ministry, and their value is manifest only in right relationship with the local body.

### **Servant-Partnership**

Hammett suggests that the relationship works best in a servant-partnership model that “combines a positive appreciation for the ministry of parachurch groups with an emphasis on the theological priority of the church. Parachurch groups are seen as partners, or helpers, raised up by God to aid the church, but possessing a status

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<sup>69</sup>Camp, “A Theological Examination,” 201-3. Also see, John S. Hammett, “How Church and Parachurch Should Relate: Arguments for a Servant-Partnership Model,” *Missiology* 28, no. 2 (2000): 202.

<sup>70</sup>Mellis, *Committed Communities*, 4-5.

<sup>71</sup>Camp, “A Theological Examination,” 204.

<sup>72</sup>A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Griffith and Rowland Press, 1909), 3: 890, 892, cited in John S. Hammett, “How Church and Parachurch Should Relate,” 202.

subordinate to that of the church.”<sup>73</sup> Just as the local church needs administration in areas of facilities, finances, human resources, and communication, there is need for evangelists and church planters and the agencies that employ them. The partnering creates synergy when both “combine their efforts to produce greater effectiveness than either party can accomplish independently,” celebrates Camp.<sup>74</sup> Churches should help facilitate the transaction: (1) the church helps an individual discern a “call to gospel ministry,” (2) the church and individual consider and select a parachurch ministry for consultation and direction, (3) the individual is “hired” by the parachurch ministry, (4) the church “partners” with that ministry, initiating a relationship of support and care.

This combining of efforts serves the local church and empowers (and employs) the individual, and in the relationship, the parachurch “find[s] justification for its existence only in the mission of the church.”<sup>75</sup>

It has been shown that the history of Christian missions has had a progression of sorts—from “going persons” in the first missionary heroes of the nineteenth century to the “going people” of the voluntary associations of missionary societies and parachurch ministries. More recently there has been a positive resurgence of the local church (the missional church) to embody the *missio Dei* in Jesus Christ as the “sent people” of God, but it must go even further. The last step toward obedience to the missionary mandate is to “send persons” out from that sent people.

Being sent is not the same as “going,” for we are all called to “go.” The local church, however, authorizes, commissions, and sends certain persons—apostolic ministers. These are missionaries in the truest sense of the title. While “go” is the

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<sup>73</sup>Hammett, “How Church and Parachurch Should Relate,” 200.

<sup>74</sup>Bruce K. Camp, “Major Paradigm Shifts in World Evangelization,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 11, no. 3 (1994): 135.

<sup>75</sup>Noel, “The Relationship between Church and Para-Church,” 201.

imperative of “sent,” it has a different connotation (for many) and therefore different implications. “The missionary today is a ‘sent one’ if he is a missionary in the biblical sense of the word,” writes George W. Peters, “A missionary is not one who has *gone* out, but one who is *sent* out. It is the sending that makes all the difference.”<sup>76</sup> The difference is the priority of the church as the mediating sending authority. The church, in taking up Christ’s mission, sends missionaries as extensions or generations of that local body. Those who “go”, however, are not sent in the same official capacity—they are not necessarily extensions or generations of the body in a “missionary” sense. This, of course, in no way diminishes the duty to go. The Great Commission texts (Matt 28:16-20; Mark 13:10 and 14:9; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21 and Acts 1:8), highlighted by Matthew’s “Go, therefore and make disciples” remain the enduring challenge and charge.

And yet the command is not first or original. Peters writes, “The missionary nature of Christianity does not originate in a command; it merely focuses it ... [it] does not create new duties; it merely defines original ones.”<sup>77</sup> Robert E. Speer adds,

If these particular words had never been spoken by [Jesus], or if, having been spoken, they had not been preserved, the missionary duty of the Church would not be in the least affected. The supreme arguments for missions are not found in any specific words. It is the very being and character of God that the deepest ground of the missionary enterprise is to be found.”<sup>78</sup>

There is a difference between going and being sent. The local church should associate going with being a sent people, but being sent by that sent people is the call of a few who are set apart. Christians will continue to go and make disciples anywhere and everywhere. The Great Commission, summed up in Matthew 28:19, is not a new duty, but simply mandated Christian living. The church’s duty, however, does not end there;

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<sup>76</sup>Peters, *Biblical Theology of Missions*, 252. Italics his.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>78</sup>Robert E. Speer, *Christianity and the Nations* (New York: Revell, 1910), 17-18, cited in Peters, *Biblical Theology of Missions*, 55.

there is more. Primary sending responsibilities cannot be neglected or contracted out. The intent, here, in differentiating going and sending, is not to suppress the one but to incite the other.

Enlightened Westerners, individual and independent, need no further incitement, it would seem. Carey's battle cry pales in comparison to the rousing "Go, therefore" of the Great Commission. While there is no deficit in the perfect (and effectual) words of Scripture, emotional appeals to "Go!" from the mouths of good-hearted missionary societies or ill-equipped-to-send pastors on "missions Sundays" often produce less than satisfactory results. It is often the case that the most zealous volunteers aren't the most gifted evangelists or church planters. Michael C. Griffiths comments, "The volunteer system does not produce the kind of missionaries that are required in the proportion in which they are required. There may be a surplus of people volunteering as accountants, secretaries, or nurses, but a serious shortage of ... men who are personal soul-winners and church-planters (gifted in starting new congregations)."<sup>79</sup> We must continue to teach the Great Commission texts, exhorting the faithful to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," and trusting that the Spirit will move in hearts, but not at the expense of local church sending of apostolic ministers. Missions is not Western, Enlightened, heroic volunteerism; it is humble surrender to God's call in conjunction with local church preparation and authorization.

This chapter has presented a sending theology. I have held up God's glory as the motivation and final goal of missions. I have acknowledged the ground gained in the *missio Dei* motif in rescuing missions from Christendom and colonialism, but have also warned against a broadly Trinitarian mission that deemphasizes Christ and his church. I have suggested "God as missionary" as the deeper ground to the better motif of apostolic

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<sup>79</sup>Michael C. Griffiths, *Who Really Sends the Missionary?* (Chicago: Moody, 1974),15.



sending. Sending is the plain meaning of mission and is best narrowed to local church sending of evangelists and church planters—missionaries in the most appropriate sense of the word. The local church has priority to lead, not only in “going” generally, but in “sending” particularly. Parachurch ministries are partners in missions, serving alongside the church. This sending theology will next be supplemented with sending dynamics on the way toward a sending strategy.

## CHAPTER 3

### SENDING DYNAMICS

Sending missionaries is the responsibility of TVC as a local congregation. Establishing a sending theology that defines missions as apostolic ministry while looking to the Antiochene Church in Acts 13:1-3 as a model has substantiated this thesis. Still, my stated purpose of developing a strategy for identifying, training, and sending apostolic ministries also requires my looking into interactive elements or key components of sending. There are a few topical items that the church leader must examine regarding potential missionaries. I call these items “sending dynamics.” Calling and obedience are the two dynamics I will consider here. These interrelated issues must be addressed in order to arrive at a comprehensive strategy.

#### **Calling**

If all go but only some are sent, as I have suggested, what differentiates the two? The most immediate answer is their calling. But there is more, the candidate must also wrestle with obedience to that call—obedience might be either aided or discouraged by persuasive church leaders.

Enlightened Westerners’ general disdain for authority along with an inherited heroic volunteerism has adversely affected the missionary’s call, and the church’s capacity to send. Calling, in many ways, has become an individual, private affair acted upon apart from the local church. There was a time in history when Reformers reacted over and against a Catholic dualism that elevated priestly work over the menial labor of the laity. Where Christian calling then referred to only the spiritual, the Reformers began to esteem

the daily work of faithful followers.<sup>1</sup> Later, the Puritans would go further, in trying to glorify “secular” work they essentially removed spirituality from calling.<sup>2</sup> Today, calling has been commandeered by a Protestant work ethic that sanctifies achievement and bedevils any form of ascription.

The present concern of sending individuals, however, begins with God calling some to places of leadership in the church. Even this is not without controversy. Debates around returning church ministry to the laity out of the powerful hands of the clergy regularly flare up. At times our understanding of “the priesthood of all believers” discredits needed offices. Evangelists and pastors are legitimate leaders called by God. And while the renewed ownership of ministry to the members of the body is important, it cannot be at the expense of installing qualified, authorized church leaders.

Evangelists and pastors are uniquely called to ministry service, and while there is no “special” calling for superior Christians, there remains an exclusive role for those gifted by God toward church work. To put it another way, the role or function is special; the person or office is not. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teacher/preachers are assigned and appointed according to measures of gifts (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12: 4-12; 1 Pet 4:10-11; Rom 12:3-8). They are not set apart by birth or class, privilege or prestige—but they are, in fact, set apart. Church roles, like other social roles, are established to create order and prescribe responsibilities. While the ministry belongs to the entire church, the members still submit to the leadership of called church officials.

If it is the responsibility of the local church to send missionaries, then church

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<sup>1</sup>Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* (St. Louis, MO: Concorida, 1957), pt. 3, chap. 2, and John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), I. xvi, III.x, IV. xiii,

<sup>2</sup>Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), chaps. 4 and 5, and R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998, chaps. 3 and 4.

leaders must be about the work of helping candidates discern what has traditionally been referred to as a “call to ministry.” The sending church should assist individuals in understanding and evaluating this personal call in corroboration with the church community. Together, the church leaders *and* the members will need to answer the questions, “Is the individual called? According to what measure of gifts? And is it wise to act upon that calling?” This is a weighty task, not to be taken lightly. Therefore, in order for the church to lead with conviction in discernment, it must: (1) establish a shared understanding of calling, (2) differentiate between positional, professional, and priestly callings, (3) discern God’s will, and (4) evaluate the candidate’s desire, gifting, skill, and opportunity.

Like mission, missions, and missionary, “calling” has proven equally difficult in providing a satisfactory definition. A call or calling in Scripture is first, and most plainly, a beckoning from God. It is a summons for service, of which a response is expected. But it is also a vocation and even an identity. The simple fact Christ calls us to follow him is evident, and that the church is identified as “called-out ones” is clear, but the continued use of the word vocation can complicate matters. Vocation, from the Latin *vocatio* simply means “calling.” The idea being that a vocation is not simply an occupation (a job or a profession) but a dutiful working unto the Lord. Vocation also recognizes a “Caller” who assigns and appoints according to His divine will. With that redundancy, and with the terms being virtually synonymous in most others ways, we will move ahead with call or calling rather than vocation.

There was a time when calling referred only to the spiritual work of monks and priests. As mentioned earlier, a sacred-secular dualism during the Middle Ages relegated manual labor to second-class, while contemplation of God was “promised us as the goal of all our actions and the eternal perfection of happiness,” as Augustine attested.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Augustine, *On The Trinity*, I, 8, cited in Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-*

Aquinas even thought it to be “the goal of the whole of human life.”<sup>4</sup> The Reformers would disagree. Luther fired back, “The works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they be, do not differ one whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic laborer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks ...”<sup>5</sup> Reformer William Perkins would follow, “The action of a shepherd in keeping sheep, performed as I have said in his kind, is as good a work before God as is the action of a judge in giving sentence, or of a magistrate in ruling, or a minister in preaching.”<sup>6</sup> Where Catholics elevated the work of monks and priests, Protestant Reformers would raise the daily work of peasants. They believed everyone is called to a sacred work and every calling is performed unto the Lord. Calvin and the Puritans took the idea even further equating calling with a certain kind of hard work that lead to achievement and acquisition. The industrial revolution additionally narrowed and individualized calling into simply a personal job that was productive.

God summons his people for service, and He expects a prompt response. This is the call or the beckoning of the Father in its most basic form. Christians are primarily called to God, not vocation. The response is, then, faithful obedience to Him, to whom disciples are ultimately responsible (more so than to the job that we perceive to be our

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*Nicene Fathers*, 1, vol. 3, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf103.html>.

<sup>4</sup>Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II, 2<sup>nd</sup>, Q. 100, art. 4, accessed on Sept 21, 2015, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa>.

<sup>5</sup>Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” *The Ninety-Five Theses and Three Primary Works*, ed. Henry Wace and C. A. Buchheim (London: John Murray, 1883), accessed September 15, 2015, [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/luther/first\\_prin.i.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/luther/first_prin.i.html).

<sup>6</sup>William Perkins, “A Treatise of the Vocations or Callings of Men,” *The Works of That Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins* (London, 1612-1637), 750, cited in Os Guinness, *The Call* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 34.

calling). Beyond the request and response, to be called is also to be named by God.<sup>7</sup> When God names something He brings it into being. He creates with a call. It is constitutional and thereby positional in its identifying where Christians stand in relation to God. Christian identity, then, is a *positional* calling.

However, there is also a *professional* calling. God gives his children gifts to steward, to express in professional service. “Professional” generally refers to a paid occupation. A professional calling is anything you spend most of your day doing—how you make a living. Our gifts are paired with assignments and appointments, and these become our callings. For some, those called to professional church work—apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers (Eph 4:11)—also receive a clerical or *priestly* calling. Following this pattern, a pastor has a positional calling, a professional calling, *and* a priestly calling. This does not imply a hierarchy, of course. The priestly calling is not the pinnacle. In every calling there is a dutiful Christian response that expresses his or her identity and gifts. That some are set apart for clerical, priestly service does not demote or devalue other professions. For the redeemed, all work is Kingdom work. Still, not all work is church work. There is a specific call to gospel ministry that is altogether positional, professional, and priestly.

### **God’s Will and Christian Ministry**

Paul writes, “If someone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Tim 3:1). The question not answered in the verse is, “*should* I pursue the ministry?” Aspiration or desire to ministerial vocation does not mean one should enter vocational ministry. The Christian first and foremost wants to be obedient to God’s will, and so begins for many faithful followers an anxiety-producing search for answers. What is God’s will for my life? Does He want me to pursue professional, priestly ministry? For

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<sup>7</sup>Gen 32:28; Isa 56:5, 62:2; Rev 3:12.

some, He does indeed.

The sovereign God of the universe “works all things according to the counsel of his will (Eph 1:11).” All that is, and all that ever will be, was decreed by God in his infinite wisdom. At the same time on a more human level, God wills that we as responsible moral agents respond to His demands and expectations. “The secret things belong to the Lord our God,” it is explained in Deuteronomy, “but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law (29:29).” God’s secret will is unfolded over time, understood only in retrospect, while God’s revealed will is readily available in Scripture, demanding our obedience. Where fretting about the future is unfruitful, righteousness is always immediately profitable. The will of God is our sanctification (1 Thess 4:3). God carefully guides his children toward their divine assignment and appointment, revealing to His disciples that discovery is generally better than disclosure. Discovery is active and never passive, as Kevin Deyoung explains, “If you are seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, you will be in God’s will, so just go out and do something.”<sup>8</sup> Certainly God could simply disclose his secret plans ahead of time, but a father’s guidance is better. Edmund P. Clowney agrees, “The will of the father is perfectly clear, yet it may not be at all understood. It is good for a child to obey even when he doesn’t understand.”<sup>9</sup> Even more so, it is better to obey *because* the child doesn’t fully understand. Still, in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3). In the days of the prophets, God spoke at many times in many ways (Gideon’s golden fleece; David and the priest’s ephod), but in these last days he has spoke to us in his Son (Heb 1:1-2).

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<sup>8</sup>Kevin Deyoung, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God’s Will* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 61.

<sup>9</sup>Edmund P. Clowney, *Called to the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964), 70.

## Desire, Gifting, Skills, and Opportunity

When considering the sending dynamic of calling, the church leader and the potential missionary uses wisdom. The righteous walk in wisdom, and wisdom is discernment. To discern is to decide—from the Latin *decidere* (*de-* “off” + *caedere* “cut” or “kill”).<sup>10</sup> If decision is the cutting off of alternatives, we should be so wise in our severing. Wisdom points the Christian to several calling categories: desire, gifting, skills, and opportunity. These are always preconditions for service.

Called ministers must first desire to do the work. Missionaries must have a passion for gospel ministry paired with a compassion for suffering and appreciation for diversity. Frederick Buechner explains, “The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you most need to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done . . . The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”<sup>11</sup> Paul’s desire, for example, manifested itself in a strong compulsion to preach—“For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel” (1 Cor 9:16-17). He was indebted to the lost—“I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish” (Rom 1:14). Those sent outside the scope of the local church are particularly driven by a love for those who are suffering or for those who are different—those outside one’s familiar context. This could be a love for people of a different ethnicity, geography, culture, or class, but there must be this desire.

The desire for gospel ministry is often accompanied by the presence of gifts, and the more that those gifts are exercised, the more the desire usually grows. Kingdom service is shaped by these gifts of grace, in measure. Paul writes to the Ephesians,

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<sup>10</sup>*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 12<sup>th</sup> edition., s.v. “discern.”

<sup>11</sup>Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 95.



“But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift” (4:7). In our work, we are to “present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). The giving up and laying down of our bodies (our lives) is our service to God. We steward gifts given to us for a particular purpose. Peter writes, As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies” (1 Pet 4:10-11). A steward is one who supervises, manages, and utilizes God's resources for the benefit of the community. Gifts, on loan by God, are for public service.

Individuals are called into service of the community according to measures and graces. Each gift is proportionately connected to a particular function or an assignment:

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness (Rom 12:3-8).

Paul connects the variety of gifts with a variety of services, all apportioned and empowered by God for the common good:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ (1 Cor 12: 4-12).

Paul attributed his own calling to his gifting, and his gifting to his assignment, “. . . because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God” (Rom 15:15). His was a priestly calling to

gospel ministry—“But by the grace of God I am what I am,” and it was God’s grace that both motivated and empowered his work—“his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me” (1 Cor 15:10). Interestingly, Paul was not content to let his gifts speak for themselves, but continually worked to prove his gifting. This leads to another condition for service: with desire and gifting, there is also a honing of skills. Ministry requires development; it takes training specific to the assignment.

Personalities, or gifts given at birth and naturally matured during normal human development, can be somewhat fixed. A strong personality type probably won’t morph into its opposite; strong talents typically aren’t picked up over time. However, ministry demands that certain skills be developed. An individual’s aptitude to grow in ability can be an indicator of his or her calling. Some gifts can be deepened in this way; others can be awoken. Some may be made manifest where none now exists. Still others can only be “earnestly desired” (1 Cor 12:31) and petitioned through prayer.

As one sent from the church to complete an assignment, there must be an awareness of not just one’s present gifts or personality, but ability to develop skills where gifting may be less evident. The church does well to encourage, even facilitate, that training. And lastly, there must be real opportunity. Desire, gifts, and skills should be directed toward unmet needs outside the scope of the local church. Evangelists and church planters walk through open doors of opportunity. Where there are needs, there is often occasion to serve.

While it is not altogether incorrect to speak of paid gospel ministry as a professional priestly calling (a remunerated occupation within a particularly religious sphere), there is, however, another sense in that the pastoral calling is something altogether different—something not for everybody and exists somewhere outside of the ordinary. Paul Helm believes,

The call to the ministry is *extraordinary*, not in the sense that it is miraculous, or

accompanied by voices or visions, but because by it a man is taken out of many of the routine commitments of daily life. In particular, he ought to be freed from the need to earn his daily living in order to give himself exclusively to the Word of God (1 Tim 5:17). And so to be a minister of the gospel is not to pursue a career . . .<sup>12</sup>

In many ways it is not a professional career at all, but something altogether different. As mentioned, the movement toward the professionalization of all callings begun by the Reformers and Puritans was later completed with eighteenth-century Enlightenment ideals of achievement and acquisition. The narrow specialization in the division of labor made for great advancements in industry, but also created today's corporate culture of unlimited growth where ministry ultimately finds no real commonality. It is because of the role's otherworldly requirements that John Piper has emphatically stated, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*, in the hopes of "shak[ing] us loose from the pressure to give in to the cultural expectations of professionalism."<sup>13</sup> "The world sets the agenda of the professional man," he continues, "[but] God sets the agenda of the spiritual man."<sup>14</sup>

Because the ministry of the gospel is not a professional career in this sense, but something unique, it cannot be taken up by just anybody. While recent emphasis on "every-member ministry" has encouraged the church toward her responsibilities, it has also in many ways confused the call of the professional pastor. R. Paul Stevens notes, "It is widely acknowledged that pastors are facing an identity crisis, a crisis which may be deepened by the pastor-as-equiper emphasis now being promoted . . . [but] if there is no single activity that is the exclusive prerogative of the pastor . . . [then] is there anything left?"<sup>15</sup> In the church, certain roles are, in fact, legitimate offices that carry real authority

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<sup>12</sup>Paul Helm, *The Callings: The Gospel in the World* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 66-67. Italics his.

<sup>13</sup>John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals* (Nashville: B&H, 2002), xii.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>15</sup>R. Paul Stevens, *The Abolition of the Laity* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1999), 51.

and thereby greater accountability. Christ reminds us, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48). The authority and responsibility of transmitting the apostolic deposit—the ministry of the Word—is entrusted to faithful men (2 Tim 2:2). It is on this Word that the church is built, and the (binding and loosing) keys to care for her are given to those who would preach and administer the sacraments. To say it again, the standards for church offices are not higher than other Christians, but teachers will be judged with greater strictness (Jas 3:1). Leaders will have to justify how well they kept watch over souls (Heb 13:17). This is not the case for all Christians, only for those who lead the church.

### **Cumulative Questions to Consider**

The local church—both leaders and members—affirm calls to ministry by first understanding the meaning of calling in its different forms, then by interacting with the will of God in that individual’s life, and finally, by evaluating the candidate’s desire, gifting, skill, and opportunity. The collective wisdom either encourages or discourages movement toward the work. The individual all too often makes this journey alone without the help of a church community. There is a responsibility on the part of both the individual and the church to partner toward discerning a call to professional, priestly service.

The cumulative question remains, however, for those involved: Is that person called, according to what measures of gifts, and is it wise for them to presently act upon that calling? There is a sense in that the connection of calling to gifts simply follows reason or logic. All Christians are called to a “profession,” some are called to “professional” ministry. If one has the desire, the measure of gifts, the skills, and the opportunity, then he or she is called accordingly to that role. Assuming God works that formula, then the called one has no choice other than to obey. Clowney summarizes,

The particular service a man is called to give is determined by the gifts that he has received . . . The man who would prove God's will must learn to think soberly about his own gifts. He must not think too highly of himself [Rom 12:3] but understand the *measure* of the spiritual gifts of faith that has been granted him. The greater the gifts, the greater his responsibility. [And therefore t]his principle of stewardship in Christ's kingdom leads us to the unavoidable conclusion: *The call of the Word of God to the gospel ministry comes to ALL those who have the gifts for such a ministry.*<sup>16</sup>

God gifts a measure of grace that He expects to be used in service to others and not to be buried in the ground. If the gift is present to the appropriate measure, then the individual is called to that ministry. When paired with the obvious need for the gospel around the world, this logical conclusion seems to be sound. James Gilmour, a missionary to Mongolia agreed: "To me the question was not 'Why go?' but 'Why not go?' Even on the low ground of common sense I seemed called to be a missionary. For is the kingdom not a harvest field? Then I thought it only reasonable to seek work where the work was most abundant and the workers were fewest."<sup>17</sup> Keith Falconer, a missionary to the Arabian Peninsula, goes further and challenges the Christian to prove he or she is not called to gospel ministry outside the scope of the local church: "While vast continents still lie shrouded in almost utter darkness, and hundreds of millions suffer the horrors of heathenism and Islam, the burden of proof rests upon you to show the circumstances in which God has placed you were meant by Him to keep you out of the foreign mission field."<sup>18</sup> Robert Hall Glover, along the same lines, compares the call to the drafting of competent men at wartime: "The call to military service furnishes a fitting illustration . . . [where the] norm is to go, not to stay. The only honorable exempts from going are those disqualified for overseas service, or those who can serve their country's cause better by

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<sup>16</sup>Clowney, *Called to The Ministry*, 79. Italics his.

<sup>17</sup>Cited in Robert Hall Glover, *The Bible Basis of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1973), 139.

<sup>18</sup>See Robert Sinker, *Memorials of the Hon. Ion Keith-Falconer, M.A.: Late Lord Almoner's Professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge, And Missionary to the Mohammedans of Southern Arabia* (Cambridge : Deighton, Bell and Co., 1888), 263.

remaining at home.”<sup>19</sup> The reasoning seems logical, but is it the most wise? These just mentioned—Gilmour’s common sense, Falconer’s burden on proof, and Glover’s norm to go—all make for motivating prods, but logic of this sort needs to be balanced by wisdom. Ironically, the logic in these cases often turns toward emotionalism, even nationalism or patriotism (Glover’s military service illustration). Where measured gifts do equal calling much of the time, reason needs wisdom; otherwise, heroic volunteerism can trump church authority and community affirmation.

The glory of God made manifest in the world is a compelling vision that rightly grips every believer. Rather than hastily following one’s heart to the ends of the earth, however, each servant must carefully consider the service to which he or she is being called. While all will “go” only some will be “sent” by the local church in an official capacity. Apostolic ministers are identified, trained and sent; they are not primarily recruited to go. Missionaries are set apart by God; they don’t necessarily volunteer for service. The difference is not semantic, and the implications are not inconsequential. Helm understands,

The idea that every Christian ought to be in “full-time Christian service,” though intended to exalt the office of the ministry by attempting to copy it, has a tendency to devalue it. For instead of the ministry of the Word of God being regarded as a distinctive, high office to which a person is called from his daily calling, the assumption is that any well-meaning Christian can and should “minister.” But if the price of the commodity is lowered then the demand for it will increase, and if there is a general belief that everyone ought to be some kind of minister, and that most people can be, then the character and quality of the ministry of the gospel will invariably deteriorate, as it has done in the present century.<sup>20</sup>

The intent is not to discourage disciples, but rather to multiply them. A deteriorated gospel ministry in character and quality will not grow the church. A devalued office will not move the mission forward. There are those who are called to

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<sup>19</sup>Glover, *The Bible Basis of Missions*, 139.

<sup>20</sup>Helm, *The Callings*, 67.

lead; these are the missionaries called by God. He has graced them with an appropriate measure of gifting for the work. The church in her collective wisdom is responsible to reach beyond volunteerism. She must recognize, understand, and utilize this calling dynamic.

### **Obedience**

Beyond calling is the sending dynamic of obedience. Obedience is the result of a life surrendered to Christ, and calling is quieted where Christians will not give themselves up to it. The very opposite of heroic volunteerism is cowardly disobedience to God's commands. While heroism is at least noble, disobedience is at most deadly. The people of God will often need cajoling toward submission to their Lord and local church leadership should gently push. Obedience, then, must be considered in the identifying, preparing, and sending of missionaries.

God is a loving father, but awfully jealous. He demands the compliance of his children. He makes requests and expects them to obey fully. Rarely are these simply suggestions, but most often orders. God in a sense always gets his way, but humans do resist and rebel. Of course, freedom—understood biblically—is not really a release from restraint, but instead, it is freedom for more service and for greater compliance. Resistance against God, then, only amounts to more giving in to evil. For this reason God demands our total obedience, and presumably without coercion, manipulation or exploitation. But is he not persuasive? And to what extent does he employ the church to “spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Heb 10:24 NIV)? Are church leaders, then, in the business of bringing about this compliance? The sending church must consider how it will shepherd those who are called to missions and church planting toward obedience.

People obey for many reasons. Most often it is because they have been rightly persuaded. Humans, over time, have learned to cope with their increasing complex

environments by creating shortcuts in the way the brain processes constant stimuli. These automatic responses free us from the burden of overthinking. The shortcuts are triggers that can be pulled in order to bring about desired behavior. They can become ways to influence or to persuade—to bring about compliance.

Emotional appeals toward the participation in missions and church planting can manipulate in this way. The offense in these appeals is typically found in our feeling exploited. We are familiar with compliance professionals—salesmen and politicians—who prey on our natural tendencies with clever techniques. But is God a compliance professional? How does he persuade us to obey, and further, how should the sending church follow? It seems church leaders must act ethically, even if persuasively.

The rule of reciprocity, as an example, is highly motivational. It is also controversial in the context of obedience to calling. It is “the rule [that] says that we should try to repay, in kind, what another person has provided us . . . we are obligated to the future repayment of favors, gifts, invitations, and the like.”<sup>21</sup> In primitive cultures, where resources are scarce, it makes sense that people would need to feel confident that something shared would be returned—that individuals within communities could give something away without actually losing it. Robert Cialdini adds,

The result was the lowering of the inhibitions against transactions that must be begun by one person’s providing personal resources to another. Sophisticated and coordinated systems of aid, gift giving, defense, and trade became possible, bringing immense benefit to the societies that possessed them. With such clearly adaptive consequences for the culture, it is not surprising that the rule for reciprocation is so deeply implanted in us by the process of socialization we all undergo.<sup>22</sup>

Reciprocity rules us all, but believers do not obey Christ for social benefit. We obey our Lord because we are slaves. Fully persuaded Christians give themselves over to bondage.

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<sup>21</sup>Robert B. Cialdini, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (New York: Collins Business, 2007), 17-18.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 18-19.



The Greek word *δοῦλος* appears throughout the New Testament. Oddly, the English Bible overwhelmingly translates the word “servant” rather than the seemingly more appropriate “slave.” For Western Evangelicals the reason is clear, the eighteenth century English slave trade along with the institutional slavery of blacks in the Southern United States remains a stain on both British and American histories. Any mention of slaves or slavery most certainly conjures up painful memories, reminders of wounds that have yet to heal. The translator also fears, presumably, that contemporary readers might misunderstand the text in projecting those modern atrocities back onto ancient practices. While there were, in fact, significant differences in ancient and modern examples, all historical instances of institutional slavery emphasized this one thing: the alienation from the slave’s family and friends and attachment by ownership to his or her master.<sup>23</sup> T. E. J. Weidemann adds, “What makes slavery unique as an unequal relationship, is that it denies the slave any existence as a person independent from that which his master chooses to grant him.”<sup>24</sup> For the church, sensitivity is paramount when reconciling race relations, and institutional slavery—both ancient and modern—remains truly abhorrent. At the same time, there can be no misunderstanding that in the cases where Scripture contrasts “slave” and “free” that the full force of surrender, submission, obedience, and ownership was and is intended. “At the heart of [all] slavery,” writes Murray J. Harris, “. . . [is] the ideas of total dependence, the forfeiture of autonomy and a sense of belonging wholly to another.”<sup>25</sup> This is precisely the thrust behind Scripture’s slavery motif when describing the relationship of the Christian to Christ or to God. The expressions slave(s)

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<sup>23</sup>M. I. Finley, “A Peculiar Institution,” *Times Literary Supplement*, July 2, 1976, 819, cited in Murray J. Harris, *Slaves of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 44.

<sup>24</sup>T. E. J. Weidemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery: A Source Book* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1987), 3, cited in Harris, *Slaves of Christ*, 44.

<sup>25</sup>Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 44.

of God and slave(s) of Christ are shockingly abundant throughout the New Testament, and rightly leads to the conclusion that we are not simply servants, but slaves.<sup>26</sup>

The *δοῦλος* serves the *κύριος*. *κύριος* is lord, either the owner of property (Matt 20:8) or the master of slaves (Luke 12:45). The faithful *δοῦλος* obeys every command of the *κύριος*. The New Testament, without apology, develops the theme of Jesus' lordship or masterhood. Jesus is Lord and his followers are his obedient slaves. In fact, Christ struggles to comprehend a slave acting otherwise: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you" (Matt 6:46)? Rather, "Well done, good and faithful slave," is the Master's expected reply (Matt 25:21). Harris comments, "Obedience to commands was not simply required of slaves; it was assumed to be their principal role. In fact, the degree of a slave's faithfulness was determined by the extent of his obedience: a perfectly obedient slave was a completely faithful slave."<sup>27</sup> This faithful obedience marks the slave-master relationship. Paul asks, "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?" (Rom 6:16). Christians serve Christ in active obedience.

What is the motivation, then, for the Christian's slave-like obedience to Christ? Many believe it to be gratitude. This is often the reply of potential missionaries. Gratitude is the acknowledgement and appreciation of a gift given; it generally produces joy and a positive disposition toward the gift giver. Further, gratitude is a powerful force that often signals a psychological impulse to repay the gift. The rule of reciprocity, described

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<sup>26</sup>Slave(s) of God: Luke 1:38; Luke 1:48; Luke 2:29; Acts 2:18; Acts 4:29; Acts 16:17; Titus 1:1; Jas 1:1; 1 Pet 2:16; Rev 1:1; Rev 7:3; Rev 10:7; Rev 11:8; Rev 15:3; Rev 19:2; Rev 19:5; Rev 19:10; Rev 22:3; Rev 22:6; Rev 22:9; Rev 6:11;). Slave(s) of Christ (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; 1 Cor 7:22; Col 1:7; Col 4:12; Col 4:7; Eph 6:6; Phil 1:1; 2 Tim 2:24; Jas 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1; Jude 1; Rev 2:20).

<sup>27</sup>Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 97.

earlier, points to the sociological interdependence that makes this rule pervasive among most cultures. But what if the gift was not part of a cultural exchange, but rather, came by way of grace. The impulse to reciprocate, then, could very well be offensive to the one who has shown mercy. It potentially takes attention off the gift and the giver, and instead, emphasizes the debt now owed. Christ's gift of salvation, for example, was never intended to produce a feeling of indebtedness. John Piper affirms, "He did not mean it to be an impulse to return favors. If gratitude is twisted into a sense of debt, it gives birth to the debtor's ethic—and the effect is to nullify grace."<sup>28</sup> The scandal of the cross is that it destroys reciprocity. Attempts at turning Christ's gift of salvation into a business transaction are futile; there is no paying back what we owe. Obedience motivated by gratitude or reciprocity easily amounts to legalism. The sending church must consider the motivation of its members just as it considers its own persuasiveness.

Exhortations toward obedience in Scripture are never motivated by indebtedness. Instead, it is by faith—for "Without faith it is impossible to please [God] (Heb 11:6)." Faith keeps gratitude from digressing into the debtor's ethic. It looks forward to God's promises rather than looking back in obligation. Faith is hope that breeds trust. It finds evidence in gracious gifts of the past, but rather than satisfying the impulse to repay, faith builds confidence in the future. Rather than primarily participating in persuasion toward social *interdependence*, the Christian is totally *dependent* on God in faith. In the same way that people are instinctively conditioned by automatic responses, the follower of Christ is cued to trust and obey.

We return now to the introductory consideration: Is God a compliance professional? How should the sending church assist in persuading missionaries to obey? First of all, we must remember that *persons* are ethical where *methods* are somewhat

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<sup>28</sup>John Piper, *Future Grace* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1995), 32.

neutral. Even so, they are connected. Robert H. Gass and John S. Seiter maintain, “The moral quality of an influence attempt is derived primarily from the motives or ends of the persuader, and only secondarily from the means of persuasion that are employed ... the means of persuasion take on the moral character of the persuader’s ends.”<sup>29</sup> Christ’s moral character is impeccable, and his ends are worthy. That God is good qualifies his appeals for obedience, and his methods take on his good character.

Christ’s great love for his church creates in Christians a deep response to persuasion, a response beyond reciprocation based on biology and sociology. To trust and obey in total dependence creates joy; it creates worship. Slaves of God do not serve reluctantly or under compulsion, but with cheerfulness (2 Cor 9:7). What brings about this joyful worship is that God’s love was demonstrated, “in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). The deeper response is conditioned upon this higher love—Christ’s atoning sacrifice. Paul writes, “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor 5:14-15). The cross is the only true motivator of obedience. It was the total of what Paul would preach (1 Cor 2:2). In the same way, the church should primarily motivate toward obedience by preaching the cross—without emotional appeals toward volunteer service. The word of God works in those who hear and respond (1 Thess 2:13). It persuades; it constrains and compels.

This chapter has presented two sending dynamics: calling and obedience. These interactive elements or key components of sending must be considered in identifying, training, and sending missionaries. Chapter 4 presents a sending strategy built on a sending theology and based in these sending dynamics.

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<sup>29</sup>Robert H. Gass and John S. Seiter, *Persuasion: Social Influence and Compliance Gaining* (New York: Pearson, 2011), 349.

## CHAPTER 4

### SENDING STRATEGY

This project has argued that missions is best described as sending apostolic ministers, and that the church is God’s mediating sending authority responsible to act. I have suggested missionaries are not heroic volunteers, but developed leaders—evangelists and church planters—given an assignment and an appointment. There are those, however, that have a different understanding. Even if they would not disagree with the thesis, some churches are content to remain passively receptive of passionate individuals who are convinced of their call and are looking for local church financing. The leadership of these churches is eager to help and, at times, reluctant to dissuade any who want to go, even when it would be wise to do so. Rather than engage, some churches are too often quick to hand off responsibility to parachurch ministries and missionary agencies. This is no strategy for sending; it is closer to member maintenance. Strategy means making choices in these matters, and the church has a responsibility to choose.

Even as many churches have been slow to change—often doing the same thing for years and years—there is a growing desire in some (and the hope for TVC) to try something new. This will require, as strategist Michael Porter explains, “Deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver unique value.”<sup>1</sup> This new set of activities is the strategic sending of apostolic ministers, and the unique value is gospel multiplication rather than simply acts of service. What then is keeping the church from this strategy, or any strategy? Reasons for a lack of strategy could be threefold: (1) the church has simply

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<sup>1</sup>Michael E. Porter, “What is Strategy?” *Harvard Business Review* (November-December 1996), accessed August 15, 2015, <https://hbr.org/1996/11/what-is-strategy>.

failed to make a choice, (2) It believes there is no choice to be made, or (3) it assumes that an optimization of the status quo is a strategy, when, in fact, it is not.<sup>2</sup> Surely, the church can do better. Decisions can and should be made. This project is suggesting a sending strategy built on theology and based in dynamics, a strategy that narrows assignments to evangelism and church planting and encourages more obedience to a call. This chapter details a process and a plan that encourages developing leaders over recruiting volunteers.

Corporate business leaders are a common grace—knowledgeable and experienced in the ways of work and success. Their wisdom may be able to help guide and direct even the church toward a robust missions strategy. For example, A. G. Lafley and Roger L. Martin’s description of strategy as five choices is useful. They suggest asking (1) What is your winning aspiration? (2) Where will you play? (3) How will you win? (4) What capabilities must be in place? And (5) What systems are required?<sup>3</sup> The overtly acquisitive, economic language of “playing to win” aside, the principles may be applicable to a church’s sending strategy. The church does, in fact, aspire to “win.” It labors with a purpose, but what is it? On first thought, it would seem that the church rightly aspires to produce more and more ministers. The aspiration has been the intent of many church leaders who continually tweak processes to get more “products.” But getting more products is not the goal. The kingdom does not *need* more and more missionaries; it needs more obedience to a call to ministry. The first choice to make, then, is against blind proliferation—a move away from simply getting missionaries on the field. Heroic volunteers are not hard to find; drawing out obedient servants, on the other hand, takes time. Next, this obedience to a call has its competitors. A strategy will narrow

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<sup>2</sup>A. G. Lafley and Roger L. Martin, *Playing to Win: How Strategy Really Works* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

that competitive field. The church, in regard to missions, must know what business it is in, and choose (or not choose) where it will engage. “Where to play” choices means narrowed assignments—evangelism and church planting. The win is not just obedience to a call, then, but more specifically obedience to a call to apostolic ministry. The next choices to make involve determining “how to win,” “what capabilities must be in place,” and “what systems are required.” If obedience to the call of apostolic ministry is the “win” and evangelism and church planting are the narrowed “markets,” how then will the church identify and prepare its people? Local church leadership must locate laborers, but not just those who are willing. They must determine who is worthy.<sup>4</sup> High caliber individuals—elder and deacon-level leaders—must be identified and then trained in the art of gathering people, the skills of preaching and teaching, and the ability to articulate a vision that will guarantee lasting support and care.

A sending strategy, then, built on theology and based in dynamics, must first be concerned with the “who” then the “what” and only after the “where.” The sending church is initially looking for leaders to send rather than locations to serve (as has often been the case). Management researcher Jim Collins, in support of that priority, has observed that successful strategies often do not begin with a direction to drive an organization but begin with an effective executive who “first got the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figured out where to drive it.”<sup>5</sup> Vision, even assignment and appointment, come only after leaders are identified, mainly because as Collins adds, “great vision without great people is irrelevant.”<sup>6</sup> These strategic

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<sup>4</sup>Michael C. Griffith writes, “The most that an individual can do is express his *willingness*. Others must determine his *worthiness*. The individual may be *free* to go, but only his church knows if he is really *fitted* to go.” Michael C. Griffith, *Who Really Sends the Missionary?* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 15-16. Italics his.

<sup>5</sup>Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001), 41.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 42.

people—these leaders—are the persons to be sent.

### **Leaders Over Volunteers**

I have suggested that missions must move away from appeals for volunteers. The practice continues, however, despite the often less-than-satisfactory results. Results are lacking, it seems, because mere availability is not enough; there must also be accountability. Accountability is what differentiates a volunteer from a leader (Heb 13:17). Biblical leadership is God-given authority and thereby makes the leader answerable to God for the influencing of others. Leaders are those who create change, while others may only manage conditions. John P. Kotter describes the main activities of those who lead change: (1) they establish direction, (2) they align people, and (3) they motivate and inspire. He contrasts these activities with that of those who simply manage conditions: (1) they plan and budget, (2) organize and staff, and (3) they control and problem solve.<sup>7</sup> I submit that volunteers are more regularly active in the second category than the first. Managing conditions may explain why their impact is at times minimal. Missions needs those who will lead change. Missionaries must be more than available volunteers; they must be leaders who are accountable.

Many churches begin with the premise, “the harvest is full . . . we must find workers” (see Matt 9:36-38). Surprisingly, Jesus did not recruit laborers for the harvest in this passage, but instead told his disciples to pray to the Lord for them. Availability, still, for many churches remains the low bar. The need continues to drive the search. Need and availability become the conditions to manage. Keeping the missionary on the field becomes the ultimate goal. The volunteer, committed to filling the role and focused on maintaining his or her availability, must be active in Kotter’s three managerial categories rather than those of leaders. Maintaining availability, for instance, requires one being

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<sup>7</sup>John P. Kotter, *A Force for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 4-5.



overly concerned with order, control, and predictability. Volunteers, needing consistency, are forced to become shortsighted problem solvers. This is most evidenced in missionary plans and budgets. Planning and budgeting for maintaining availability is no grand vision for ministry. Plans, instead, are often small and incremental; they fail to look far into the future. Further, financing these plans for maintaining availability usually involves organizing loose networks of disconnected donors under the ambiguous promise of investment, partnership, or participation. Hands-off financing is far from Paul's hope for the fellowship of fellow-workers working together apart. Volunteers, still, must manage conditions; they must maintain availability. The disposition will not get the job done. On the other hand, leaders have the opportunity to influence change.

Leaders have authority that makes them accountable. It is certain that there will continue to be a need for workers, but available volunteers alone will not suffice. Missions needs leaders to set direction, align, motivate, and inspire a workforce. Orderly plans and controlled processes won't satisfy the need for big vision and strategy. Fail-safe, risk-free approaches will not persuade others to join the cause. The church must go beyond the recruitment of volunteers who will manage availability to the identification and development of leaders who will give an account.

### **Assessment of Leaders' Character, Aptitude, and Determination**

To be a missionary is to be a leader; the role is one of leadership. Leaders of this sort in the church are often elders or deacons, or at least operating in a similar function with related accountability. Why missionaries would not be of this caliber is a mystery, and yet many churches continue to maintain lesser standards. Potential apostolic ministers, it would seem, as guardians and transmitters of the apostolic deposit, should aspire to high levels of leadership. It remains the responsibility of the church to commission *these* individuals with authority.

It is a matter of qualification. A biblical form of church government calls for

godly elders to shepherd its flock. These leaders are to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4), to which John Owen identifies as “their principle work and duty; from which those who understand it aright can spare but little of their time and strength.”<sup>8</sup> They are busy because they also keep watch over souls (Heb 13:17), manage the church of God (1 Tim 3:4-5), teach the Word (1 Tim 3:2), preach the gospel (2 Tim 4:1-2), rule the body (1 Tim 5:17), protect from wolves (Acts 20:28-29), pray for healing (Jas 5:14), contend for the faith (Jude 3), rebuke false doctrine (Titus 1:9), equip the saints (Eph 4:12), and set an example to the believers (1 Pet 5:3). It is understandable why elders are given deacons as helpers. Many scholars point to the seven selected servants in Acts 6 as the prototype. As early as the second century, Irenaeus believed this to be the case.<sup>9</sup> While the word “deacon” is not used in the passage, *diakonia* (Acts 6:1b) and *diakoneo* (Acts 6:26) are used, and many pastors today assume some connection.<sup>10</sup> Regardless, what followed for the Jerusalem Church was a new organizational structure, and by AD 62, Paul—who was in Jerusalem when the seven were chosen, officially recognized the diaconate in at least two churches he planted. Throughout Christian

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<sup>8</sup>John Owen, “Of Deacons,” in *Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (London: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850-53, repr., Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 16:145.

<sup>9</sup>Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, accessed August 21, 2015, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.html>.

<sup>10</sup>Alexander Strauch believes, “It is quite likely that the official title *diakonos* corresponds to the specialized use of its related noun: *diakonia* and *diakoneo* . . . since an office in the church called *diakonos* is concerned with the physical needs of the people (1 Timothy 3:8-13) and since an official body of men was appointed to help meet the physical needs of the poor (Acts 6:1-6), we cannot but assume there is a connection between the two groups” Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon*, (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1992), 48-49. Gene Getz finds a similar connection, “As the seven men in Jerusalem assisted the Apostles in meeting a unique cultural need at that time, just so ‘deacons’ were later commissioned in the churches to assist elders/overseers in carrying out their shepherding responsibilities, which included helping them to meet unique cultural needs” Gene Getz, *Elders and Leaders* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 102.

history elders and deacons together have led and served the church, being selected and approved according to various credentials. Paul lists the character qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The men must be above reproach—upright, holy, and disciplined, the husbands of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, and hospitable. They must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, and also be able to teach the word and rebuke those who contradict it. They cannot be arrogant or quick-tempered, drunkards or violent or quarrelsome. Elders are not lovers of money. Their families are well managed. Outsiders think well of them. Paul also lists several character qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. They must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to wine or greedy for gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, be proved blameless, and also have a respectable family. It is noted that these traits are nothing more than those of faithful Christians, but with the accountability of a leader.

While the offices of elder or deacon may not necessarily be preconditions to all gospel ministry, these same qualifications must be present in missionaries. As apostolic ministers they have authority that makes them accountable. They must be assessed according to character. In addition to the biblical qualifications listed in the Pastoral Epistles, there are several other broad character categories to be assessed, such as spirituality, theology, and responsibility. For instance, those sent by the local church must possess a spiritual vitality that evidences a life of deep devotion, prayer, confession and repentance, and Sabbath rest. Next, the person must understand and hold fast to Christian doctrine. He or she is committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the church. And lastly, the leader is responsible both to the calling and to his or her family.

The assessment of aptitude follows character. These categories include the skills needed in evangelizing, gathering, discipling, and preaching and teaching. The performance of assignments requires certain skills. Missionaries, for example, are skilled evangelists—able to share the gospel, win converts and point them toward local churches

for discipleship. They are also church planters, who on the other hand, are skilled gatherers of people into gospel-centered communities. Once gathered, church planters disciple converts toward maturity through preaching and teaching. Those who are to be sent are assessed in these disciplines.

The final area of assessment is determination. Does the individual possess a drive to be obedient against all odds? Leaders have resolve; they are single-minded and unwavering in their work. It is no secret that evangelism and church planting are long and difficult. There is often little to no fruit for extended times, but the determined leader is purposed and driven. In sum, elder or deacon-like character, an aptitude to perform the task, and dogged determination are all qualities that the church leadership and the sending community looks for in a missionary candidate.

### **Affirmation from Sending Community**

While church leaders may conduct assessments of potential missionaries, the *church members* must give affirmation. The church body, in this way, plays a part in sending along with the leaders. Assessment and affirmation go hand-in-hand. There is a “real life” testing (2 Cor 8:22; 1 Tim 3:10) that can only take place among the community—those of whom the missionary candidate walks with most closely. This smaller, tight-knit group of friends and family (the “sending community”) testifies to the character, aptitude, and determination of the individual.<sup>11</sup> With access beyond that available to the church leaders, the group looks at the life of the one to be sent and gives either their full endorsement or insight toward further development before final affirmation. In large churches especially, it probably means little to be sent by the church,

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<sup>11</sup>Sending Communities are simply small pockets of biblical community within the local church. These are the individuals that know the candidates intimately and can best assess their readiness. In large churches, these sending communities may be the individuals’ small group or Sunday school class. In small churches, it may in fact be the entire congregation.

broadly as an institution. Being sent by a smaller sending community within the whole, on the other hand, may mean a great deal more. It may better guarantee closer connection in support and care. Sending communities are valuable advocates for missionaries.

There may be precedent for partnering in assessment and affirmation in the Acts 13:1-3 passage we investigated in chapter two, where the wording of verse 2 would seem to indicate that the entire church assembly was involved in the sending of Paul and Barnabas. Many believe that the entire congregation was there gathered for the occasion. Bruce K. Camp offers several proofs along these lines: First, the very context of the passage (“they” in 13:2) implies the presence of both the leaders and assembled body. Next, the wording is consistent with Luke’s description of the entire Jerusalem church’s involvement in the choosing of the seven in Acts 6:2-6. Further, it probably wasn’t until the second century that church officials would have begun to regularly act apart from the laity.<sup>12</sup> It seems unlikely that the leaders would have released Paul and Barnabas without the affirmation of the church members. Additionally, the setting seems to indicate that the “ministering to the Lord” (v. 2) that was taking place was some special service for the purpose of hearing from the Lord. Clearly, they heard what the Spirit had probably already told Paul and Barnabas, and they promptly laid hands on the missionaries joining them in spirit with the congregation. The Antiochene Church assessed and affirmed Paul and Barnabas, and with a laying on of hands they moved ahead as one. This was not done in haste, as Paul later warned Timothy (1 Tim 5:22), but with great care due to the bond that was forged by the act. Alexander Strauch comments further,

According to [the passage], the laying on of hands in appointment establishes a partnership between two parties. There is a sense in which the one (or ones) who appoints shares in the failure or success of the one appointed. Also, the one set apart

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<sup>12</sup>Wm. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), cited in Bruce K. Camp, “Scripturally Considered, The Local Church Has Primary Responsibility For World Evangelism,” D.Miss. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary (1992), 85-87.

has some responsibility toward those who place their hand on him. Thus, the laying of hands creates a deeper sense of responsibility, accountability, and fellowship between the parties involved.<sup>13</sup>

The local church, both leaders and members, are to send out apostolic ministers in a similar way. All the parties involved—both leadership and members in assessing and affirming—are responsible and accountable for the ministry.

Many believe that mere proliferation of missionaries in key locations is adequate to the task. If so, then volunteers are sufficient to manage conditions. But if real impact is desired, it seems that real leaders are required. Missions and church planting are leadership roles.

### **Assignment and Appointment**

The plain meaning of mission is sending, which presupposes not just a sender (the local church) but also an assignment and an appointment. This project has argued that the missionary is better identified by the role rather than according to geography. Even so, they do go somewhere. If the missionary *is* what the missionary *does* then what is the task and where is it performed? They are evangelists and church planters. And they are sent *outside* the scope of the local church as an extension or a generation.

Evangelists, according to Scripture, are assigned the work of evangelism, or proclaiming the *εὐαγγέλιον* or good news of Jesus Christ. *εὐαγγελιστής* (evangelist) appears three times in the New Testament: “On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip, the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him (Acts 21:8).”<sup>14</sup> Next, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11).” Lastly,

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<sup>13</sup>Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1995), 324.

<sup>14</sup>Philip is presumably called an evangelist due to his taking the gospel to unbelievers in Acts 8, in Samaria (vv. 4-8), to the Ethiopian eunuch (vv. 26-39), all the way to Caesarea (v. 40).

“But you [Timothy], be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Tim 4:5).” It is noteworthy that evangelists in the second instance are included in the list of gifted leaders along with apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers. The order within the list may be arbitrary, unlike the ranking of first apostles, second prophets, and third teachers in 1 Corinthians 12:28.<sup>15</sup> But Gordon Fee believes the order, “Is not so much that one is more important than the other, not that this is necessarily their order of authority, but that one has precedence over the other in the founding and building up of the local church.”<sup>16</sup> The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20) and then disciplined by pastors and teachers. Considering how evangelists typically followed or extended the work of the apostles and prophets, while preceding the local leadership of pastors and teachers, their placement in the middle of the list is fitting.<sup>17</sup> This function within gospel ministry leads William Barclay to conclude that evangelists were “the rank and file missionaries of the Church.”<sup>18</sup> They followed in the apostolic tradition, winning converts and pointing them toward churches.

Also significant is that Timothy, while serving as a pastor, was reminded to not neglect doing evangelistic work (2 Tim 4:5). While some have a gift of evangelism, every Christian shares the duty of gospel proclamation. This is more than “lifestyle evangelism,” but it is communicating a message that should, in some form, verbally

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<sup>15</sup>William W. Combs, “The Biblical Role of the Evangelist,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 7, no. 1 (2002): 37.

<sup>16</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 619-20.

<sup>17</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 346.

<sup>18</sup>William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Daily Bible Study Series (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958), 174.

introduce the historical person and work of Jesus, his life, death, and resurrection. It should recognize him as Lord and Savior, followed by a call to repent and believe upon him. Additionally, evangelists point converts to churches. Combs confesses, “Any ministry of itinerant evangelism that does not lead to new converts being formed into local churches is foreign to the NT.”<sup>19</sup> Combs goes further, even blurring the line between evangelist and church planter: “Though this emphasis [evangelization of unbelievers] was primary, no doubt the message of the evangelist would have included some teaching and discipleship of new believers to form them into a functioning NT church . . . I will argue, the NT evangelist was primarily a church planter.”<sup>20</sup> Some overlap is certainly possible. However, just as all Apostles were evangelists but not all evangelists were Apostles, it could be said that while all church planters are evangelists, not all evangelists will pastor a local church.

There are those sent by the church to evangelize and encourage converts to this or that church, but there are also those sent to evangelize and gather converts together into a newly formed local church that they themselves will pastor. Church-planting pastors—beyond evangelism—lead, guide, and direct a body of believers through the teaching and preaching of God’s Word and the administration of the sacraments.

But is the evangelizing and gathering of people into churches the only missionary activities? Are Christians not also sent to serve? It should be made clear that social action and the fighting of injustice is, in fact, a Christian obligation. It is the responsibility of every faithful follower of Jesus. However, it is a duty first because we are humans, and not because we are Christians or church members. We serve others by virtue of our shared human nature, for we are all made in the image of God and given a

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<sup>19</sup>Combs, “The Biblical Role of the Evangelist,” 28.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.



shared task toward the propagation and development of the world. God first mandated that all humans would work for community prosperity (Gen 1:28). This may not necessarily fall under the purview of the church's mission. George W. Peters agrees,

I do not find anywhere in the Bible that the first mandate comes under the biblical category of missions. It is man's assignment as man and is to be fulfilled on the human level. It is not implied in the Great Commission of our Lord to His disciples, nor do any of the spiritual gifts (*charismata*) as presented in Scripture relate to it . . . Only the second mandate is considered missions in the strict biblical sense. The first mandate is philanthropic and humanitarian service rendered by man to man . . . from members of the same 'family' (Gal 6:10; Lk 10:25-37). It should not be downgraded as unworthy or secular service, though it is not missionary service in the technical sense. Because the two mandates have not been distinguished, serious confusion has resulted in our assignment, work and the choice of workers for the fields.<sup>21</sup>

The institutional church cannot facilitate every human obligation to his or her neighbor. While pastors should work to equip their members to serve, the mission must be to win converts and gather them into churches.

At the same time, it is understood that dualisms will not do. Both the body and the soul must be attended to in gospel ministry. There is an "involved evangelism" that addresses the whole person in his or her context. Missionaries—evangelists and church planters—are not ambivalent to the needs of those to whom they share the gospel. J. H. Bavinck writes,

The Scriptures never view the preaching of the gospel as an isolated independent event or activity; it is always included within the larger context . . . [Paul] knew very well that his whole conduct and attitude with respect to social relationships was of far-reaching significance. A man cannot only preach; he must live. And the life that he lives . . . either it emasculates his preaching or it gives it flesh and blood . . . The approach is thus never simply a search for words; it is at every moment an approach to living people.<sup>22</sup>

Serving the needs of people in their own contexts will enliven evangelism and preaching. Living-in-context is important to gospel ministry, yet the missionary motivation and

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<sup>21</sup>George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 170.

<sup>22</sup>J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Mission* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1960), 92-93.

intent is first evangelism and gathering converts into churches. David Hesselgrave sums up forcefully, “If [missionaries] do not engage in or support evangelism and church planting, they are not only parachurch, they are paramission.”<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, missionaries assigned as evangelists and church planters are also *appointed* a particular time and place for their gospel ministry. Appointment addresses the “when” and the “where” the missionary will evangelize or plant? If the church leads in assessment, affirmation, and assignment, it would not be inappropriate for the church to allow for more individuality in appointment. It is acceptable, even reasonable, that the potential missionary self-appoint for the most part. If the church, as the thesis has argued, does well to return to first-century sending proactivity in most areas, in other areas like the ultimate decision of the when and the where should be somewhat personal to the missionary. Returning to the Acts narrative, those sent out by the church exercised a great deal of freedom in appointment matters: Paul’s team initiated—even changed—their own strategy (Acts 13:14, 44-48), they recruited their own personnel (Acts 13:5), and resolved their own disputes (Acts 15:36-41).

Churches can build structure around what kind of work they want to see accomplished, but conviction and desire are internal to the missionary. These things are simply personal and must be intuited by the individual. Dogmatic direction with no freedom to choose would ultimately prove unfruitful anyway. One’s deep gladness matched with the world’s deep hunger cannot be preemptively pinned to a map. While church leadership should suggest the assignment, it seems the candidate should lead in his or her own appointment.

Certainly, not all in the church will be on board with a narrowed assignment (even with a flexible appointment). Even with all the challenges that come along with a

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<sup>23</sup>David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 26.

broad description of missions, some are not willing to forego a full offering of ministries. The issue is not, of course, *if* we should do justice or love mercy. The church should unequivocally love her neighbor well. The question is what is the priority or emphasis required of the institution toward these good works. Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert understand the difficulty in drawing conclusions about importance. They write, “The minute you start arguing that good works are not of *the utmost importance*, people accuse you of saying that they are of no importance at all. The thinking seems to be that good works have to be motivated by the highest imaginable reasons . . . or else people will think they’re not important at all.”<sup>24</sup> The accusation is inaccurate and unjust. At the same time, when the needs are great and the opportunities many (and when the resources are limited), choices must be made—which is the essence of strategy.

There is also the question of what the church is obligated to facilitate for her members and what opportunities are the responsibility of the individual to create. Some activities the church *can* do, but there are other activities that the church *must* do. For instance, churches *must* multiply disciples; they *can* do social action. Certainly the two are not mutually exclusive, but priority and emphasis matter. The church could do many great things, and it is not necessarily wrong to have different passions that drive different ministries, but it seems that the local church should spend the bulk of its time, money, and resources toward evangelism and church planting. Individual Christians—even secular organizations—will feed the hungry, heal the sick, and care for the oppressed, but if the church does not witness to Christ, win converts, and disciple them into local churches, then no one will.

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<sup>24</sup>Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 230. Italics theirs.

## Vision

With leaders assessed and affirmed and with assignment and appointment established, the missionary may begin to develop and then articulate his or her vision in the hopes of receiving lasting support and care. John P. Kotter calls vision “A picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future . . . First, by clarifying the general direction . . . Second, [by] motivat[ing] people to take action . . . Third, [in] help[ing] coordinate the actions of different people.”<sup>25</sup> Vision lets others know this is “where I’m going” or “where we’re headed,” and by making that direction clear it frees others from the paralysis of indecision. The picture of the future motivates others to get up and go, even when the initial steps may be uncomfortable or even painful. Finally, a vision aligns varied individuals around a unified plan.

Vision also includes values, purpose, and goals. Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras describe values as “Essential and enduring tenets—a small set of timeless guiding principles.”<sup>26</sup> These principles could number from one to three, but probably no more than five. They come from inside the individual; they do not respond to outside circumstances or change over time. Values ground the vision. Next is purpose. Collins and Porras explain purpose as “fundamental reason for being.”<sup>27</sup> Purpose does not only describe what one does but why they exist. Neither is it a detailed plan or strategy, which often change or run out of steam. Rather, purpose is never exhausted. It continues to inspire. Purpose can be captured in a brief statement following the guiding principles. Values and purpose together—one guiding and the other inspiring—make up the core to

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<sup>25</sup>John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 1996), 68.

<sup>26</sup>James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last* (New York: HarperBusiness Essentials, 2002), 222.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 224, 227.

one's vision. Lastly, a vision contains goals. A picture of the future that will direct and motivate action needs visible or tangible aims. Visionary goals are much grander than shortsighted projects. They look far into the future. They create an envisioned reality that may take significant time and effort to reach.

It stands to reason that ministers of the gospel must be guided by the gospel. The gospel is the guiding principle of missions. No other principle will persuade. The purpose that follows, then, must be disciple making. Missionaries exist to make disciples of Jesus Christ. For the apostolic minister, this purpose paired with that value gives their vision substance, while their goals will give it vibrancy. Goals may be as varied as the minister's appointment, but must be communicated with passion and conviction. Passion and conviction begin with urgency. Complacency is often high in many churches. Visionary missionaries should unsettle the status quo with their lofty goals. While some have made appeals according to eschatological categories, the urgency of obedience to a call is more persuasive. Earlier it was explained that the sending church motivates obedience toward a call primarily by preaching the cross. A passionate vision substantiated by a cross-centered gospel and made vibrant by goals toward obedience for both the vision-caster and the audience creates urgency for each to fulfill their individual role within God's mission.

After the development of a vision that includes values, purpose, and goals is the articulation of that vision to others. The missionary should be prepared to communicate his or her plans in several forms. Each form is tailored to a specific setting and intended for a specific purpose. The desired result is the guarantee of support and care.

The first form is a short pitch. The ultimate goal of the pitch is to create the kind of intrigue that results in a second opportunity to present more information. The pitch should include: (1) a memorable statement of why your ministry exists and what it will do, (2) a few thoughts on how your approach is uniquely valuable, and (3) a question

that engages the hearer and potentially leads to a second opportunity to explain in more detail. A well-crafted pitch should create interest within a short time that can be followed up in the future by a longer inspirational speech. This 7 to 8 minutes speech inspires, serves the audience, and gives even greater opportunity to connect. It seems that missionaries are often all too quick to present their own financial needs, and in less than stimulating readings, where they should speak from their heart, and explain not what they want *from* the hearers but what they have *for* them. The impactful speech is intended to benefit the audience, not simply to serve the speaker. The personal story of obedience should inspire others to obey their own calls to ministry. Fundraising is redeemed only when its primary purpose is to motivate the audience to serve, not just to give financially. There will be, however, opportunity to detail ministry needs in a still longer, more informative talk. Where the first pitch is intriguing and the 7 to 8 minute speech is inspiring, the final communication form is informing. These talks are not long—18 minutes or less, but lengthy enough to include some detail. For the one sharing his or her vision for ministry, the format is suitable for building on the initial pitch and the follow-up speech by adding all the necessary information.

The development and articulation of a vision is critical. Too many potential missionaries assume that gospel ministry in-and-of-itself is compelling enough to receive lasting support and care.

### **Support and Care**

Missionaries must have a big vision that can be clearly communicated to an audience. Only then will it be received and returned with support and care from the hearers. The apostolic minister must learn to cast vision effectively and the local church must learn to be hospitable. The sending church leader must be prepared to equip for both. A sending strategy will assign the apostolic minister the responsibility of reporting back to the local church and give the congregation the responsibility of staying connected

to the apostolic minister.

Missionaries who have made good on their promises report back to the sending church leaders who assess the progress. Bruce Camp writes, “Reporting and accountability are inseparable items. The local church has a responsibility to send missionaries, and the missionaries in turn have a responsibility to report back on their efforts.”<sup>28</sup> This was the practice of Paul and Barnabas in returning to Antioch: “When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27). Good news edifies the church, while a less than stellar report might give opportunity for needed guidance. Rarely would the local church attempt to dictate on-the-ground ministry or demand a change in appointment on the basis of a report. Paul and Barnabas followed their own course. However, in the exchange, creating value is the expectation, and as extensions and generations of the local church, missionaries should be held accountable to produce.

Digital newsletters have become the common correspondence; even while detailed field reports are available. Why the local church often receives one and not the other is curious (at times I have been denied access to these privileged documents by some missions agencies). Regardless, one would assume that the apostolic minister himself would want full disclosure, and that they would be responsible to present to the sending church more than the pleasantries often included in newsletter directed to donors.

Virtual face-to-face reports through online technology have now surpassed the newsletter, but neither is as helpful as personal check-ups. There should be personal visits by church leaders when possible. However, reporting back bodily to the sending church brings the most benefit—for the missionaries and the congregation. Few, however, when

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<sup>28</sup> Camp, “Scripturally Considered”, 209.

back on furlough, follow Paul and Barnabas. Acts 14:27 finds the missionaries giving a report and then directly after, “they spent a long time with the disciples” (v. 28). This is often not the case at TVC where many will maximize their number of meetings toward deputation rather than receiving the support and care, and further training from their sending church.

Time spent with the disciples in reporting and receiving guidance strengthens the missionary and builds up the body. At the same time, connection must also be maintained by the local church membership. Every sending church must also go to great lengths to ensure that missionaries feel loved and connected to home. Many resources offer suggestions on how to communicate regularly using technology, how to send care packages, and how to schedule occasional visits.<sup>29</sup>

### **Education and Training**

The sending church not only prepares a missionary candidate for ministry by helping to clarify a call and by helping to develop a vision strong enough to ensure lasting support and care, the sending church must also provide adequate education and training to the task. Affirmation rightly follows satisfactory preparation over an allotted time. While the church need not be responsible for facilitating every aspect of their development (churches should partner well with organizations who provide superior education and training), it should structure a programmatic process for ensuring movement toward final mobilization.

A sending strategy must include learning—understood formally as the process of producing new or changed behavior.<sup>30</sup> Those being sent are learners, making necessary

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<sup>29</sup>Neal Pirolo, *Serving as Senders: How to Care for Your Missionaries While They are Preparing to Go, While They are on the Field, When They Return Home* (San Diego: Emmaus Road International, 2012), 10.

<sup>30</sup>See George R. Knight, *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 9-11.



changes toward new behavior, or in this case new ministry. Conceptually, learning is both education and training. Education is reflective; it is controlled learning concerned with producing a specific new or changed behavior. Training, on the other hand, is reflexive; it is a subset of education that teaches using repeated responses to changing conditions. To put it another way: learning is preparation *and* participation. Sending churches do well to provide a program for potential missionaries toward both.

Christian education in the church has long been connected to discipleship. There have been numerous approaches throughout church history.<sup>31</sup> Education and training in the local church has traditionally considered the role of the teacher, the nature and potential of the learner, methodological emphasis, and curriculum. These factors give direction and orientation. A “sending program” in view of historical approaches should take each factor into account as it facilitates the preparation and participation of ministry candidates. The role of the Christian educator in the context of sending missionaries or may be different than other settings. It is assumed that the nature and potential of adult

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<sup>31</sup>The first disciples, for instance, broke bread, prayed, and devoted themselves to the Apostle’s teaching (Acts 2:42). The early church used instructional manuals like the *Didache* (c. late first century). Eventually, the refutations and apologies of church fathers became educational material for growing Christians—Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies* (c. AD 180) and Justin Martyr’s *First Apology* (c. AD 103 -165) are examples. Later, the creeds—Apostle’s Creed (c. AD 180) and Nicene Creed (c. AD 365)—gained popularity. The church in the Middle Ages mostly relied on liturgy while the monastics widely took up Saint Benedict’s *Rule* (c. AD 480). Soon the printing press would encourage churches to teach the liberal arts’ Trivium and Quadrivium. The Reformers would follow with catechisms (Heidelberg, c. 1563; Westminster, c. 1647), and the Church of England with the *Book of Common Prayer* (c. 1549). The next century brought about the Sunday School Movement carried along by John Wesley. The popularity of his “methods” in England would catch on in America, as would his schools. Sunday school, newly influenced by the social sciences’ theories of learning would only continue to develop. Only recently has Christian education moved “off-campus” out of the school into homes with the Small Group Movement. Programs and curricula, over the years, have solidified a place in discipleship. See Roger White, “Learning from Archival Maps: Historical Perspectives on Curriculum,” in *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church: Cartography for Christian Pilgrims*, ed. James Estep, Roger White, and Karen Estep (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 67-87.

learners is not that of adolescents.<sup>32</sup> Adults are generally self-motivated to learn and are capable of self-directing. The teacher then, in this case, may be more of a guide and counselor than one who simply transfers his or her repository of knowledge. The learner's potential has already, to an extent, been affirmed previously, and the expectation now is consistent, continued motion toward mobilization. Sending program participants progress through several stages at a self-pace over a specified time. (Self-pacing takes into account the capacity of the candidate who typically still holds a job and may not be able to invest a great deal of time away.) The methodological emphases of the earlier stages would involve preparation while the later stages would involve participation. Additionally, curriculum should include a core along with a personalized development plan that addresses: calling, spiritual health, biblical knowledge, ministry experience, cultural awareness, and fundraising. Activities might include suggested readings and reports, assigned worksheets and documented observations, devotions and journaling, recording of regular ministry opportunities, or seminar and class participation.

A sending program that facilitates education and training is in line with traditional church discipleship, and it utilizes contemporary theory in its methodology. The curriculum guarantees a satisfactory level of learning.

This chapter has presented a sending strategy that requires making choices. The strategy—built on theology and based in dynamics argues for local church responsibility in identifying, training and sending apostolic ministers—asks TVC to narrow its description of missions to evangelism and church planting, and it asks TVC to increase the expectations of potential missionaries to that of leaders over volunteers. With those choices made, the process and plan for assessment and affirmation, assignment and

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<sup>32</sup>See Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton III, and Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Burlington, MA: Elsevier, 1998), 72.

appointment are executed. Vision is created and communicated by the evangelist or church planter in order to gain lasting support and care. Finally, education and training is facilitated toward final mobilization. In the last chapter, I will conclude with a summary and implications.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this project was to develop a strategy for sending missionaries from The Village Church in Dallas-Ft. Worth. A strategy has been presented that was built on theology and based in dynamics that argues for local church responsibility in identifying, training and sending apostolic ministers—evangelists and church planters. The research accomplished two goals: (1) developing a process and (2) creating a plan to communicate the process. The process and plan, upon implementation, make up the key components to a sending strategy. I have called the process a “Sending Program” that aids the potential missionary in the areas of exploration of a call to ministry, preparation for ministry, immersion into ministry experiences, and association into an ongoing partnership after being sent. The communication plan involves a quarterly “Sending Program Information Meeting” directed to the adult membership of TVC for the purpose of informing them of the process. The hope is to grow the congregation’s understanding of missions and church planting, while also to reinforce the responsibility of all to participate in sending. The meeting includes a short lecture on sending theology and dynamics and a short presentation of the process for anyone from among TVC congregation who may be interested in being sent.

The strategic choices required for the adoption and implementation of both the process and the plan necessitate that—following a summary of the first four chapters—I restate more concretely what has been up to now somewhat abstract or theoretical. Therefore, I will conclude with a set of immediate proposals for TVC leadership toward necessary change followed by several implications if embraced.

## Summary of Chapters

Beyond introducing the purpose of the project and the goals (already stated in the opening of this chapter), chapter 1 provided the necessary context and rationale. The Village Church (TVC) was once Highland Village First Baptist Church (HVFBC), a small, stagnant congregation primed for revitalization. In November 2002, Matt Chandler was called as the church's fourth senior pastor and grew the membership from about 200 hundred to over 10,000 over the next ten years. The Dallas/Fort Worth "Metroplex" is a major hub that draws residents from all over the nation. It boasts several of the fastest growing cities and many corporations have relocated to the area. While cosmopolitan growth has diversified the demographics there remains traditional, evangelical, conservative sentiment. Weekly church attendance is a social obligation for many, and Bible belt, nominal Christianity makes for a ripe harvest. In this ministry environment, TVC is committed to challenging this status quo by speaking the truth in love.

The context has given opportunity for some to be sent from TVC as missionaries. There has been, and continues to be, a growing tradition of multiplication through global disciple making, local church planting, and multisite campus addition. At the same time, there has been no consistent strategy for sending. TVC, for the most part, has been reluctant to make significant choices in the matter—hence the rationale for the project. Despite many successes in sending missionaries, the lack of a clear vision and process has unnecessarily stifled the call to send.

Chapter 1 adds definitions, limitations and delimitations, and research methodology to the context and rationale. Important to the project is a clear understanding of the terms mission, missions, missionary, apostolic ministers, evangelists, and church planters. With these terms initially defined in the first chapter the reader is prepared for the discussion in chapter 2. Further, the project was limited and delimited by factors including the specific meaning of strategy for the purposes of this project, and the scope of the process and plan as it fits within discipleship at TVC. Lastly,

the research methodology points back to the rationale, or the real need for a sending strategy. It explains that the project will serve TVC by its being presented to TVC leadership in the form of proposals toward needed change.

Chapter 2 lays the foundation for a sending strategy by developing a sending theology. The thesis of this project is that TVC, as a local congregation, has a biblical mandate to send missionaries. To substantiate the thesis, I made three moves: to further define the key words introduced in chapter 1, to warn against the continued influence of Enlightenment ideals on those considering a missionary call, and to encourage movement from individual “going” to “being sent” by the local church.

First, I address the mystique that shrouds much of missions, brought about by eighteenth-century Enlightenment notions of individualism and unlimited human potential, and the concern that it tends to promote heroic volunteerism. When these Old World qualities mix with American revolutionary attributes of need for achievement, a pioneering spirit, disdain for authority, and frustration with bureaucratic interference, the result is a distinctively modern, Western, evangelical way of understanding missions. The influence of what I call “Enlightened Missions” could challenge the thesis—that TVC has a responsibility to corporately send.

This missions mystique perpetuates, I argue, because TVC has failed to define the terms mission, missions, missionary. In order to offer definitions, the project must be first directed doxologically. Motivation for mission necessarily begins with God and his glory. After motivation is motif. The motif to guide the definitions of the terms mission, missions, and missionary is not *missio Dei*, as some have put forth. Rather, the better motif is “sending” beginning with “God as missionary.” Who God *is* (missionary), in this case, is more helpful than what he *does* (*missio Dei*). While the *missio Dei* motif did much to rescue missions from Christendom and colonialism, it was not adequately Trinitarian. “God as missionary” more fully represents the sending nature of the Trinity. Further, “sending” is the better missions motif because it points to the plain meaning of

the word “missions.” The Latin *missio* and *mitto* mean, “a sending” and “to send.” Scripture reflects this meaning broadly, but also points to the more nuanced and narrowed “apostolic sending.” An apostolic church carries on the work of the Apostles in the work of evangelism and church planting. It is these apostolic functions that best identifies missions and missionaries. TVC would do well to narrow their descriptions in this way.

A sending theology also must give priority to the local church in the work of sending. I argue that precedence is found in the Antiochene church (Acts 13:1-3) and others (Acts 11:22, 15:22; Phil 2:25, 2 Cor 8:33). The parachurch has at times disagreed, claiming to be an equal expression of the universal church with outreach privileges. TVC cannot abdicate its role as primary sender, but instead must partner well with these ministries toward shared goals.

Substantiating the thesis with a sending theology makes possible the consideration of sending dynamics in chapter 3. Identifying, training, and sending apostolic ministers requires the looking into several interactive elements or key components of the process. There are a few topical items that the TVC church leader must examine regarding potential missionaries. I call these items “sending dynamics;” *calling* and *obedience* are the two considered in chapter 3.

A sending candidate must wrestle with obedience to a call to ministry. Unfortunately, the influence of Enlightened missions has often made that wrestle an individual, private affair acted upon apart from TVC. If the local church has a responsibility to sent, as the thesis suggests, then TVC must be about the work of helping potential missionaries discern their call, and the candidate must be willing to listen to counsel. In collaboration with the church community, church leaders should assist in answering the questions: “Is the individual called? According to what measure of gifts? And is it wise to act upon that calling?” This interaction is made possible when TVC establishes a shared understanding of calling, differentiates between positional,

professional, and priestly calling, and lastly evaluates the candidate's desire, gifting, skill, and opportunity.

Beyond calling is obedience to that call. Often potential missionaries will need encouragement toward surrendering. While God demands the compliance of those he has called, it is the role of TVC to gently persuade. Obedience does not come by way of manipulation or emotional appeals, but by preaching the cross of Christ to elicit grace as motivation (even more than gratitude as motivation). The sending dynamics of calling and obedience must be addressed in order to arrive at a comprehensive strategy.

Chapter 4, borrowing from the common grace of corporate business leadership, explains strategy as “making choices” that will bring about unique value. TVC has been slow to make decisions regarding whom they will send or what assignment those individuals will carry out. Historically church leaders have been content to recruit volunteers rather than develop leaders, even when the results have been less-than-satisfactory. I argue that the meager results are often evidence of the volunteer simply managing conditions, or maintaining availability. On the other hand, leaders are those who lead change. Leaders are accountable to God for the influencing of others. Proliferation of available missionaries is not better than developing leaders made accountable. TVC must grow ministers for greater impact. This is accomplished by the careful assessment of leaders according to character, aptitude, and determination. Further, potential missionaries need affirmation from the sending community—those within TVC with whom they walk most closely.

With leaders assessed and affirmed and with assignment and appointment established, the missionary may begin to share their vision for ministry with the hopes of receiving lasting support and care. A sending strategy encourages the candidate to create a vision based on values, purpose, and goals. The vision should be articulated within several formats to address specific audiences. Effective communication will likely be



returned by support and care from others. The candidate is then responsible to report on progress.

Lastly, a sending strategy should provide education and training for ensuring movement toward final mobilization. Learning is both preparation and participation, and the programmatic offering should address calling, spiritual health, and biblical knowledge, as well as ministry experience, cultural awareness, even fundraising.

### **Summary in the Form of Proposals**

#### **Define Missions for the TVC Congregation**

Where the Bible gives no definition of missions, there is latitude in our descriptions. I concede that the one I have offered is not the only one available. I am convinced, however, that broad definitions of missions will only complicate matters, even confuse members. Narrowing my description to evangelism and church planting is not only helpful, but I have argued that it more closely follows Paul in Scripture.

The alternative makes sending by the local church nearly impossible. Where TVC should be developing leaders we are too often explaining why we will not support what is essentially Christian tourism by wide-eyed adventurers. We spend too much time responding to requests for money from strangers where we should be training members as evangelists and church planters. These individuals and organizations are not malicious, of course. Slowing sending is not their intent. They have only not been told how the church defines missions. They have not been told that time abroad does not necessarily make one a missionary. They've not been told that money is not a missions strategy. TVC church leaders must define missions for the TVC congregation—through communication outlets, in small groups, and from the pulpit.

#### **Encourage Service But Facilitate Multiplication**

If evangelism and church planting—apostolic ministry—is best categorized as

“multiplication,” then feeding the hungry, healing the sick, educating the poor, and freeing the oppressed fall under the category of “service”—gospel-centered multiplication and gospel-centered service being TVC discipleship traits. One is “missions” in the most appropriate sense, as I have argued; the other is not. Both, however, are absolutely necessary. It is only that service outside the scope of the local church is primarily a Christian duty to humans by humans because of intrinsic, God-imaging value. We serve others because of our responsibility to the greater community. This kind of service should be encouraged as regular discipleship. Multiplication, on the other hand, should not only be encouraged but also facilitated by the local church. I propose that TVC build more structures, put more processes in motion, and dedicate more resources to identifying, preparing, and sending evangelists and church planters.

Service should be recognized and celebrated by TVC. That many will “go” and start orphanages, dig water wells, and give medical aid will encourage and edify the body. Others may even be compelled to follow in similar acts of service. These sacrifices should never be discounted or the individuals involved made to feel inferior. At the same time, every act of service cannot receive equal recognition or celebration, or more apt—financial support. Ideally TVC would be so active in serving that church leaders cannot keep up with them all. Even so, if possible and when appropriate the congregation should be made aware of and given opportunity to celebrate.

What about the individual that chooses to go serve apart from being sent by TVC? How does the church encourage “missionaries” that go it alone? Maybe they are willing, but not necessarily worthy according to the program’s standards? They may still need the church’s help. Typically, missions agencies will require local church affirmation, but what if church leaders do not feel comfortable “signing off?” It seems, in this case, the local church should not allow the parachurch to dictate the terms. The local church should be able to, with clear conscience, encourage the Christian service of individuals, even if they do not meet the qualifications of official “sending.” The church

is free to create its own categories. Church leaders may be comfortable being a “supporting” church rather than a “sending” church. They may want to give financially, even if they do not want to cover them spiritually. These seem to be acceptable ways to encourage without facilitating.

### **Press the Obligation to Be Sent**

Some potential missionaries at TVC have expressed an unwillingness to be sent. They feel slowed by the time requirements and constrained by the system. Not understanding how sending might benefit them, they cannot get beyond how they might bypass the process. The issue at hand or the question to be asked, however, should be “How can I serve?” not “How can I be served?” These individuals have felt no obligation to the body, only to their mission. This should be remedied.

This type of exchange is common, and there are likely those who would applaud the determination or admire his candor and hurry him along with their approval. And without anyone pressing the obligation to be sent by the local church, missionaries will continue to seek affirmation and support from a wide variety of churches. The consumer culture of Dallas/Ft. Worth is partly to blame, with its churches often the greatest perpetrators, with their buffet of options. Church hoppers often learn nothing of service, only satisfying immediate needs, and as these Christians are moved toward mobilization the trend may continue.

With a greater understanding of the responsibility each has to the other, however, the body can be built up. As each TVC member and attendee grows into the fullness of Christ, some will be set apart as apostles, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers (Eph 4:11-16). Being sent is an obligation; potential missionaries are duty-bound to others. Local churches are one body with many members (1 Cor 12:12). A dismembered foot cannot ask the body for support even as it leaves the leg without. A sent foot, on the other hand, is an extension serving the entire frame. TVC must press the obligations the

part has to the whole.

### **Impart Meaning Into the Phrase “Sending Church”**

A sending church is a local church that has identified, trained, and sent a missionary, where there is a connection of extension or generation assuming responsibility and accountability. Sending is no small commitment, and because of the unique relationship, a potential missionary must actually know the church and be known by the church. Knowing and being known firstly means being present. They must be in the local church for an extended season. I have encountered several individuals and couples who approach me, anxious to start their ministry, but can only commit to a short time with the church before they must go out. They want “sending church” status without “sending church” investment. The situation only renders the phrase meaningless. I propose requiring a specified length of time in TVC membership and service.

However, sending is more than prayer and financial support. It is also working together apart, evangelism within one’s own sphere. Scholars have debated whether Paul expected this of his churches, and many local congregations seem to have followed in abdicating corporate evangelism. The condition cannot be the case. Imparting meaning into the phrase “sending church” means being serious about the gospel going out. TVC cannot give potential missionaries “sending church” benefits without requiring them to know and be known by the church, and while encouraging the congregation to give support in prayer and financing, TVC cannot negate their responsibility to verbally proclaim the gospel.

TVC must encourage corporate evangelism in support of those sent out. In the same way, candidates must be required to support TVC in committing to covenant obligations of time and service.

## **Integrate Missions into the Life of TVC**

The challenge remains to keep God's heart for the nations before God's people. The temptation is to create "missions" affinity groups for the purpose of gathering like-minded individuals. I propose TVC find another way. Propagation of God's heart for the nations should equal greater inclusion for all rather than (the often resulting) marginalization of a few. That is not to say that affinity groups are intentionally exclusive. Most members of these groups are eager to add to their number, but TVC may, by facilitating these groups, actually contribute to the stigma that missions can or should be left to the passionate or to the professional. It seems the better way is to weave service and multiplication into the fabric of regular discipleship. I propose TVC utilize the established groups structure to communicate and encourage missions initiatives by way of utilizing group pastors, coaches, and leaders to serve as missions advocates.

### **Implications**

If the preceding proposals along with the process and the plan are embraced, I foresee several results. The most immediate implications of these strategic changes may be clearer direction, closer alignment, more faithfulness, and greater impact.

Potential missionaries at TVC have had little direction in the past, and while some have stumbled their way onto the field or into the neighborhood, the journey has not been exceedingly clear. A well-marked pathway for identifying, training, and sending apostolic ministers will not only bring needed organizational structure, but will give clarity and confidence to the candidates who are already walking by faith. Bringing along disciples toward maturity in their call is not optional, but the duty and obligation of TVC. It should be done with excellence and effectiveness. The proposals, process, and plan put forth in this project are focused and straightforward. Adoption and implementation will bring clarity and direction.

The next implication is closer alignment. TVC is a large church existing as both organism and organization. The massive body must move together. It needs to be

unified in purpose and goals. TVC's stated mission statement is: TVC exists to glorify God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service, and gospel-centered multiplication. The statement is both a picture and process of discipleship. The sending of missionaries must fit within this scheme if alignment is to be achieved. Alignment is the drawing together of resources toward a unified mission. Where there is no alignment the body is pulled in multiple directions, diluting the power of any one of them. Where TVC's history has seen misaligned ministries eventually dissolved, the proposals along with the process and plan presented in this project will unify around a discipleship pathway that is already established in the groups department, maintaining its consistent ministry.

Not only will the structures be more secure, the congregation will be more aware and involved. Missions will not be the passion of only a few. Instead, there will be an understanding that "sending" is a responsibility of all—not just the leadership but also the community. Ownership will be shared, and the newfound energy and excitement will be evident.

I have argued that Scripture understands missions as primarily evangelism and church planting, and TVC would do well to narrow its understanding. In doing so, this and the other proposals make for more faithfulness to God's Word. While missions and missionaries are not biblical terms, the Apostle Paul serves as a worthy model of both the function and the title. His focus was exact; his every action was purposeful. He knew nothing but preaching the cross. TVC should follow the pattern with similar intentionality. Other service ministries can give humanitarian aid, but if the church does not evangelize and plant churches, no other institution can or will.

Further, TVC's emulating the sending practices of the early church as found in the Antiochene church (Acts 13:1-3) and others (Acts 11:22, 15:22; Phil 2:25, 2 Cor 8:33) will result in more faithfulness to Scripture. The precedence should be followed in hearing from the Holy Spirit, clarifying the call of qualified leaders, and laying on hands

in affirmation and partnership. Along with clearer direction and closer alignment, another implication of the adoption and implementation of this project is more faithfulness.

The last implication is greater impact. Narrowing assignments to evangelism and church planting and developing leaders over recruiting volunteers (the essence of this proposed strategy) has higher potential to create more disciples, and thereby make the greater kingdom impact. The proliferation of missionaries, while believed to be more spiritual by some, is generally less pragmatic and potentially less fruitful. I argue that the spirit calls individuals who must then obey. If TVC deals in calling rather than mere willingness to go, the implication would be not only more missionaries in the field, but the most effective people in the most effective places.

In conclusion, TVC has a biblical mandate to identify, train, and send missionaries. TVC will be best equipped to respond if it addresses the missions mystique that promotes heroic volunteerism, if it develops leaders who are accountable rather than finding those who are available, and if it narrows the meaning of missions to evangelism and church planting in hopes of multiplication. A sending program informed by these axioms and influenced by these proposals will create clearer direction for those who feel called to go, closer alignment within TVC's discipleship process, more faithfulness to Scripture, and greater impact for the kingdom.

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## ABSTRACT

### A STRATEGY FOR SENDING MISSIONARIES FROM THE VILLAGE CHURCH IN DALLAS-FT. WORTH

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016  
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The Village Church (TVC) in Dallas-Ft. Worth is a multi-site megachurch that exists to glorify God by making disciples who will make more disciples, and while the church has multiplied missionaries in this way over the years, there has been no comprehensive “sending strategy.” Consequently, many have *gone*, but few have been *sent*. It is the thesis of this project that the local church has a responsibility in identifying, training, and sending apostolic ministers—evangelists and church planters. For far too long TVC has given over “sending” priority to parachurch ministries and has been content to remain passive financiers of those who are convinced of a call regardless of local church affirmation. Further, there has been an inability or unwillingness to make strategic choices of what *not* to do or who *not* to send. This will not do. In response, I will propose in this project narrowing missions to evangelism and church planting, and I will advocate for developing leaders rather than recruiting volunteers.

These convictions will provide the impetus for a sending strategy that will accomplish two goals: (1) developing a process and (2) creating a plan to communicate the process. The process and plan, upon implementation, will make up the key components to a “Sending Program” that will aid the potential missionary in the areas of exploration of a call to ministry, preparation for ministry, immersion into ministry experiences, and association into an ongoing partnership after being sent. The

communication plan will involve a quarterly “Information Meeting” directed to the adult membership of TVC for the purpose of informing them of the process.

TVC has a responsibility in identifying, training, and sending apostolic ministers—evangelists and church planters. This sending strategy will demand choices be made by TVC leadership—that, when adopted and implemented, will have the opportunity to make use of a process and a plan that is faithful to Scripture and fruitful in its effect.

## VITA

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### EDUCATION

Diploma, Nimitz High School, Irving, Texas, 1995  
B.A., Howard Payne University, 1999  
M.Div., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009

### MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Communications Director, The Village Church, Flower Mound, Texas, 2007-  
2010  
Spiritual Formation Pastor, The Village Church, Denton, Texas, 2010- 2014  
Training and Sending Minister, The Village Church, Flower Mound, Texas,  
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