

1-1-2010

Rethinking missions: a pathway for helping the next generation to fulfill Christ's Great Commission

Jon Olson
George Fox University

This research is a product of the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program at George Fox University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

Olson, Jon, "Rethinking missions: a pathway for helping the next generation to fulfill Christ's Great Commission" (2010). *Doctor of Ministry*. Paper 4.
<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/4>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Seminary at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Ministry by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University.

GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

RETHINKING MISSIONS:
A PATHWAY FOR HELPING THE NEXT GENERATION
TO FULFILL CHRIST'S GREAT COMMISSION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
JON OLSON

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

NOVEMBER 2010

Copyright © 2010 by Jon Olson

All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

GLOSSARY.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	ix
SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM	1
<i>The State of the American Church</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Funding Problems.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Declining Personnel.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>The Missions Generation Gap</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Image Problems</i>	<i>8</i>
New Global Realities	12
<i>Globalization and the Rise of the Rest</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Religious Pluralism.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Geopolitics.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Christianity's Transition Away from the West</i>	<i>19</i>
Lack of Consensus Over Missions Definition and Practice.....	22
<i>The Growing Divide Between Word and Deed</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Unwillingness to Change</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Fear of New Models.....</i>	<i>26</i>
SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS.....	29
Continue Current Missions Practices.....	29
Transition American Missions to Our Local Mission Field	31
Embrace Missions Expressions that Are Primarily Socially and Cause-Oriented	33
Keep Evangelism the Primary Focus of American Missions	36
SECTION 3: THE THESIS	40
Recapture a Priority on Teaching Missions	41
<i>Missio Dei.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>The Great Commission.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Love for Others</i>	<i>44</i>
A Redefinition of Missions	45
<i>Changing Our Missions Lexicon.....</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Deprogramming Missions.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Missionaries Are Not Just Paid Professionals</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Christianity is Neither Western nor White</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>From Teacher to Learner.....</i>	<i>54</i>
Ensure Balance in Our Missions Expressions	58
<i>Word and Deed as Equal Partners</i>	<i>58</i>

<i>Missions is Local and Global</i>	61
<i>Assistance vs. Independence</i>	63
Embrace Sustainable Missions Practices	65
<i>Sustainable Funding</i>	66
<i>Partnering with Nationals</i>	68
<i>Kingdom-Based Partnerships</i>	72
<i>Green Missions</i>	75
Engaging the Next Generation Is Key to the Future of Missions	77
<i>Globally Aware</i>	78
<i>Community</i>	80
<i>Desire to Serve</i>	82
<i>Holistic Worldview</i>	83
<i>Drawn toward Compassion and Repelled by Injustice</i>	84
<i>Authenticity over Agenda</i>	86
<i>Empowerment and Equality</i>	87
<i>Digital</i>	89
Better Define the Remaining Roles for Americans	89
<i>Preparing the Next Generation</i>	90
<i>Multipliers</i>	92
<i>Creative Access Platforms</i>	94
<i>Proponents of Justice</i>	95
<i>Technology</i>	95
<i>Bible Translation</i>	97
Rethink Our Approach to Short-Term Missions	99
<i>Mission or Tourism?</i>	100
<i>Reducing Our Western Footprint</i>	101
<i>Commitment or Convenience?</i>	102
<i>Partnership over Projects</i>	104
SECTION 4: THE PROJECT	105
<i>Overview</i>	105
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	105
SECTION 5: PROJECT SPECIFICATION	108
<i>Audience</i>	108
<i>Goals and Strategies</i>	108
<i>Guidance and Feedback</i>	109
<i>Rationale</i>	109
<i>Budget</i>	110
<i>Standards of Publication</i>	110

Promotion 110

SECTION 6: POSTSCRIPT **111**

BIBLIOGRAPHY **113**

APPENDIX: MISSIONS SURVEY..... **123**

GLOSSARY

One of the challenges in this area of study is the plurality of terms that sound alike. *Mission, missions* and *missional* are often used interchangeably but have different meanings. Different generations ascribe different meanings to the same word. We mistakenly think that age-old definitions of missions are still widely held and understood today. In *So Beautiful*, Leonard Sweet tells a humorous story about a pastor who included this tagline on his business card: “*Great Commission Minded.*” The pastor’s wife later gave the card to a friend in need who noticed the comment and asked, “It says here that you are Great Commission minded. How big a cut do you take of the offering?”¹

For example, whereas the terms *mission* and *missional* may have meant one thing to previous generations, now both have become buzzwords that are used in just about every church and organization. In Michael Polanyi’s book *Personal Knowledge*,² he discusses the subjective meanings we bring to language and even commonly understood terms. We have done as well within the world of missions, creating so many meanings and derivatives of *mission* that the intent of a specific term can be unclear.

As generations collide along with all the meanings they attach to specific words, many are left confused. Philip Thornton and Jeremy Thornton hit the nail on the head with this assessment: “The old saying that everybody’s job is nobody’s job seems particularly applicable to missions. When we begin to label any and all the ministries of the church as missionary, we lose the uniqueness of the missionary task. Without an understanding of the unique dimension of the Church’s task we call missions, young people will continue to find it hard to dedicate themselves to a missionary career.”³

Therefore, for the sake of continuity throughout this dissertation I offer the following definitions of these terms:

¹ Leonard Sweet, *So Beautiful* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 19.

² Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge ; Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

³ Philip Thornton and Jeremy Thornton, “Why They Don’t Go: Surveying the Next Generation of Mission Workers,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2008): 206.

Mission (God's)

Also known as *missio Dei*. This is God's global plan to reach the world and reconcile all people to Himself. God is a sending God who is Himself engaged in mission. He loved the world to the point that He *sent* His Son to incarnate in our world and in our lives.

Mission (The Church)

The corporate expression of visibly and tangibly living out God's mission. Missiologist Charles Van Engel describes it as "the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God's action in human history."⁴ According to Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, "Mission is not merely an activity of the church. It is the very heartbeat and work of God. It is in the very being of God that the basis for the missionary enterprise is found... The missional church is a *going* church, a movement of God through his people, sent to bring healing to a broken world."⁵

Mission (Personal)

The individual expression of each Christ follower in living out his/her God-given mission. Leonard Sweet explains: "God's doesn't so much have a 'plan' for your life as God has made you for a mission and has a design whereby you can accomplish that mission. God doesn't just have an agenda for you to do; God has a mission for you to live."⁶ He adds, "We have been saved to be sent. We are not saved for ourselves alone. We are saved for the world and to continue Christ's mission in the world to 'redeem God's creation.'"⁷

Missional

The act of living out (both individually and corporately, as the church) God's character, heart and desires within one's culture. To be missional is "to take the gospel to and incarnate the gospel within a specific cultural context."⁸ It's the difference between "being" the church and

⁴ David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 24.

⁵ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come : Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 18.

⁶ Sweet, 57.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

⁸ Frost and Hirsch, xi.

simply “doing” or “going” to church. Frost and Hirsch add, “A missional church mobilizes all its members to be sent into the community.”⁹

Missions

The practice of working strategically around the globe to further Christ’s Great Commission¹⁰. This manifests itself through many different expressions and approaches from culture to culture. One book describes missions as “the specific work of the church and agencies in the task of reaching people for Christ by crossing cultural boundaries.”¹¹ The expressions and strategies used to further missions do not remain the same over time, but are changing and dynamic.

Missiology

The study of mission, including “biblical, theological, historical, contemporary and practical reflection and research.”¹² This dissertation is a form of Missiology.

Missionaries

People who carry out God’s mission on earth. This has historically referred to people who do this in a cross-cultural context. These individuals typically engage in one or more of these activities: evangelism, leader training, church planting, or humanitarian work. Other missionaries serve in a support role: their primary calling is to support another missionary who is already on the field.

American missions

The practice of missions as carried out by the American church. This paradigm has traditionally consisted of sending out Western missionaries into other cultures. For the sake of this dissertation, missions will refer to the practice of the American church in carrying out cross-cultural ministry which is largely global.

⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰ Many churches engage in projects and call them “missions”, but there has to be a theological grid rooted in God’s ultimate plan. Otherwise it’s just activity.

¹¹ A. Scott Moreau, Gary Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions : A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*, Encountering Missions (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 17.

¹² Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God : Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2006), 25.

ABSTRACT

I am exploring the practice of global missions, which has historically enjoyed widespread support and enthusiasm within the American church. In recent years both the church and also the global culture have experienced significant change, although the church's approach to missions has remained relatively unchanged. Most American missions efforts still assume an ethnocentric paradigm, with a missionary force that remains largely white and requires large numbers of dollars to further their efforts overseas.

At the same time, statistics reveal that the US church is experiencing a rapid decline in both personnel (Westerners engaging in a long-term cross-cultural commitment) and funds (money given to send and support missions efforts). Additionally, missiologists and church leaders alike note that while today's youth are more cause oriented, they are less interested in traditional missions expressions. If current trends continue, a generation of Christian youth and young adults will become largely disconnected from missions. Thus, the purpose of this dissertation is to help the church respond strategically to these changes if we are to engage the next generation in helping fulfill Christ's Great Commission.

Section one will explore why the American church is growing increasingly disconnected from traditional missions expressions. This discussion will include some of the key paradigm shifts in our world today that are challenging our assumptions.

Section two will explore other proposed solutions in response to moving missions forward in the Western church.

Section three will offer a pathway to equip churches to better respond to the significant shifts taking place in missions, resulting in a more successful missions movement in America.

Section four will provide an overview of the related book that will engage individuals and churches with practical challenges and insights for rethinking missions.

Section five will provide an overview of the book's printing and editorial specifications.

SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM

Missions is having an increasingly difficult time finding its place in the American church. While many missiologists have labeled past Western missions efforts as largely successful, times have clearly changed. James Engel explains: “North American Christian commitment to world evangelization is in sharp retrenchment. Unless there is an intervention by God leading to across-the-board willingness in churches and agencies to cope with changing paradigms and realities, North America will become a secondary force in the world church.”¹ Well-known missiologist David Bosch wrote, “More than ever before in its history, the Christian mission is in the firing line today.”² And Keith Eitel has noted how a growing number of people have discounted missions “as a relic of the modernistic past.”³

Assessments such as these should cause us alarm. Missions is arguably one of the largest and most impactful ministries of the church. It is both enormous and audacious in its attempt: to carry to the ends of the earth a message that is in many ways counter-cultural, counterintuitive and unpopular. It involves going into cultures and people groups that can be unreceptive, uninterested and even hostile. Some have given their careers and even their lives to it, sometimes with minimal visible results and few or no conversions.

And yet, missions activity has been an important component in helping ensure the global reach that Christianity enjoys today. Over the past two millennia of missions efforts, the faith of just a few has exploded into a global movement that has impacted billions.⁴ This would not have been possible without the faithfulness of many who carried the gospel torch through the generations and into other cultures. Engel and Dyrness write, “Since William Carey left Britain in 1793, thousands of missionaries from North America and Europe have gone everywhere to take the gospel and plant churches. Today there is a Christian presence in nearly all parts of the world—a fact that is remarkable in and of itself.”⁵

¹ James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions : Where Have We Gone Wrong?* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 17.

² David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission : Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 2.

³ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, 31.

⁴ The Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission 2004 (published in the International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol. 28, No. 1) reported 2,090,763,000 worldwide Christians as of mid-2004.

⁵ Engel and Dyrness, 44.

However, successes in the past may very well have lulled us into complacency in the present. As missions practices have remained relatively unchanged for years, an increasing number of authors, missiologists and church leaders alike have predicted the steep challenges this movement faces. Wilbert Shenk is one of many voices who agrees: “One cannot study the record of modern missions since the 1920s without gaining the impression that it is an aging movement, increasingly unable to adapt to the times.”⁶ Richard Tiplady adds, “Involvement in world mission has usually been left to a small group of enthusiasts, who have sometimes through their approach and manner done their best to ensure it remains a minority interest.”⁷ And Vethanayagamony and Chia state what has become obvious to most the American evangelical community: “Within the church... we have witnessed a seeming loss of missionary passion.”⁸

Clearly the current trajectory of traditional American missions efforts is not sustainable. The American missionary force is in retrenchment, and yet there are few (if any) agreed-upon models of how we must move forward. While we scramble to keep things afloat, youth and young adults become increasingly disengaged from traditional missions expressions. While missions efforts are thriving in the global South⁹, we in the West stand at a critical crossroads—we either change our approaches or continue to watch the downward trend from the sidelines. Moreau, Corwin and McGee offer a concise assessment: “The prognosis, from a human perspective, does not look particularly good.”¹⁰ Patrick Cate adds this prediction: “If Western culture continues in the direction it is going, there will be fewer people going to the mission field, fewer people praying for missionaries, and fewer people giving to send them.”¹¹

⁶ Wilbert R. Shenk, “Reflections on the Modern Missionary Movement: 1792-1992,” *Mission Studies* IX-1, no. 17 (1992): 75.

⁷ Richard Tiplady, *World of Difference : Global Mission at the Pic ‘N’ Mix Counter* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 88.

⁸ Ogbu Kalu and others, *Mission after Christendom : Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 2010), xix.

⁹ The Brandt Commission issued a report in 1980 entitled *North-South: A Programme for Survival*. It presented a clear divide between the more affluent “north” and the less developed “south” (which not only included the majority of the countries in the southern hemisphere but also sizable portions of Asia and the Middle East). For one of the best contemporary explanations of the Global South, see the following: Glyn Williams, Paula Meth, and Katie Willis, *Geographies of Developing Areas : the Global South in a Changing World* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁰ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, 283.

¹¹ Mike Barnett and Michael Pocock, *The Centrality of Christ in Contemporary Missions*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2005), 62.

The State of the American Church

Christianity in America is facing an uphill battle. Besides the many books written in recent years that share this thinking, a growing number of studies are validating this trend. A recent cover of *Newsweek* arriving in my mailbox shouted the obvious: “The Decline of a Christian Nation.”¹² In the multi-page cover story are numerous terms and phrases (each of which are well-known even within the Christian community) that attempt definition of where America’s religious landscape is headed: *post-Christian, culture-shift, ranks of professing Christians in decline*, etc. A poll conducted by *Newsweek* substantiates many of their predictions. Not surprisingly, fewer people are attending Christian churches and giving to Christian causes.

Back in 1991, Bosch made a summary statement that is being echoed by countless authors today: “The church has lost its position of privilege.”¹³ Mark Batterson agrees: “Over the last few decades, the church has been pushed further and further onto the periphery of culture.”¹⁴ Leonard Sweet puts it even more bluntly: “The West is deconstructing, and Christianity is dying in the West.”¹⁵ This trend, however unfortunate it may be, is one that seems to be specific to the West and not global Christianity. Missiologist Jonathan Bonk writes, “Statistically, the West is one of the least encouraging areas in the world, manifesting neither the burgeoning numerical growth of sub-Saharan African Christianity, nor the dynamic activity of Latin American Christians.”¹⁶

One question begs asking: since the evangelical church has been so ineffective in terms of reaching out into the community, what business does it have trying to reach out overseas? Frost and Hirsch, in discussing the decline of the church in recent years, write, “The church is worse off precisely because of Christendom’s failure to evangelize its own context and establish gospel communities that transform the culture.”¹⁷

Even if we had unlimited resources with which to carry out our missions efforts, we would still achieve little if the American church lacked the passion, focus, personnel and resolve to advance the kingdom globally. The time for change is now.

¹² From the cover of the *Newsweek* issue dated April 13, 2009.

¹³ Bosch, 364.

¹⁴ Batterson, Mark quoted in Leonard I. Sweet, *The Church of the Perfect Storm* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 110.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁶ Jon Bonk, *Missions and Money : Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem*, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 75.

¹⁷ Frost and Hirsch, 14.

Funding Problems

American Christians are giving fewer dollars to missions, whether through the church or directly to missions agencies. *Philanthropy Journal* reports that church funding for international missions has been declining for the past 80 years.¹⁸ *WORLD Magazine* reported that out of every dollar tithed to Protestant churches, only two cents goes to fund missions efforts.¹⁹ My conviction is that as missions increasingly falls off the radar for many Christians, Western funds will continue to dry up. This is forcing missions agencies to reduce budgets and cut staff, and few people are predicting any reverse or halt to this trend. If we don't quickly learn new approaches for funding missions, I believe we will face a crisis in the next decade. Philip Jenkins, substantiating the findings of numerous organizations, notes that "American mainline churches have dramatically cut back on their budgets for missions."²⁰ Dick Jacquin adds, "Financial support for missionaries is becoming more difficult to raise and maintain... Some missionaries have been forced to give up mission work because of serious issues with raising and maintaining support, and a growing number are confronting this possibility..."²¹

Needless to say, the prospects for new personnel hoping to be deployed to the mission field are becoming increasingly grim. In a nationwide missions survey I conducted among 225 churches (see Appendix for survey questions and responses), 46% of respondents agreed with the statement that American Christians "*will be giving less to missions in the next 5 years.*" 36% thought giving patterns would remain relatively unchanged, and only 18% anticipated an increase in giving to missions.²² Jacquin adds, "Many churches are also becoming more limited in their flexibility to grant missionary support."

Also, in recent times as the value of the dollar has weakened (especially against those currencies that are bundled with the Euro), each of our church's missionaries in that part of the world have been struggling with their support levels. In my missions experience, never before have I received so many letters from missionaries who are suddenly underfunded and possibly

¹⁸ "Support of Overseas Missions Linked to Growth", *Philanthropy Journal*
<http://philanthropyjournal.org/archive/96716> (accessed April 19 2009).

¹⁹ Gene Edward Veith, "Who Gives Two Cents to Missions?", *WORLD Magazine*
<http://www.worldmag.com/articles/11176> (accessed April 19 2009).

²⁰ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom : The Coming of Global Christianity*, Rev. and expanded ed. (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 252.

²¹ Dick Jacquin, "Retiring into Uncertainty," *Lausanne World Pulse* June (2008): 25.

²² Olson, Jon. 2009. Missions survey conducted by author. Please refer to the appendix for a full breakdown of questions and data collected.

having to return home from the field.²³ In *Christianity Today*: “The dollar’s falling value translates into a pay cut for many American missionaries... According to the U.S. Center for World Mission, many are finding their dollars worth 8 to 12 percent less than they expected this year.”²⁴

Missiologists such as Jonathan Bonk have also discussed the expensive nature of doing missions the Western way. Projects and personnel are funded in accordance with Western figures which usually create issues of dependency and disequilibrium between the missionary’s work and the local culture. He explains: “The missionary strategies devised by Western agencies and modeled by Western missionaries is too expensive and too dependent on technology to be emulated by any but the richest churches in the non-Western world.”²⁵ He adds, “The relative affluence of Western missionaries has long been and continues to be a key element in seemingly endemic tensions marking the relationship between Western missions and third world churches”²⁶ (this notion will be discussed more later in this essay).

Declining Personnel

Not only are Western-sent funds drying up, but the American church is also seeing a dramatic decrease in the number of missionaries it sends into other cultures. Statistics from numerous sources reveal that the current Western missionary force is shrinking, both as fewer recruits (those willing to go on the mission field) come forward and current personnel age and retire. According to a Wheaton College study cited in the *Washington Post*, the number of career American missionaries serving overseas continues to decline.²⁷ The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism noted, “Look at the declining statistics of career missionaries from the Western nations. What we have all feared can now be statistically demonstrated by comparing the declining figures for the largest evangelical missions in North America...”²⁸

²³ Many missions agencies require American missionaries to be at or near full funding to remain on the mission field. Otherwise they are forced to return home and fundraise in an effort to make up the missing support.

²⁴ Jocelyn Green, “Pinching Pennies,” *Christianity Today*, January 2008.

²⁵ Bonk, 72.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁷ Jacqueline L. Salmon, “Churches Retool Mission Trips: Work Abroad Criticized for High Cost and Lack of Value,” *Washington Post*, July 5 2008.

²⁸ David Claydon and Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization., *A New Vision, a New Heart, a Renewed Call*, 3 vols. (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2004), 125.

One of the primary reasons for this trend is that churches are simply funding fewer missionaries. In another 2007 survey of 405 megachurches, this conclusion was reported: “Financial support for career missionaries now competes against newer priorities, with support for career missionaries a shrinking proportion of total expenditures.”²⁹ In my 2009 missions survey, a theme of *less is more* emerged from the results. One question asked, “*What is your church’s preference for the number of missionaries it supports?*” 71% of all respondents agreed with the statement “*We would rather support fewer missionaries, but at higher financial levels.*”³⁰

Some see this trend as one that will ultimately be healthy for the global church, especially as it pertains to the growth of indigenous leadership. John Pitterle sees the potential for positive change: “A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church’s growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas.”³¹ Gary Corwin affirms this trend as one that will increasingly define the future: “The already vigorous trend toward higher and higher percentages of the global missionary force coming from the South and East rather than the North and West is almost certain to continue.”³²

The Missions Generation Gap

Back in 1932, William Hocking offered this timeless declaration: “The Church cannot hold its place unless it can convince and hold the loyalty of the new generation. The youth of today are to be the makers and molders of the next period and the message of life must be formulated in terms that will not leave them uninterested and untouched, as is too often the case in the churches of today.”³³ Decades later, this statement could not be more appropriate to today. After celebrating many generations of effective missions outreach in America, it is paradoxical but yet plausible that we could fail to pass the baton to the next generation. Bosch wrote, “It has

²⁹ Robert J. Priest, Douglas Wilson, and Adelle Johnson, “U.S. Megachurches and New Patterns of Global Mission,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 2 (2010): 98.

³⁰ Olson.

³¹ John Pitterle, “Great Commission Prioritization of Countries: Helping to Make Completing the Great Commission More Meaningful for All Believers,” *Lausanne World Pulse* January/February (2010): 20.

³² Gary Corwin, “Doing Missions Like It’s 1930?,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (2009).

³³ Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry. Commission of Appraisal. and William Ernest Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions; a Laymen’s Inquiry after One Hundred Years* (New York, London,: Harper & Brothers, 1932), 96.

become clear that the missionary is not central to the life and the future of the younger churches.”³⁴

Much has been written in recent times about the growing gap between Millennials and the generations before them. In *Time*, Nancy Gibbs references a recent Pew Research Center Report which noted that “79% of Millennials say there is a major difference in the point of view of younger and older people today.”³⁵ Endless studies point to an emerging generation that is more pluralistic, more diverse, and more progressively minded than that of their predecessors. Especially given some of missions’ baggage from the past, it is plausible to assume that today’s globally minded and tolerant generation would be largely uninterested in an enterprise that, for many years, perpetuated imperialism and even cultural hegemony. Ed Stetzer writes, “The reality is that still many of the concepts and practices of mission/missions that are affirmed and practiced today are often locked in another time period and are out of sync with Christians elsewhere.”³⁶

Not surprisingly, churches and missiologists alike share pessimism around the degree to which we will be successful in engaging the next generation with missions. Philip Thornton and Jeremy Thornton share this concern: “While it is true that the task of ‘world evangelization’ is far from finished, it is equally true that fewer young people from the US seem willing to follow the call into long-term missionary service.”³⁷ Similarly, in my 2009 missions survey, one of the questions posed asked respondents to consider the involvement of today’s youth in future missions expressions. Nearly half of all who answered the question agreed with the statement that youth would “be less involved in global missions than that of previous generations.”

In another survey question, nearly half of all responders agreed with the statement “*Missions interest among Christians in America is generally in decline.*” 23% agreed with the statement “*Missions interest has remained about the same*” and only 30% thought that “*Missions interest among Christians in America is increasing.*” With two-thirds of the respondents expressing sentiment that missions interest is either plateaued or in decline, the natural trajectory of missions is not optimistic.

³⁴ Bosch, 364.

³⁵ Nancy Gibbs, “Generation Next,” *Time*, March 22 2010, 72.

³⁶ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, 72.

³⁷ Thornton and Thornton: 204.

This growing generation gap will also have a profound impact on the classic institution of missions agencies. Tiplady writes, “Missionary attrition rates, and the very inability of some traditional mission agencies to recruit and retain younger workers, suggest that the problems are grave, putting in doubt the future of many agencies.”³⁸ For missions agencies that are already struggling in terms of recruitment or budget, the future doesn’t look bright.

Much to my surprise, I have seen very few high level symposiums or conferences that address the urgency of this issue. Missiologists must (and sooner rather than later) meet with representative Christian leaders of the emerging culture (i.e. Rob Bell, Dan Kimball, Mark Driscoll, etc.) to figure out a roadmap for making the connection. As I have mentioned in this essay, not only must our missions approaches be rethought and retooled, but we cannot for a minute assume that the emerging culture will automatically grasp the *why*, *what* and *how* of missions. Missiologist David Hesselgrave writes, “I firmly believe that, to a significant degree, the future of evangelical missions and missiology will depend upon our willingness to engage the best minds evangelicalism has to offer in the affirmation of Christian beliefs and a consideration of nature Christian mission as well as in the determination of mission strategy.”³⁹

Image Problems

Perhaps few terms in Christendom carry with them so many negative meanings as do *missions* (and all that we associate with it: *missionaries*, *mission trips*, etc.). Wall Street Journal columnist Brad Greenberg explains what has become obvious to many: “The term ‘missions’ itself... carries with it a negative connotation, even in politically and theologically conservative circles.”⁴⁰

Leonard Sweet describes well the mixed bag of meanings attached to the terminology we often use: “At best the status of ‘missionary’ is seen as an elite spiritual position to which only a select few are called. At worst missionary is a backwards calling for those who can’t make it in

³⁸ Richard Tiplady, *Postmission: World Mission by a Postmodern Generation* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 16.

³⁹ “Responses to Christopher Little’s ‘What Makes Mission Christian?’,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25, no. 2 (2008): 76.

⁴⁰ Brad A. Greenberg, “How Missionaries Lost Their Chariots of Fire,” *The Wall Street Journal* (2010). <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704895204575321101671590716.html?KEYWORDS=BRAD+A+GREENBERG> (accessed July 13, 2010).

the real world.⁴¹ Christopher J.H. Wright adds, “The term *missionary* still evokes images of white, Western expatriates among ‘natives’ in far off countries.”⁴² Because of this, he explains, many churches (including ours) and missions agencies now avoid using the term altogether.

Much of this dissonance toward missions is rooted in history. While there are many historic successes in missions to draw upon, it’s also true that the missions strategies employed over the centuries have been a mixed bag: while some missions projects were benevolent and led to the construction of schools and hospitals, others largely ignored the context in which they served and even sought to forcibly convert people against their will⁴³. For example, the Crusades of the Middle Ages are now widely viewed as a great atrocity linked to missions. Other examples come to mind such as the colonization of South Africa (in the name of Christianity) whereby Africans were “taught” by the missionaries how to dress differently and assume Western names. Volumes have been written about natives who were forced to convert to a Western lifestyle (language, dress, mode of worship, etc.) that was just as much a part of the salvation experience as Jesus. According to Chong Kim, since most historical missions activity has been Western-driven, the consequence is that “the spread of Christianity generally went hand-in-hand with the establishment of colonial governments and institutions and thus failed to become localized or indigenized.”⁴⁴

The overall consensus both within and outside the missions community is that these colonizing expressions were, in many ways, detrimental and even destructive to local cultures. Michael Pocock explains: “The peoples of receiving cultures had no choice but to conclude that acceptance of the Christian gospel would mean acceptance of everything Western and the disavowal of their own culture.”⁴⁵ Darrell Whiteman adds, “In the colonial era, missionaries tended to equate Christianity with Western culture, leading to a theory of mission that aimed first

⁴¹ Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 58.

⁴² Wright, 24.

⁴³ In the book *Six Modern Myths About Christianity and Modern Civilization*, the chapter entitled “The Missionaries: A Story of Oppression” offers an excellent argument that too often colonial missionaries are lumped together with Western slave traders and other imperialists. The author argues that mistakes have certainly been made along the way, but that the work of many missionaries during that era has been labeled unfairly. To the contrary, numerous missionaries were outspoken about the oppression and slavery perpetuated by their Western counterparts seeking commercial interests.

⁴⁴ Chong H. Kim, “The 5th International Korea Mission Leaders Forum: Another Reformation on the Horizon,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 23, no. 1 (2006): 21.

⁴⁵ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, 105.

to civilize and then to Christianize.”⁴⁶ And African Pius Wakatama wrote, “Often the gospel has been transported to other countries wrapped with the cumbersome paraphernalia of Western culture. This has not only retarded indigenous expressions of the Christian faith, but at times it has unnecessarily caused confusion in and harm to existing social structures.”⁴⁷

While these paternalistic approaches may have been the accepted norm of the day, it is one of the first reasons people cringe at the thought of missions and, more often than not, dismiss the concept as a relic of American imperialism. Steve Murdock points out just how pervasive the problem is: “Even when it’s done in a Christian manner for altruistic purposes, paternalism has existed among missionaries and recipient nationals or focus groups for decades, if not centuries.”⁴⁸ Consequently, as Glenn Schwartz explains, “It was characteristic of the colonial period that many people lost the will or courage to be creative because outsiders were setting the agenda.”⁴⁹

In discussing cultural imperialism, Frost and Hirsch write, “This form of imperialism, itself a sin, is easily observed in so many countries where Western missionaries import without critical reflection their cultural forms of the gospel and impose them on a people group. Even though conversions often result, the long-term outcome is the loss of a genuinely local, indigenous culture. The Christians of that group appear to be more like *wannabe* westerners than genuine incarnational expression of the Christian faith among their own people group.”⁵⁰ Whiteman adds that “thousands of cross-cultural witnesses remain who are still steeped in the worldview and epistemology of the colonial period and who have not made the important paradigm shift to postcolonial mission. They are neocolonial in their actions and perspectives...”⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ibid., 115.

⁴⁷ Pius Wakatama, *Independence for the Third World Church : An African’s Perspective on Missionary Work* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 13-14.

⁴⁸ Steve Murdock, “Cutting the Purse Strings: How to Avoid and Overcome Paternalism,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2009): 67.

⁴⁹ Glenn J. Schwartz, *When Charity Destroys Dignity : Overcoming Unhealthy Dependency in the Christian Movement* (Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2007), 110.

⁵⁰ Frost and Hirsch, 38.

⁵¹ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, 117.

Additionally, Dana Robert comments on just how encumbered missions has become by its tainted history:

The idea that Protestant foreign missions were a tool of nationalism and, by extension abroad, imperialism, proved to be an irresistible thesis that has generated numerous monographs from the late 1950s until the present. After consensual interpretations of American history were challenged by the social upheavals of the 1960s, and the ecumenical movement splintered on the shoals of secularized theologies and political disunity, mission increasingly became a metaphor not for national virtue but for imperialistic excesses. The mission of America and, by association, Protestant foreign missions no longer represented America's virtue but its fatal flaw.⁵²

What's also interesting (but not necessarily surprising) is the growing number of Christian leaders in foreign countries who want to disassociate themselves from the Western "brand" of Christianity. Undoubtedly their sentiments mirror those of their culture. Kim explains this trend: "There are significant pockets of peoples who are Hindus, Muslims, traditional African religionists, and Chinese that are saying yes to Christ and no to Christianity. They are 'independent' and want to remain independent from Western Christianity."⁵³ As will be discussed later in this essay, the global trend away from a Western form of Christianity will likely—and eventually—affect the way we view and express our faith even in the West, especially as immigration continues and America becomes more multi-ethnic. In a globalized world, the phrase *as goes America, so goes the world* will likely be replaced with *as goes the world, so goes America* in the not-too-distant future.

As long as the modern missions movement continues to hold onto a largely paternalistic model, it only furthers the western stigma that has been attached to the gospel. Engel and Dyrness add, "The modern missionary movement... has reflected at every point in its development the Western historical and cultural situation. This fact has led to a model of missions that is often in clear contradiction to Jesus and his early disciples."⁵⁴

⁵² Dana Robert, "From Missions to Mission to Beyond Missions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (1994): 148.

⁵³ Kim: 25.

⁵⁴ Engel and Dyrness, 44.

New Global Realities

The recent changes in missions are not a result solely of changes within the American church. The reality is that the world in which we live is experiencing change at a rapid, breakneck speed. Simply glancing at the international news headlines of the day will quickly reveal a fluid world in which there are few constants and countless uncertainties. The trends discussed in this section will only accelerate the need to rethink our approaches to missions.

Globalization and the Rise of the Rest

The concept of globalization has become a buzzword deeply ingrained in our cultural lexicon.⁵⁵ It is the delineation of boundaries brought upon by the rapid flow of information, availability of global transportation, and widespread population migration. The pace of change globalization has brought about can be dizzying, as explained by Robert Schreiter: “The compression of time and space that is a part of the experience of globalization means that events can come upon us quickly, and consequences arise that were not anticipated.”⁵⁶ Ogbu Kalu adds, “Globalization has become the buzzword of our contemporary world: lauded for all that is good, creative, and inspiring, but blamed for all that is bad.”⁵⁷

Journalist Thomas Friedman is famous for explaining how this global trend has resulted in a “flat earth”⁵⁸, a world in which countries exist on a much more level playing field than ever before. Whereas in modern history America has often dominated the world scene (in terms of influence, technology, medicine, science, entertainment, etc.), other countries have recently surpassed us in many ways. Some of the most innovative medical advances are emanating from India and Southeast Asia. Despite the global recession, China has displayed a remarkable resilience as its economy continues to experience robust growth. As the American government has slashed NASA’s budget, Russia and others seem to have surpassed us in terms of space

⁵⁵ N.J. Demerath III writes, “In recent years, few terms have enjoyed a quicker transition from social science jargon to popular cliché than ‘globalization.’” Bruce Mazlish, Nayan Chanda, and Kenneth Weisbrode, *The Paradox of a Global USA* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 81.

⁵⁶ Kalu and others, 23.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁸ Discussed in *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* by Thomas Friedman.

exploration, launching a new space race. These global developments are not indicative of America's demise, but rather a concept Fareed Zakaria describes as "the rise of the rest."⁵⁹

While our American society wants to enjoy the benefits of globalization, we're also highly critical of some of the undesired changes that come with it (outsourcing, downsizing, looking to experts in other countries). Ian Tyrrell sums up this phenomenon well: "As the sole hegemonic power of the early twenty-first century, the United States is well known to be a sometimes reluctant participant within the international order of which it is, paradoxically, the chief author and agent."⁶⁰ Zakaria agrees: "Americans rarely benchmark to global standards because they are sure that their way must be the best and most advanced. The result is that they are increasingly suspicious of this emerging global era."⁶¹

The global spread of Christianity fits very well within a discussion of globalization. Dave Gibbons writes, "Just as the spheres of commerce and government are being fundamentally reshaped by globalism, so is the domain of the church."⁶² While the West may have been the geographic center of our faith in recent times (to be discussed later in this section), Christianity has been decentralized as it has moved around the globe in dramatic fashion. Vethanayagamony and Chia explain: "Though previous mission was unidirectional, moving from the Western hemisphere to what were called mission territories, today mission seems to be from everywhere to everywhere."⁶³ Later the authors comment on the irony of the West's involvement in Christianity's global spread: "It was the Christian missionary from the North who first nurtured the seeds of globalization, only to be on the receiving end today on account of reverse missions."⁶⁴ Additionally, Vethanayagamony notes that proof of globalization is evidenced by what has happened in the post-colonial era: "One of the great ironies of our time is that Christianity grew swiftly after the end of colonialism, suggesting Christianity in the 'rest of the world' is a grassroots people's movement rather than a product of Western colonialism."⁶⁵

This global spread of Christianity is having a profound impact on Western missions efforts. Whereas the classic missions paradigm was to send Americans into other cultures, now

⁵⁹ Fareed is the International Editor of *Newsweek* and has most recently written the book, *The Post-American World*.

⁶⁰ Mazlish, Chanda, and Weisbrode, 64.

⁶¹ Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 46.

⁶² Dave Gibbons, *The Monkey and the Fish : Liquid Leadership for a Third-Culture Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009), 34.

⁶³ Kalu and others, xvii.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

the West is receiving an increasing number of foreigners who have been “sent” by other countries to evangelize our post-Christian culture (this will be discussed more at length later in this essay). And Zakaria’s “rise of the rest” could just as easily apply to nationals (those indigenous to their own culture) who are replacing Westerners as the ones best suited to evangelize their own people, plant churches and train leaders. Whereas the “great white American” may have been the only one suited to do this work in the past, times have undeniably changed.

Unfortunately, I would argue that Western missions efforts have largely failed to globalize. The majority of American missions agencies continue to exist for the purpose of sending Westerners into other cultures for long-term service. Churches still maintain missionary rosters that largely reflect the assumption that Americans are the ones best suited to carry the gospel torch into other cultures. American short-term missions service remains a huge industry, although the millions of dollars spent on sending Westerners overseas has failed to translate into greater missions giving or sending of personnel.

A globalization of missions must happen if we are to see the American church play a role in the continuation of Christ’s Great Commission. Missiologist Samuel Escobar explains: “Church planting and evangelization in critical areas such as Islamic countries, eastern Europe or central Asia will require a true internationalization of mission, for which a change of mind is necessary. The radical change to which God’s Word keeps calling us is a change of mindset and attitude.”⁶⁶ Just as business, science, education, technology and just about every other conceivable industry figured out years ago that Americans weren’t the only ones capable of leading forward in these domains, so the church must catch up and embrace the value of truly global mission: one in which we learn, receive and applaud the work of the international community just as readily as endeavor to lead and send. According to Kalu, “Mission is the heartbeat of the church, and the globalization impulse is embedded in the heart of Christianity.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission : The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone*, Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 26.

⁶⁷ Kalu and others, 32.

Religious Pluralism

This is the relatively new but growing notion that all religions are correct and offer a way to God or salvation. But in our increasingly pluralistic society, globalization has taught us to value and affirm all beliefs and worldviews, regardless of their roots, teachings, popularity or even logic. One Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life survey revealed that “Three-quarters of Americans say that many religions can lead to eternal life.”⁶⁸ Dan Kimball affirms this cultural shift toward pluralism: “In the post-Christian era... there are many gods, many faiths, many forms of spiritual expression from which to choose. In a postmodern atmosphere, a person grows up learning that all faiths are equal... pluralism is the norm. Buddhism, Wicca, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, or an eclectic blend—it’s all part of the soil.”⁶⁹

As a growing number of people see the landscape of religions as a level playing field, fewer ascribe to the uniqueness or superiority of Christianity as opposed to any other faith. “A century ago,” writes Stephen Bevans, “there was no doubt of the superiority of Christianity over the other world religions: the modern ‘master narrative’ was in full force.”⁷⁰ But times have changed dramatically: Lamin Sanneh notes that “the post-Christian West is firmly committed to the principle of religious pluralism, and to its corollary of the rejection of Christianity as entitled to any special or exemplary role in the West.”⁷¹ A recent Lifeway Research survey revealed that 61 percent of the unchurched find the God of the Bible to be no different from any other deity found in world religions.⁷²

Needless to say, this rejection of the exclusivity of the Christian faith is having a profound impact on missions. Robertson McQuilkin sums up this challenge: “Post-modern assumptions... have led to a neglect of hell if not its denial. Postmodernism needs to be explored as part of the paradigm shift in ‘missions’ thinking.”⁷³ Academic Knud Jørgensen notes that “Since the late nineteenth century, the following conviction has played a large role in missionary

⁶⁸ “Americans Struggle with Religion’s Role at Home and Abroad”, The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life <http://pewforum.org/press/?ReleaseID=13> (accessed November 10 2008).

⁶⁹ Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church : Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003), 59-60.

⁷⁰ Kalu and others, 6.

⁷¹ Andrew F. Walls and Cathy Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century : Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2008), 138.

⁷² Mark Kelly, “Lifeway Research Unchurched Americans Turned Off by Church, Open to Christians”, LifeWay Research <http://www.lifeway.com/common/clickthru/0,1603,Link%253D238505,00.html?X=/article/?id=166950> (accessed Nov 10 2008).

⁷³ “Responses to Christopher Little’s ‘What Makes Mission Christian?’,” 75.

motivation: those who die without the saving gospel of Christ face an eternity apart from God.”⁷⁴ But the religious milieu in which missions exists today means that fewer people than ever share that conviction. Hesselgrave writes, “As for the Christian mission to people of other religions, in the public arena the very idea of missions is challenged by a pervasive relativism and loss of absolutes, a general misunderstanding of what it means to be tolerant of other faiths, and repeated appeals to be appreciative of religious diversity.”⁷⁵

This tolerance is largely incompatible with the premise of missions which is to share the gospel message in the hopes that others would convert to the Christian faith. Paul Kisau asks, “How can one attempt to convert someone to Christianity seeing that each person is entitled to his or her own beliefs?”⁷⁶ In *Unchristian*, author David Kinnaman offers a similar observation: “Some people contend that Christians should not talk about Jesus at all or send missionaries anywhere, since that might somehow offend people. This is a serious threat to Christianity because it essentially says evangelism can be traded for the path of minimal resistance.” Other influential voices such as Brian McLaren criticize the belief (serving as the ethos of missions) that Christians should invite others to leave their own faith persuasions to join the kingdom.⁷⁷

Compounding the challenges of transitioning missions to the next generation are their religious patterns. It is not just that they gravitate toward pluralism (affirming all religions); an increasing number of Millennials are actually rejecting any form of religion. According to Nancy Gibbs in *Time*, “They are... the least officially religious of any modern generation, and fully one in four has no religious affiliation at all.”⁷⁸

This trend will only result in fewer Millennials embracing missions expressions. Philip Thornton and Jeremy Thornton assess this trend: “Unless young people have a strong conviction that men and women are truly lost without Christ, there is little impetus to tackle the biblical mandate to reach the world with the gospel.”⁷⁹ This will not only impact financial support of missions, but the sending of personnel as well: in *The Changing Face of World Missions*, the authors write, “Christians who have lost the conviction that Christ is unique and the only hope

⁷⁴ Knud Jørgensen, “The Uniqueness of Christ and Committed Pluralism,” *Lausanne World Pulse* March (2010): 8.

⁷⁵ David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict : 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 82.

⁷⁶ Paul Mumo Kisau, “What Postmodernism Means for Evangelism,” *Lausanne World Pulse* February (2007): 10.

⁷⁷ Discussed in Brian’s book *A Generous Orthodoxy*.

⁷⁸ Gibbs, 72.

⁷⁹ Thornton and Thornton: 204.

for salvation and new spiritual life... may be less inclined to serve as missionaries or indeed to witness at all.”⁸⁰

An additional layer to this discussion is that the growing sense of religious pluralism is not just limited to the unchurched, but also includes church goers and even professing Christians. Another Pew Forum survey revealed that 57% of those who attend an evangelical church agreed with the statement “many religions can lead to eternal life.”⁸¹ Consequently, the Church faces an uphill battle in mobilizing the body of Christ to evangelize. How can we commission believers if, according to this survey, over half of the church denies the exclusivity of the Christian message? J.A. Kirk writes, “For some Christians the basic cause of hesitancy about evangelism is due to uncertainty about the truth of the message of Jesus Christ in the light of so many competing claims to truth.”⁸²

The growth in global pluralism also means that it will become increasingly difficult for traditional missions expressions (sending people from one culture into another) to find their footing in other cultures. According to Wilbert Shenk, “Whether or not it is avowedly conversionist in intent, mission is intrusive and disruptive. Sooner or later, either explicitly or implicitly, it questions the status quo, calls for change and proposes an alternative allegiance. Missions is a fundamental threat to accepted values and standards of the culture into which it is inserted.”⁸³ Especially when we encourage people of other cultures to renounce their god for the One of Christianity, it is to be expected that we will encounter pushback and even, at times, outright hostility.

For those missionaries who do continue to venture into different cultures, the religious pluralism they are likely to experience means that they must also adapt their strategies and adopt new ones. In *The Changing Face of World Missions*, the authors explain this challenge: “Missionaries can no longer rely on didactic, cognitive approaches, as if Christianity were a case that could be proven in a court of law or demonstrated by methods suited to the laboratory.”⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rhee, and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions : Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends*, Encountering Missions (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 116.

⁸¹ *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, (Washington D.C.: The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008), 174.

⁸² J. Andrew Kirk, *Mission under Scrutiny : Confronting Contemporary Challenges*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 47.

⁸³ Shenk: 65.

⁸⁴ Pocock, Van Rhee, and McConnell, 107.

Geopolitics

It is indeed an understatement to claim that the world in which historic missions expressions were carried out has changed dramatically. While the aim of biblical missions was never to promote Western values (although numerous missionaries and agencies regrettably chose to do so anyways), most historical missions work was carried out within a global context where Westerners were often perceived favorably. Today, however, a growing part of the world is rejecting what they have considered to be Western imperialism. Zakaria explains: “In many countries outside the Western world, there is pent-up frustration with having had to accept an entirely Western or American narrative of world history—one in which they either are miscast or remain bit players.”⁸⁵ Richard Haas, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, wrote “(America) is still the single most powerful entity in the world. But the United States cannot dominate, much less dictate, and expect that others will follow.”⁸⁶

Also, with dislike of the United States still running rampant around the globe, American missionaries often have the added disadvantage of being labeled as perpetuators of Western interests. Robert Woodberry explains this “popular perception about missions—namely, that historically the missions movement was the handmaiden of colonialism and an existential enemy of indigenous cultures.”⁸⁷ Similarly, in many parts of the world, Christianity is seen as a “western religion” and Jesus Christ as a western political figure.

Whereas many countries once issued missionary visas to virtually any foreigner who asked, this is no longer the case. Today there is a decreasing number of countries where American missionaries can work and move freely, and in some countries their work is conducted strictly underground out of fear for their safety. In the past two years, I have seen six of our church’s American missionaries forced to either relocate or leave the mission field altogether due to geopolitical issues. More have had issues with visa renewals and residency permits, some of whom live with ongoing uncertainty as to whether or not they will be able to remain in the country to which they believe God has called them. Numerous countries refuse missionaries

⁸⁵ Zakaria, 34.

⁸⁶ Richard N. Haas, “The World That Awaits,” *Newsweek*, 11/3/08 2008.

⁸⁷ Robert D. Woodberry, “Reclaiming the M-Word: The Legacy of Missions in Non-Western Societies,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25, no. 1 (2008): 17.

altogether⁸⁸ (many of which are in the 10/40 Window⁸⁹), and even more restrict their movement. Even in countries as large as India, most American missionary visa requests are denied.⁹⁰

What further compounds the issue is the increase of terrorism around the globe. Ongoing terrorist attacks emphasize the volatility of the world in which we live. According to Philip Thornton and Jeremy Thornton, “Add to that the turmoil of the Middle East, the recent move to the left in some Latin American countries, tensions with North Korea and the threat of terrorism all over the world and, indeed, our planet has become a threatening place for many young persons considering cross-cultural service.”⁹¹ Additionally, Escobar adds that “missionaries will have to expect less and less in terms of support or protection from their government as they travel and engage in mission.”⁹²

Christianity’s Transition Away from the West

William Hocking wrote that “Christianity must not be thought of as solely the religion of the West... Christianity is not western, but universally human.”⁹³ While in 1932 that statement may have been received with some resistance (given how prominent America was in global missions efforts at the time), it clearly reflected the global shift that had already begun earlier in the twentieth century. More recently, Alister McGrath noted that “the numerical center of Christianity, including Protestantism, shifted decisively away from the West between 1900 and 2000.”⁹⁴ In *The Changing Face of World Missions*, the authors write, “The pendulum has swung from a majority of the world’s Christians living in the West to a majority of them now living outside it.”⁹⁵ Jehu Hanciles adds, “It is now a commonplace that global Christianity experienced an epochal demographic shift in the last half a century. The shift is the product of two

⁸⁸ According to the Urbana website (<http://www.urbana.org>), 84% of the world is closed to missionaries.

⁸⁹ From the Joshua Project’s website (<http://www.joshuaproject.net/10-40-window.php>): “The 10/40 Window is the rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude... (It) includes the majority of the world’s Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. An estimated 4.04 billion individuals residing in approximately 7,220 distinct people groups are in the 10/40 Window.” Also, there is a great map on *Time* magazine’s website: <http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101030630/map/>.

⁹⁰ One of our missionaries mentioned that American missionary visas are no longer issued, but I have yet to substantiate this statement. If so, this could be seen as a huge setback to the western missionary enterprise.

⁹¹ Thornton and Thornton: 205.

⁹² Escobar, 73.

⁹³ Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry. Commission of Appraisal. and Hocking, 8.

⁹⁴ Alister E. McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea : The Protestant Revolution-- a History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 439-440.

⁹⁵ Pocock, Van Rhee, and McConnell, 134.

extraordinary trends: massive recession from the faith in Western societies (the traditional heartlands) and phenomenal growth in non-Western societies within Southern continents (notably Africa, Latin America, the Pacific, and parts of Asia).”⁹⁶ And this trend is only projected to continue: a report for the Lausanne 2004 Forum on World Evangelization found that in 1900, 70% of all the world’s Christians lived in Europe and that 81% of all Christians were White. However, these figures are projected to reflect a dramatic change: by 2025, only 20% of the world’s Christians will live in Europe, and only 30% of the world’s Christians will be white.⁹⁷

In fact, numerous findings reveal that while Christianity is in decline in the West, it is flourishing in many other places around the world. Missiologists such as Andrew Walls and Philip Jenkins have written extensively about Christianity’s transition from the West and the North to the *Global South*. Gerald Pillay comments on this significant shift: “In our post-colonial, post-imperial times we have lived through what mission historians have identified as a ‘shift of the center of gravity’ of world Christianity, from the North to the South and from the West to the East. Christianity has ceased in our time to be a predominantly white or European religion. It is now a world religion in the fullest sense, with the majority representation coming from cultures outside of Europe and North America.”⁹⁸ According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, “The center of gravity of Christianity continues to shift southward. In 2005, 62.5% of all Christians live in the South, by 2025 this will increase to 70%.”⁹⁹ And Chong Kim adds even more definition, referring to this shift as “The massive movement towards Christian faith in the global South, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, most of Asia, and the Pacific Islands. *For the first time, Christians from the South outnumber their brethren in the North*”¹⁰⁰ (emphasis mine).

It stands to reason that future expressions of Christianity will become increasingly reflective of their non-Western audience. Walls summarizes: “We seem to stand at the threshold of a new age of Christianity, one in which its main base will be in the Southern continents, and where its dominant expressions will be filtered through the culture of those countries. Once

⁹⁶ Walls and Ross, 126.

⁹⁷ Todd M. Johnson, Peter F. Crossing, and Bobby Jangsun Ryu, “Looking Forward: An Overview of World Evangelization, 2005-2025,” in *Lausanne 2004 Forum on World Evangelization* (Center for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2004), 8.

⁹⁸ Walls and Ross, 168.

⁹⁹ Johnson, Crossing, and Ryu, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Kim: 17.

again, Christianity has been saved for the world by its diffusion across cultural lines.”¹⁰¹ Gene Daniels writes, “The Western Church is rapidly losing numerical superiority and global Christianity is looking more and more like the Majority World religion it was in the beginning.”¹⁰² Similarly, Vethanayagamony and Chia have noted that “to associate (Christianity) with any particular culture or continent would not only be naïve but also a gross injustice.”¹⁰³ And Sweet describes well the new face of Christendom: “The statistical center of Christianity today is in Timbuktu, Mali. The language of Christianity today is Spanish; the color of Christianity today is not white but brown; there are more Christian churches in India today than in the United States.”¹⁰⁴ Even within the United States this shift is becoming more visible: one study reported that “The fastest growing churches in North America and Europe are led by Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans.”¹⁰⁵

Much of the world is welcoming this trend with open arms, especially since it is fostering greater contextualization of the gospel into specific cultures. Younglae Kim explains from a Korean perspective: “To reorient the church means to point it toward the East—to the churches of Asia—in hopes of freeing its ecclesiology, soteriology, Christology, and so on from Western captivity.”¹⁰⁶ This reorientation will help steer Christianity away from the perception that it is an American or Western religion, or one that is somehow encumbered with a particular political or cultural persuasion. Christianity is becoming even more global in nature, with patterns of growth and health taking place despite little to no Western presence. In regards to the recent expansion of global Christianity, Mark Wampler writes, “There have been no impositions from the world’s ‘great powers,’ no massive mission crusade, and no Western agenda that has been the cause of this shift.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Andrew Walls, “Culture and Coherence in Christian History,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 9, no. 3 (1984): 215.

¹⁰² Gene Daniels, “Decoupling Missionary Advance from Western Culture,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (2009): 427.

¹⁰³ Kalu and others, xvii.

¹⁰⁴ Sweet, *The Church of the Perfect Storm*, 14.

¹⁰⁵ Johnson, Crossing, and Ryu, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Sweet, *The Church of the Perfect Storm*, 72.

¹⁰⁷ Mark Wampler, “A Gospel of Many Colors: Converting Christianity from the Hold of the West,” *Neue Quarterly* 2 (2009): 56.

This transition away from the West may very well be permanent. Many missiologists have arrived at conclusions identical to that of Peter Vethanayagamony: “The future of Christianity seems to lie not in the West but rather in the non-Western parts of the globe.”¹⁰⁸

Lack of Consensus Over Missions Definition and Practice

While Christianity experiences phenomenal growth in some other parts of the world—even to the point that some countries are poised to soon overtake America as the largest missionary sending countries—we continue to struggle with and debate over models and methodologies. We argue over proclamation vs. demonstration, Western-sent missionaries vs. nationals, short-term vs. long-term... and these are only a few of the issues with which we grapple. Missiologist Steve Hawthorne acknowledges the crossroads missions is at: “We are left without a clear vision of what God’s mission will bring about in this age. This is why I think we are experiencing a drift... We are groping for hope.”¹⁰⁹ He adds, “We are groping for a narrative, a coherent story that is focused as something sourced, fulfilled by, and enjoyed by God, and yet at the same time, is a story of the war for, and redemption of, humankind and indeed, all the earth.”¹¹⁰

McGrath adds, “A Darwinian restlessness is evident within Protestantism. New forms are emerging in response to rapidly changing cultures and environments and the religious and social needs of the moment.”¹¹¹ What is hindering the Church from embracing and celebrating these new forms? Three of the primary obstacles are discussed below:

The Growing Divide Between Word and Deed

For the most, the history of global missions has reflected a fairly balanced, holistic approach that extended the gospel message through word and deed. Both are championed in Scripture, and Jesus’ ministry demonstrates both in perfect balance. The early Christians very clearly grasped this holistic emphasis. As described well in books such as *The Rise of Christianity* by Rodney Stark, early Christians made such an impact on the world around them through their holistic focus even in the case of persecution. Bosch offered a similar reflection:

¹⁰⁸ Kalu and others, 59.

¹⁰⁹ “Responses to Christopher Little’s ‘What Makes Mission Christian?’,” 77.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 79.

¹¹¹ McGrath, 457.

“Small wonder that the early Christian community caused so much astonishment in the Roman Empire and beyond... In fact, the Christian community and its faith was so different from anything known in the ancient world that it often made no sense to others.”¹¹²

For centuries to come, Christians largely understood the Great Commission as a charge to be fulfilled holistically. As the Christian faith jumped from the Middle East to Europe and then across the Atlantic to America, there was a sense that proclamation and demonstration were necessary and inseparable expressions of the Great Commission. Richard Stearns writes, “Prior to the twentieth century, the integration of faith and works as essential ingredients to Christian character and mission was largely understood.”¹¹³

Things changed with the dawn of the twentieth century. As enlightenment fueled the spread of liberalism across the West, there was a growing desire to de-emphasize the gospel message in outreach efforts. Richard Stearns explains what happened: “Liberals within the Church, as well as the wider society, began to attack historic, biblical Christianity. This liberal faction no longer saw the Church’s mission as ‘saving souls’ but rather, transforming society through humanitarianism—in other words, a ‘social gospel’ based on works.”¹¹⁴ Graham Gordon adds, “The social gospel movement was most closely associated with both the liberalism of the time and an optimism about how far society could be transformed.”¹¹⁵

Fundamentalists reacted strongly to a growing trend in evangelism to primarily the meeting of physical and social needs. Bosch summarizes: “The spirit of rationalism, secularism, humanism, and relativism increasingly invaded the church and began subtly to undermine the very idea of preaching a message of eternal salvation to people who would otherwise be doomed.”¹¹⁶ There was an urgency to recapturing a sense of evangelism as proclamation—placing a high priority on the salvation of people from eternal punishment. The meeting of social needs took a back seat to the church’s focus, as involvement in such work might indicate a compromise of the core gospel message. McGrath writes, “In the 1920s and 1930s, fundamentalism turned its back on any attempt at social outreach.”¹¹⁷

¹¹² Bosch, 48.

¹¹³ Richard Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 200.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 200-201.

¹¹⁵ Graham Gordon, *What If You Got Involved? Taking a Stand against Social Injustice* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003), 98.

¹¹⁶ Bosch, 340.

¹¹⁷ McGrath, 397.

As liberals embraced the social gospel, fundamentalists clung tightly to the spoken gospel. Before long, a schism had emerged within the church, with both camps (fundamental and liberal) claiming different responsibilities in fulfilling the Great Commission. This may not have been biblical, but each side knew its priorities. Bosch commented on this historic divorce: “By the end of the nineteenth century the rift between conservative (or fundamentalist) mission advocates on the one hand and the liberals (or social gossellers) on the other was becoming ever wider.”¹¹⁸

This dichotomy has largely remained in place for the past century. According to Stearns, “This same basic debate has seesawed back and forth within the Church ever since, with the pendulum swinging more toward faith in some groups and, in certain times, more towards works in others. But faith and works were never meant to be in dichotomy.”¹¹⁹ He adds, “It’s easy to see how this dividing of the gospel left both sides with only half a gospel, that is, a gospel with a hole in it, as each became satisfied with their particular piece. But this diminution of the whole gospel left both camps with just a shadow of the tremendous power of the good news proclaimed by Jesus. His gospel encompassed not only the forgiveness of sins and the saving of our souls but also the fullness of the coming kingdom of God through a society transformed by His followers.”¹²⁰

Additionally, Craig Borlase offers this summary of the division that remains today:

“There are those who suggest that the only way to do it properly is to tell people about faith. Loudly. And often. For this camp, it becomes all about the words: words that persuade of the truth, words that will form into a simple prayer which must be prayed if eternal salvation is to be guaranteed. The others favor more action and less talk. They’re the spiritual equivalent of badgers, with a faith that is surprisingly quiet and keeps its teeth well hidden. To the guys in the words camp, they’re the liberals—the postmodern relativists who have robbed Christianity of its guts, leaving it pallid and struggling on the roadside. The truth is that both camps have gotten some things right. Both have gotten some things wrong. And both exist on the fringes of dualistic thinking where Christianity so often gets dragged, but in which it so often fails to thrive.”¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Bosch, 297.

¹¹⁹ Stearns, 198.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 201.

¹²¹ Craig Borlase, “Service or Evangelism?,” *Neue Quarterly* 1 (2008): 97.

Others share this dissatisfaction with the dichotomy that has persisted in the American church. Bosch wrote, “In a world in which people are dependent on each other and every individual exists within a web of inter-human relationships, it is totally untenable to limit salvation to the individual and his or her personal relationship with God. Hatred, injustice, oppression, war, and other forms of violence are manifestations of evil; concern for humaneness, for the conquering of famine, illness, and meaninglessness is part of the salvation for which we hope and labor.”¹²²

Unwillingness to Change

While our globalized world continues to change at a breakneck pace, the methods the western Church uses to reach the world largely remain the same. Engel and Dyrness comment: “The world has changed, whereas the church and its agencies, to a disturbing degree, continue to act as if nothing has changed.”¹²³ Later, they add, “The missions momentum from North America and much of the remaining Western world is functioning within theological paradigms and resulting ministry practices dating back prior to the dawn of the twentieth century.”¹²⁴

For example, mission agencies largely continue to recruit new missionaries using methodologies from a different era. Pocock, Van Rheezen and McConnell describe this as a “colossal paradox.” They write, “Moderns are training postmoderns... cognitivists are mentoring experiential; propositionists are equipping narrativists. Consequently, many of the old models are being challenged publicly and privately.”¹²⁵

What further highlights the “stuck” nature of missions is how much the rest of the world has changed. While Christianity’s center of gravity has clearly moved to the Global South, much of the Western missionary enterprise refuses to believe that we have lost our role of prominence in the missions matrix. According to Vethanayagamony, “The territorial ‘from the West to the Rest’ model, which predominated the Western missionary movement (1492-1950), still holds sway in the thinking of Christians, though Christian mission has been rethought substantially during the past half century.”¹²⁶ As he (and many other missiologists) describes the growth of Christianity in the Global South, he adds, “The door is slowly but steadily swinging shut on

¹²² Bosch, 397.

¹²³ Engel and Dyrness, 17.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 24.

¹²⁵ Pocock, Van Rheezen, and McConnell, 176.

¹²⁶ Kalu and others, 60.

North Americans who are reluctant to recognize that the Two-Thirds World and its churches now lie at the very center of world missions influence and initiative.”¹²⁷ Similarly, Engel and Dyrness point out that “power, leadership and influence in world missions circles have been shifting for several decades away from North America and Europe.”¹²⁸

Additionally, the reality of our world today is that many Western missions efforts are viewed from the lenses of a mistrust toward Americans. According to Daniels, “All too often, Christian mission is seen as serving the interests of Western cultural imperialism.”¹²⁹ He adds, “Many Western missionaries seem quite unaware that our careless cultural imperialism is causing more resistance to our mission than the facts of the gospel themselves.”¹³⁰

Until the West comes to terms with the “new day” that has dawned in missions, we will continue to cling to outdated models, watching the American church become even more disconnected from missions. Kenneth Ross writes, “There is need for new models to interpret and give coherence to new patterns of mission for a new century... Common to different schools of thought is an acknowledgment that the old wineskins are no longer holding the new wine of the Gospel and that new wineskins are required.”¹³¹ The greatest challenge we face in the West is the adoption of these new wineskins, as settling for course corrections and incremental change will only ensure the continued decline of missions within the American church.

Fear of New Models

Alongside our unwillingness to change is the fear that comes with unknown or unfamiliar paradigms. Some simply fear the fact that Christianity is no longer a Western, white person’s religion (not that it ever was, but it is the perception to which many have clung).

Vethanayagamony explains this challenge: “Some white people find it difficult to accept that these Christians are more likely to be people with darker skin color and from poor nations, as opposed to the stereotypical white person in rich Western nations.”¹³²

¹²⁷ Engel and Dyrness, 21.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹²⁹ Daniels: 427.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 422.

¹³¹ Kenneth R. Ross, “The Centenary of Edinburgh 1910: Its Possibilities,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 4 (2006): 178.

¹³² Kalu and others, 61.

The fear this produces is not as much a resistance to diversity as much as it is about the fact that America is no longer at the center of the Christian universe. Vethanayagamony adds, “For centuries the Western church has been the repository of Christian faith and its authoritative expositor; now it must undergo a mental revolution if it is to recognize that Christianity’s center of gravity has shifted to the South. It is quite unfortunate that many Western churches are too perplexed to come to terms with the fact that the real center of Christianity is now located in the non-Western world.”¹³³ Wampler adds, “The end of Western influence as the dominant worldview may at first appear scary and riddled with danger—a decline that should be fought against. It is, after all, the only view that many of us know.”¹³⁴

The crossroads of where missions stands today was echoed, almost prophetically, by the late David Bosch nearly twenty years ago: he described our need of “a new understanding of mission. We live in a period of transition, on the borderline between a paradigm that no longer satisfies and one that is, to a large extent, still amorphous and opaque.”¹³⁵ More recently, Daniels has written, “We too are on the verge of a new era in world mission, but need a bit of a push to move outside our comfort zone and reach for it.”¹³⁶ Engel and Dyrness also affirm the widespread acknowledgement that missions models must change, but acknowledge the fear and resistance that accompany a step into the unknown: “There is no mistaking the fact that Western world missions is facing a clouded future... today’s dilemma is only a symptom of a much deeper problem—inability to cope with changing paradigms.”¹³⁷

Gibbons writes, “Globalism applies to the many colossal shifts occurring in the world today because of an intense interdependence that countries, cultures, and people are experiencing with one another.”¹³⁸ Ironically, considering all the talk about globalism and globalization within missions circles, the reality is that many American missions efforts continue to resist the interdependence Gibbons mentions. Somehow the mindset lingers that American missionaries continue to be the ones best suited to reach other cultures with the gospel message.

Historically, much of our American missions thinking has revolved around us as the sender and initiator, with the rest of the world as the benefactor of our global outreach. With so

¹³³ Ibid., 68.

¹³⁴ Wampler: 52.

¹³⁵ Bosch, 366.

¹³⁶ Daniels: 420.

¹³⁷ Engel and Dyrness, 145-146.

¹³⁸ Gibbons, 34.

many of our missions approaches rooted in an American-centric worldview, some will inevitably be threatened by missions expressions independent of our involvement or control. Wampler writes, “The idea of African or Asian churches sending missionaries to America makes us skeptical and maybe even a little angry. ‘Why would we need missionaries here?’ we say. ‘Aren’t we the ones who are supposed to be sending the missionaries?’ But we must learn to actually believe that, yes, we do need missionaries here.”¹³⁹

One great area of change (still met with resistance in many missions circles) concerns the growing trend toward supporting nationals. The modern missions movement would not have been possible apart from the faithful and sacrificial work of people like William Carey, Hudson Taylor and Amy Carmichael. But as we have evangelized other people groups and raised up national leaders, we have been slow to empower and release them to take over the work. In *Changing the Mind of Missions*, Engel and Dyrness discuss having met with numerous leaders in the two-thirds world. They found that “a strong Western presence inhibits development of indigenous resources, both people and funding, and maintains an unhealthy dependence on the outside.”¹⁴⁰ They add that the ongoing presence of westerners, in many cases, “curb the initiatives of the indigenous church and perpetuate the longstanding image of Western domination.”¹⁴¹

Even one of the great frontiers in missions, technology (which will be discussed later in this dissertation), represents change and fear for some. Sandra Lee writes, “Some traditionally-minded churches and mission organizations seem to approach emergent digital technologies with fear or reluctance. As a result, they often lag behind the creative work of businesses and people who have embraced these new mediums, seizing the opportunities to communicate to new audiences and to grow in innovative directions.”¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Wampler: 56.

¹⁴⁰ Engel and Dyrness, 20.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁴² Sandra Lee, “Engaging in the Digital Age: Harnessing Its Power for Good,” *Lausanne World Pulse* October/November (2009): 34.

SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Pastor and academic Stephen Davis asks, “How can we communicate the unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of a changing world? This is one of the great missiological questions of our day.” There are a number of various solutions currently being discussed that address this question of missions in the American church and where, specifically, we go from here. This section will explore four options:

Continue Current Missions Practices

Some would argue that the global missions efforts of the past (driven primarily by the West) have been largely successful and will continue to serve the church well in the future (the largest component of this solution is a continued emphasis on the sending of American missionaries into other cultures). Ralph Winter predicted that “traditional Western mission agencies will continue to be healthy into the foreseeable future”,¹ reflecting the optimism some have that the Western missionary enterprise will continue uninterrupted. Thus, some feel that global missions efforts will continue to be primarily Western-driven and that the bulk of the missionary force will continue to be Western.

Not surprisingly, to proponents of this view, the idea of making key changes to missions practices is usually something to resist. Representing a dissonant voice toward change, Keith Eitel asserts that “We live in a time of dangerous creativity in missionary circles.”²

But statistics project a sharp decline both in personnel willing to go and dollars given to missions, trends that do not seem to support the effectiveness or logic of continuing current missions practices. Moreau, Corwin and McGee offer one large reason why: “North American Christians are seeing the retirement (and expiration) of a generation that was more financially committed and the subsequent transfer of wealth to a generation known for its greed rather than its generosity.”³

Additionally, Engel and Dyrness respond to the desire of many to see missions as a primarily Western-driven endeavor: “Though well-intended, the efforts once again often curb the

¹ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 198.

² *Ibid.*, 34.

³ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, 283.

initiatives of the indigenous church and perpetuate the longstanding image of Western domination.”⁴ Daniels agrees: “Today many Western missionaries seem quite unaware that our careless cultural imperialism is causing more resistance to our mission than the facts of the gospel themselves. As the great juggernaut steams ahead, running over whatever gets in its way, Christian mission is perceived as part of the ‘Western package deal’ and not without reason missionaries are often a bit fuzzy on this matter themselves.”⁵ Engel and Dyrness add, “Contemporary missions retain, one might say, a kind of structural hangover that continues to impede a genuine openness to the work of God.”⁶

Another challenge is that the bulk of current missions efforts are reaching not the unreached, but those who are already *reached*. Missiologist Peter Law notes that “Over seventy percent of all missionaries sent out into the world today are going to Christian cultures where the gospel has been faithfully preached for generations.”⁷ Author and editor Justin Long echoes this concern: “The reality is that the majority of cross-cultural missionaries are still focused on areas largely claiming to be Christian: Protestants evangelizing Catholics, Catholics evangelizing Orthodox and everyone evangelizing marginals. Less than 10% are focused on places traditionally thought to be non-Christian or anti-Christian.”⁸ If we are largely failing to advance the cause of the Great Commission, then it merits significant changes on our part lest we ignore Christ’s call to truly go to the *ends of the earth*.

Yet another challenge, as discussed earlier in this essay, concerns the rapidly shifting nature and face of Christianity. Current practices largely assume a paradigm that Christianity is still Western-centric, although statistics reveal that the growth of the faith is clearly occurring outside the West. Vethanayagamony and Chia explain: “While in the past one might have regarded Christianity as a Western or European religion, today it is no longer the case... (it is) by and large becoming post-Western... its empire has all but crumbled with the fall of the European colonial empires.”⁹ Engel and Dyrness add, “The truth is that power, leadership and influence in

⁴ Engel and Dyrness, 21.

⁵ Daniels: 422.

⁶ Engel and Dyrness, 46.

⁷ Peter Law, “Evangelism and Church Planting: Implementing the Ministry Multiplication Cycle,” *Lausanne World Pulse* August (2008): 7.

⁸ Justin Long, “Increasing Momentum for Unreached People Groups,” *Lausanne World Pulse* September (2005): 20.

⁹ Kalu and others, xvii.

world missions circles have been shifting for several decades away from North America and Europe.”¹⁰

Not surprisingly, the dominant expressions of missions are increasingly being found outside the West. There is an increasing number of countries who once only *received* missionaries that are now sending *out* missionaries. David Hesselgrave writes, “Some authorities believe that more missionaries are being sent from these formerly receiving nations than from all Western nations combined.”¹¹ In *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Gary Corwin affirms the “vigorous trend toward higher and higher percentages of the global missionary force coming from the South and East rather than the North and West.”¹² Unfortunately there are many American churches and missions agencies that have yet to acknowledge this reality. Wampler writes, “This growth has been slowly building for decades, like a powerful volcano. The West has largely failed to see the magnitude and significance of God’s movements in our world.”¹³

It is my conviction that maintaining the status quo in missions is incompatible with a world that is changing at an increasingly rapid pace. World Christianity is changing, and our response in the world of missions can and must acknowledge this quantum shift. Missiologist Lon Allison acknowledges, “I know a major ‘turn’ is coming for the global evangelical movement. I am not clear when or even how it will occur—only that it will and should.”¹⁴

Transition American Missions to Our Local Mission Field

Douglas Shaw writes, “The emerging trend for church missions is to step into mission opportunities *in your own backyard*.”¹⁵ The idea of missions as being primarily local is not a new one, but remains an ongoing value held by many. The reasoning usually is something to the effect of, “Why send our people and resources thousands of miles away when there are needs/unreached people in our own backyard?” It is true that many churches do, indeed, direct their efforts internationally while, at the same time, there is little or no outreach to the local

¹⁰ Engel and Dyrness, 20.

¹¹ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict : 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today*, 231-232.

¹² Corwin: 141.

¹³ Wampler: 52.

¹⁴ Lon Allison, “Wanted: A Gps for Global Mission,” *Lausanne World Pulse* July (2009): 1.

¹⁵ Douglas Shaw, “The Gospel & International Studies: Can We Make the Connection?,” *Lausanne World Pulse* May (2010): 18.

community. Gibbons asks, “How are we being international if we’re not making a significant difference among the local people groups?”¹⁶

This argument is also bolstered by the fact that America is quickly becoming a post-Christian culture and, as many would argue, needs to be evangelized/reached just as much as anywhere else. Winter explained this modern paradox in missions: “In all of our commendable haste to get to the ends of the earth and to the last group that has never heard the gospel, we may be overlooking the fact that the vast bulk of the Western world no longer believes in the Bible and no longer follows our faith.” He adds, “We have been successful to a degree in tracking down the last unreached people on the face of the earth, but we face a considerable shortfall in maintaining our faith among educated people.”¹⁷ The implied concern is that it may very well be irresponsible to try to maintain a global outreach when the greatest spiritual needs are on our own domestic soil.

Consequently, a growing number of missiologists are emphasizing the need for the American church to make Jerusalem (our local mission field) our primary missions focus. As Frost and Hirsch argue, this is due to the critical season in which the church finds itself: “The church in the West must become a missionary church in its own milieu if the church is to survive.”¹⁸ Martin Robertson adds, “It is necessary for the church to rethink its stance entirely and to become a missionary church within the West.”¹⁹

Also, our focus tends to default to the needs right around us (the old adage “out of sight, out of mind” usually holds true). Stearns explains this tension: “For some reason we are wired in such a way that we can become almost indifferent to tragedies that are far away from us emotionally, socially, or geographically, but when the same tragedy happens to us or someone close to us, everything changes.”²⁰ Kimball speaks to the need for balance and makes this observation: “A church doesn’t need a missions department if its people think of everyone in the church as being on a mission, both locally and globally.”²¹ But even in a highly missional church, the default perspective will be more focused on opportunities within our field of view as

¹⁶ Gibbons, 62.

¹⁷ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 187.

¹⁸ Frost and Hirsch, 81.

¹⁹ Martin Robinson, *To Win the West* (London: Monarch Books, 1996).

²⁰ Stearns, 108.

²¹ Kimball, 287.

opposed to something that is thousands of miles away. The needs in our own backyard are much more visible than those located a continent, an ocean or even a world away.

Thus, I claim that in order to for the local church to be intentional about missions, we must have a ministry that is intentionally focused on the global domain. Pooling our efforts to reach our Jerusalem is important, but only fulfills part of what Christ called us to do. We must remain proactive in reaching all the world, utilizing the tools and calling God has provided to reach beyond our own borders. Whether the ministry involves a full-time paid position or instead a think tank of volunteers, we cannot expect that people will default to global issues as easily as they lean toward local issues. However, the missions leadership must not ever function in isolation, but must rather ensure that its global focus is owned by the entire church and integrated throughout.

Embrace Missions Expressions that Are Primarily Socially and Cause-Oriented

Perhaps fewer trends have been more dramatic in recent years than our culture's push for all things humanitarian and cause-oriented. Churches, schools and businesses alike have scrambled to jump on the bandwagon to meet global needs. Will Sampson summarizes: "Suddenly social justice is all the rage."²² Morgan Hansow adds, "We live in an age when humanitarianism, philanthropy and international awareness have moved from completely off the radar to right in the spotlight."²³ And according to Gibbons, "Hardly a day goes by when we don't hear in the news of another example of how much the younger generation in America—and people of all ages throughout the world—cares about social justice, about living for the common good."²⁴

Not surprisingly, this rise in cause emphasis correlates in many ways with a decreased focus on evangelism and more traditional missions approaches within the American church. Schreiter summarizes this trend: "In recent years, a dialogue of social action has come to take a special precedence over the other forms."²⁵ Voices such as Reggie McNeal's point out that these cause-oriented expressions create a greater receptivity for the faith: "I make the assertion that

²² Will Samson, "A Step toward Practical Justice," *Neue Quarterly* 2 (2009): 59.

²³ Morgan Hansow, "Africa Is Not That Sexy," *Relevant*, Nov/Dec 2009, 26.

²⁴ Gibbons, 98.

²⁵ Kalu and others, 22.

demonstration has eclipsed proclamation as the way of gaining a hearing for the gospel.”²⁶ And Vethanayagamony and Chia point out that “more agencies are engaged in short-term missions built around social services rather than proclamation.”²⁷

Sweet describes the trend as one that is also related to the trajectory of the American church: “Many Christian churches are themselves post-Christian, with meager interest in evangelism, with little faith in the Christian tradition itself, but lots of interest in political activism of the liberal persuasion.”²⁸ Even many of the people I have talked to (particularly youth and young adults) have either a negative perception toward evangelism in missions or, as I see increasingly, lack a cognitive category for it entirely.²⁹

Decades ago, William Hocking commented on the unfulfilling nature of missions expressions that are largely evangelistic and little else: “The organization of churches and the zeal to proselytize into them members who could be counted in statistics and reported to boards at home have in many cases defeated the central business of missionary purpose. The convert has been prematurely hurried into a church as though it were a terminus and an end in itself, when what he rather needed was an enlarged view and outlook of life and friendly help and guidance to take the slow steps which would lead on into a more robust moral and spiritual life.”³⁰

A growing number of people today believe that the pursuit of God’s mission should look far different: not primarily evangelistic but one that takes “an enlarged view and outlook of life” as Hocking discussed (see preceding paragraph). Melba Maggay offers a similar assessment: “Many of our enterprises as communities of evangelical faith are centered on ‘evangelism’, narrowly understood as proclaiming salvation for the hereafter and getting people to come to our side and believe what we believe. Yet Jesus’ understanding of what it means to truly obey God has little to do with getting people to assent to our creeds or other such propositions. To follow God is to love him with passion and, similarly, to love our neighbor with the same care and total attention that we shower on ourselves.”³¹ Missiologist C. René Padilla adds, “The practice of

²⁶ Reggie McNeal and Leadership Network (Dallas Tex.), *Missional Renaissance : Changing the Scorecard for the Church*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 57.

²⁷ Kalu and others, xix.

²⁸ Sweet, *The Church of the Perfect Storm*, 22.

²⁹ In the largely unchurched Silicon Valley where I live, many aren’t even familiar with the term *evangelism* outside of tech circles. There has been a trend lately toward the term *evangelist* for those active with sales and marketing in the tech world: *Technical Evangelist* and *Product Evangelist* are job titles viewed also as badges of honor for those on the “front lines” of promoting a company’s product or services.

³⁰ Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry. Commission of Appraisal. and Hocking, 109.

³¹ Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century : Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, 46-47.

justice is at the center of God's purpose for human life. It is so closely related to the worship of the living God as the only true God that no act of worship is acceptable to Him unless it is accompanied by concrete acts of justice on the human level."³²

Since the evangelical church has largely missed this sense of holistic mission, some would argue, the time for change and even repentance is now. Rebecca Loveless writes, "There needs to be an appropriate measure of sorrow over our ignorance and lack of involvement with justice."³³ Even well-known missiologists such as Engel and Dyrness comment on our historically monochromatic and incomplete approach to missions: "We have to a disturbing degree missed the full richness of the Great Commission by our single-minded focus on evangelism."³⁴ Similarly, author Jon Jeffrey Palmer acknowledges that the Church has traditionally been "keen on people hearing and responding to the gospel, but less interested in the impact that the gospel has on their lives, families, and communities."³⁵

We must not be content with any definition or expression of missions that does not affirm and practice both proclamation and demonstration. To only pursue one over the other is to commit the same sin of omission that we in the American church have tolerated for so long. I agree with Palmer's contention: "Our passion for seeing people come to a saving faith in Christ Jesus is entwined and inseparable with our compassion for them as people and their situations."³⁶ He adds, "I pray that we learn to take off the blinders of modern dualism and see the world through the eyes of Jesus, having a passion for souls inseparable from a compassion for people."³⁷ J.M. Terry adds that "the dichotomy between evangelism and social ministry is a false one. In fact the two emphases can combine to produce a ministry that is true to the Scriptures and effective."³⁸

The other response concerns what some would see as the lack of a clear salvific intent and message behind cause ministry and acts of compassion. Their primary argument is that engaging only in good works (without proclamation) is inadequate for pointing someone toward

³² Brian McLaren, Elisa Padilla, and Ashley Bunting Seeber, *The Justice Project* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 23.

³³ Rebecca Loveless, "The Mis-Education of Missions: Redefining Missions for Long-Term Change," *Neue Quarterly* 3 (2009): 75.

³⁴ Engel and Dyrness, 22.

³⁵ Jon Jeffrey Palmer, "Evangelism as a Whole: A Passion for Souls with Compassion for People," *Lausanne World Pulse* October (2008): 20.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁸ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 236.

salvation in Christ. Escobar explains: “We cannot serve in the name of Christ without at some point offering a reason for our commitment and pointing to the source of our motivation and the strength and power that keeps us going.”³⁹

Keep Evangelism the Primary Focus of American Missions

Some have argued that the emphasis moving forward in missions must remain on evangelism. William Hocking wrote in 1932, “For the idea that the missionary’s task not only begins with the proclamation of the message, but also ends there, has remained solidly entrenched in the minds of many missionaries.”⁴⁰ Later, The Congress on the Church’s Worldwide Mission (Wheaton Congress, 1966) affirmed the scriptural basis for social justice, but declared that evangelism was still primary to missions. Doug Birdsall notes that “the need to highlight the importance of the verbal communication of the gospel message, of person-to-person communication in real time, cannot be reiterated enough.”⁴¹ Winter has written that “we (as Evangelicals) are still mainly in the business of sharing the faith, a faith that does not include much of a mission beyond converts converting still others.”⁴²

Many Christian denominations have upheld the primacy of missions focused largely on evangelism, leader training and church planting. Their interpretation of the Great Commission is largely focused on spreading the message of Christ around the world so that as many as possible might be saved. Hesselgrave writes, “Traditionally, most missions have usually thought of (needs-focused missions) as ‘secondary,’ ‘supporting,’ or ‘related.’ Priority has been given to preaching the gospel, winning people to Christ, and growing responsible churches.”⁴³

Key arguments for the primacy of evangelism in missions include those of Rev. Dr. Nii Amoo Darku who points out that “those who would benefit from the gospel and be affected by its power must first hear the message.”⁴⁴ Mike Barnett adds that “regardless of how and when we serve, we have not fulfilled the Great Commission unless and until we proclaim.”⁴⁵ Additionally,

³⁹ Samuel Escobar, “Building a Solid Theological Foundation for Mission Policy and Praxis,” *Lausanne World Pulse* May (2008): 6.

⁴⁰ Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry. Commission of Appraisal. and Hocking, 62.

⁴¹ Doug Birdsall, “The Verbal Proclamation of the Gospel,” *Lausanne World Pulse* October (2008): 1.

⁴² Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 190.

⁴³ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today*, 118.

⁴⁴ Rev. Dr. Nii Amoo Darku, “The Verbal Proclamation of the Gospel,” *Lausanne World Pulse* October (2008): 5.

⁴⁵ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 227.

at Tokyo 2010 (a recent gathering of missions leaders from around the world), missiologist Paul Eshelman said, “We have to keep on making evangelism a priority. In many of our ministries, we have stopped asking people to receive Christ. Yet Jesus was very clear, ‘Except you repent, you will perish.’”⁴⁶

For some, the argument toward an evangelism emphasis in missions is only bolstered by what they perceive to be as a lack of spiritual fruit linked to cause-oriented work. Christopher Little writes, “The belief that the eradication of disease through the scientific method will lead to widespread conversions to Christ amounts to a denial of history—it hasn’t happened in the past, so one wonders why it would happen today.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, Little explains that any person or organization can engage in good works, but that Christian mission has a more distinct and unique responsibility: “Oprah can build schools; Madonna can sponsor orphanages; and Bill Gates can promote global health, but only the church is entrusted with the apostolic role of global proclamation whereby people are brought to the foot of the cross to ‘glorify God for His mercy’ (Rom. 15:9).”⁴⁸

Another key argument for this view concerns the urgent need to re-evangelize the West. J.A. Kirk explains: “the time has surely come, specifically in the post-Christian environment of Europe, to argue forcefully again that the church is also, by definition, evangelistic.”⁴⁹ Most agree that America is not far behind Europe in terms of people leaving the faith, and so the same argument could be made for the primacy of evangelistic methods here.

Not surprisingly, advocates of the primacy of evangelism are greatly concerned about the trend toward cause-related missions. Statements such as this from Little reflect the frustration with this apparent neglect of biblical priority: “One can be fairly certain that the missions community in the USA is presently spending more on alleviating human suffering than on addressing the eternal destiny of the lost.”⁵⁰ Kirk adds, “Mission, which in some circles used to be almost identified with evangelism, is now almost completely disassociated from it.”⁵¹

Many who uphold the primacy of evangelism in missions also react against the rising tide of social justice efforts and the perceived “liberalism” that often goes with it. Stearns explains:

⁴⁶ Paul Eshelman, “The State of the Unfinished Task,” *Mission Frontiers* 32, no. 4 (2010): 11.

⁴⁷ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 214.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁴⁹ Kirk, 47.

⁵⁰ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 205.

⁵¹ Kirk, 47.

“There lingers in some conservative American churches a suspicion that social action and reform are somehow part of a liberal theology that substitutes good works for evangelism.”⁵² Some of this is warranted, given the number of efforts that have been carried out lacking any specific gospel message. Gordon concedes that “involvement in issues of injustice in the past has led to a dilution of the gospel, as can be seen in the social gospel movement at the beginning of the twentieth century.”⁵³

Misconceptions also contribute to this perspective. Frost and Hirsch describe the perspective held by some: “It is assumed that because good works cannot save us, we should not be encouraged to perform them as a central part of gospel ministry.”⁵⁴ Stearns explains another tragic misunderstanding: “Many Christians believe poverty to be the result of sinfulness and therefore see evangelism as the best, and sometimes only, medicine.”⁵⁵

Evangelism alone is an incomplete response to the Great Commission. Loveless writes, “Historically, the Church has done an amazing job of seeing the importance of evangelism in Scripture and then crafting ways to effectively tell people about Jesus. But, also historically, the Church has not done such a good job with ministering to the other parts of a person or community. Evangelism needs to plug into a larger picture of holistic ministry; where the spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and relational parts of a person are all valuable. That is where transformation will take place.”⁵⁶ Rose Dowsett adds, “Some would argue that in our haste... to carry the gospel far and wide, in our urgency to ‘reach’ as many people as possible, evangelicals have been the most guilty of all in tragic gospel reductionism.”⁵⁷

The late missiologist Ralph Winter noted that to only emphasize evangelism means that “we misrepresent the character of God, and our proclamation activity lacks both credibility and authenticity.”⁵⁸ Paul McKaughan writes, “Missionaries who are called to personal or mass evangelism must be reminded that their words may sound hollow and have little meaning without the demonstration of God’s glory as He becomes incarnate in the desperate reality of the poor.”⁵⁹ And Kirk upholds the importance of evangelism as a key component of a larger picture:

⁵² Stearns, 202.

⁵³ Gordon, 4.

⁵⁴ Frost and Hirsch, 135.; note that the authors do not agree with this perspective but rather are commenting on it.

⁵⁵ Stearns, 128.

⁵⁶ Loveless: 73.

⁵⁷ Rose Dowsett, “Beyond Evangelism: Authentic Disciples,” *Lausanne World Pulse* May (2007): 12.

⁵⁸ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 175.

⁵⁹ “Responses to Christopher Little’s ‘What Makes Mission Christian?’,” 76.

“The church’s inescapable call to evangelism is to be carried out as an integral part of the wider dimensions of mission: serving the needs of the community, helping to resolve conflict, working for justice for the excluded, bringing comfort and healing to those who are suffering.”⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Kirk, 49.

SECTION 3: THE THESIS

I claim that we must make immediate changes to the way we identify, define, promote, recruit for and fund missions efforts. This would start with a redefinition of missions (crafting new terminology that is more reflective of the “mission” that exists all around us and less encumbered by traditions and baggage from the past) and would continue with a transition to more global, indigenous leadership (vs. a primarily “white” or Western model). This will require an expansion beyond traditional missions agencies as the ones best suited to carry out mission, to one that involves both churches and organizations in strategic kingdom-focused partnerships. It will also require an increased willingness on our part to learn from those in other cultures (as opposed to a patriarchal American-led approach), and the development of a compelling plan for the future to involve the next generation of youth and young adults in mission.

While the West can claim some success with its previous missions efforts, and while there continue to be many aspects of the modern missions movement that God is clearly blessing, I would contend there are many other areas in which a rethinking, a radical change is required. Otherwise we may largely fail to capture the passion and commitment of the next generation, a disconnect that would have permanent consequences in the world of missions.

My contention is that having to wrestle through these issues is ultimately a kingdom-building process. To rethink our pursuit of the Great Commission means that a discussion of God’s *missio Dei* becomes all the more central to our faith. If anything, it is pushing us in a direction of greater health and sustainability in missions. Vethanayagamony and Chia ponder the vast merits of this rethinking: “It might be that Christians are actually engaging in a critique of the old mission paradigms in view of enabling the emergence of new forms for doing mission.”¹ Richard Tiplady offers a similar reflection: “Is God, through postmodernity, offering us new ways of thinking and behaving that will help us to shake off the cultural captivity of modernity, to which evangelicalism is perhaps particularly prone?”²

This section will explore what this rethinking of missions might look like, and how we in the West can better synchronize our missions efforts with what is already taking place in many other parts of the world. There are tangible and substantive things the church can do to engage

¹ Kalu and others, xix.

² Tiplady, *Postmission: World Mission by a Postmodern Generation*, xiv.

the next generation, not to mention millions of Christians within the American church who have chosen to sit on the sidelines in terms of a missions commitment. These ideas are an attempt to propose a brighter future:

Recapture a Priority on Teaching Missions

One of the difficulties in advancing the cause of missions in the American church is the surprising lack of air time it gets. For many churches, missions is more of a seasonal theme (think the annual “missions week”) than it is something that is discussed and celebrated regularly. Other churches only talk about missions from the pulpit when a missionary is visiting, essentially communicating that missions has been “brought in” from the outside. Regardless of cultural trends, churches must champion the message of the Great Commission and strategically build a missions ethos into the life of the church.

The perception is that we have failed to do this well. In my 2009 missions survey, one of the questions posed was “What factors (both in America and in the American church) are hindering the cause of global missions today?” Responders were then able to select one or more statements with which they identified. Nearly two-thirds (64%) agreed with the statement “Lack of biblical understanding as to what missions is and why we do it.”³

To engage the church and especially the next generation with mission, I propose the following biblical non-negotiables as our foundational talking points:

Missio Dei

Our teaching must focus on mission as the natural and wonderful outflow of God’s own heart. God is active in the world and is relentless in His efforts to redeem all people to Himself. This is at the heart of missions. From cover to cover of the Bible, our Creator reveals Himself to be a missionary God. He took the initiative and even engaged in cross-cultural ministry to the extreme: He sent His Son from the glory and perfection of Heaven into a sinful and broken world. The incarnation is the ultimate model for missions: John Stott writes, “All authentic mission is incarnational mission. It demands identification without loss of identity. It means

³ Olson.

entering other people's worlds as He entered ours, though without compromising our Christian convictions, values or standards.”⁴

Where the message has become confusing is when *missio Dei* becomes more about the church's mission. This ensures that mission devolves quickly into a program or obligation of the church, rather than something divine and mysterious toward which we are irresistibly drawn. In our modernist thinking, we place much more emphasis on mission statements than we do the central mission to which we are called. Consequently, as Amos Yong explains, “The mission of the church is better re-conceptualized as the mission of God (*missio Dei*).”⁵

Without an understanding of *missio Dei*, we will tend to make mission more about us than the divine. According to Dawn Nothwehr, “The starting point for mission must be the unequivocal recognition of the *imago Dei* in each and every human person, and that without it, attempts to practice the Christian tenets of love and justice are quite worthless.”⁶

The Great Commission

Although there are many important passages in Scripture that engage us missionally, one cannot ignore the enormity of the final words Christ spoke to His disciples before ascending to Heaven: “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:18-19, NLT). While the many teachings of Christ have had an immeasurable impact upon the Church, many would agree that a special priority must be given to instructions that serve as the zenith for Christ's recorded words on earth. Theologian Millard Erickson writes, “This was the final point Jesus made to His disciples. It appears that He regarded evangelism as the very reason for their being.”⁷ Missiologist Enoch Wan affirms the importance of helping believers understand this: “The Christian mission cannot be accomplished apart from individuals obedient to the Great Commission.”⁸

⁴ John R.W. Stott, “The Christology of Mission.” in *The Contemporary Christian*, p. 357. Quoted in Escobar, *The New Global Mission : The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone*, 108.

⁵ Kalu and others, 48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 115-116.

⁷ Millard J. Erickson and L. Arnold Hustad, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001), 347.

⁸ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 46.

The early church very clearly understood the enormity and urgency of this call. One of the overarching distinctives marking first century Christians was their zeal for pushing the good news outward. Theologian Peter Phan points out that “from its very birth Christianity has always been portrayed as a world movement with a divine commission to bring the Good News to all peoples, at all times, and in all places.”⁹ According to author Dana Robert, the Great Commission helped produce a “missionary consciousness” among the early Christians. He adds, “The transformation of a cowed and defeated handful of Jewish followers into a death-defying, multi-cultural missionary community was an amazing beginning to what is now the largest religion in the world.”¹⁰

We must also give serious thought to how we motivate people to engage in mission. Where the church has tended to go sideways is with the various motivations for missions that we tend to emphasize: world evangelism is a prerequisite to Christ’s return, attention on the 10/40 Window, etc. Long challenges us to keep the focus on the centrality of Christ’s call: “This is not a matter of triumphalism or believing that once the world is evangelized Jesus will come back. He simply gave us a job to do. Those passionate about the unevangelized are holding the church accountable to this task.”¹¹

Until the Great Commission has been fulfilled, there will always be a need for international missions. Especially with the privilege and resources with which we have been blessed in the West, it can be clearly argued that we have a biblical and moral responsibility to help the less fortunate. For the billions in our world who live in poverty and struggle with injustice, there are tangible ways the church can mobilize and extend Christ’s love. With the availability of top-notch teachers, trainers and seminaries, we can also promote leader multiplication and discipleship around the world.

For a generation that craves risk and adventure (exhibit A is the proliferation of extreme sports that are very clearly targeted at younger audiences), nothing could be more bold and audacious than the prospect of seeing planet earth transformed by Christ’s love. Jonathan Bonk writes, “With a mission more sweeping in scope and magnitude than those of even the most

⁹ Peter C. Phan, “World Christianity and Christian Mission: Are They Compatible? Insights from the Asian Churches,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 4 (2008): 193.

¹⁰ Dana Lee Robert, *Christian Mission : How Christianity Became a World Religion*, Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion Series (Chichester, U.K. ; Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 12.

¹¹ Long: 19.

daring mission strategists, (Christ's) commission was to save the world."¹² A bold challenge requires nothing short of a bold response.

Love for Others

Past paradigms of evangelism have tended to treat people more as projects and less as objects of God's incredible love. In our efforts to craft formulas (think the Four Spiritual Laws) and abrasive arguments ("If you were to die tonight do you know for sure that you would go to Heaven?"), we have tended to boil mission down to a robotic obligation rather than a natural outflow of God's love for us. We must learn to strip mission down to its irreducible truth and repent for the externals we have allowed to cloud the message. God has pursued us with His relentless love, and the only appropriate response of worship is to radiate that same love outward.

As Chris Wright explains, the ultimate picture of love-motivated mission is the cross: "All Christian mission flows from the cross. We need a cross-centered theology of holistic mission."¹³ He adds, "The redemptive work of God through the cross of Christ is good news for every area of life."¹⁴

The methods we use to fulfill mission must also reflect this love for others. Mission is much more than just world evangelization. It is reconciliation. It is committing substantive acts of love where they are least expected. It is acting on behalf of the oppressed, the forgotten, the enslaved and the broken. It is not as much about targeting people groups as it is community transformation. Author Siga Arles writes, "In our present context, we must view the call to mission as a call to peace, a call to the unity of humankind. Christian mission should not be presented as a divisive force but as a unifying force. It should cement human communities with the love of God, which has been shed abroad in Jesus Christ."¹⁵

¹² Jonathan J. Bonk, "Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem... Revisited," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31, no. 4 (2007): 174.

¹³ Chris Wright, "Re-Affirming Holistic Mission: A Cross-Centered Approach in All Areas of Life," *Lausanne World Pulse* October (2005): 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵ Siga Arles, "World Religion Database: Realities and Concerns," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 1 (2010): 21.

A Redefinition of Missions

In a world of change, it has become commonplace in the church to rethink paradigms and methodologies regularly. Whether it is worship style, ecclesiology (modern vs. emerging), church leadership structures or even denominational affiliations, very few areas of the church remain off limits in terms of change. For a two thousand year old institution, there is a surprising amount of change that the church has weathered and even embraced in recent years. Perhaps one of the last few holdouts is in the area of missions. While we evaluate and debate just about every ministry and practice as church leaders and in Christian media, for all intents and purposes it largely remains “business as usual” for this one key area in the American church.

To be fair, the American church has enjoyed an extended season of great missions fruit around the globe. Many areas of the world where Christianity is growing or even exploding have been the recipients of faithful American missionaries who made great sacrifices to serve others and advance the gospel. But we have also had a painstakingly difficult time in shaking some of the terminology, concepts and images that tend to be associated with missions. Some of these are historical, some are ideological, and some are clear misinterpretations of what actually happened, but all have contributed to help turn missions into an institution that, for better or worse (unfortunately more of the latter in recent years), tends to evoke strong emotions and responses.

If we still believe the words of Jesus to be true when He spoke His final words on earth (Matthew 28:18-20), then we must find creative and compelling ways to take His urgency seriously. Bosch offered a challenge to the missions community that still applies today: “Mission must be understood and undertaken in an imaginatively new manner today.”¹⁶ Thus, I offer below some practical steps we can take to begin this critically needed process of redefinition:

Changing Our Missions Lexicon

For better or for worse, over the years Christendom has adopted and used terms that have accumulated quite a bit of baggage. While we are often well-intended with our concepts and in our zeal to reach the world with the gospel message, we can also get married to the forms and

¹⁶ Bosch, 367.

traditions that have seemingly served us well for so long. Eric Geiger describes many of the words Christians use as “spiritual tags” or, more pointedly, “broken buzzwords.”¹⁷

Even in my church association of *Conservative Baptists*, our rich history of sticking to biblical distinctives cannot overcome the loaded nature of both of those words joined together. And many authors, church leaders and missiologists alike are telling us that the time has come for new terminology. Herbert Hoefler writes, “Congregations that want to reach postmodern youth in the West are already inventing new terminology so the call of God in Christ can get a fresh look... It’s the same problem of baggage from the past that needs to be creatively and clearly addressed.”¹⁸

It’s not just our buzzwords or denominational labels that have become barriers. Many argue that even the word *Christian* has become heavily loaded. As Hoefler explains, “In Europe, Australia, and in parts of the USA, ‘Christian’ is a pejorative term. There is an image of a Christian as someone who is self-righteous and shallow.”¹⁹ Sweet adds, “Some argue, with good cause, that the term *Christian* is now polluted beyond recognition.”²⁰ So if the *term* Christian has become (at best) a mixed bag, where does that leave the concept of missions?

One of the problems within the world of missions is not just that many of our terms are loaded, but that they are ambiguous as well. Missiologist Charles Van Engen notes that “*mission* and *missionaries* are two of the most misunderstood words in the vocabulary of North American churches today.”²¹ In reference to the term *missional church*, Darrell Guder offers a similar assessment: “It is abundantly clear that the term has become a cliché today that means everything and nothing.”²² Stephen Davis adds, “We might ask ourselves if we have so diluted the term ‘missionary’ that it has become a catch-all word with accrued baggage that allows for almost any kind of overseas work or anything vaguely connected with the gospel to be called ‘mission.’”²³

As discussed earlier, the term *missions* is not only ambiguous but, for many people, is also highly loaded. Hoefler affirms what would likely be agreed upon throughout the world: “We

¹⁷ Eric Geiger, “Common Unity,” *Neue Quarterly* 3 (2009). Among the “buzzwords” Geiger refers to are *community, organic and fellowship*.

¹⁸ Herbert Hoefler, “What’s in a Name? The Baggage of Terminology in Contemporary Mission,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25, no. 1 (2008): 28.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁰ Sweet, *The Church of the Perfect Storm*, 19.

²¹ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 8.

²² *Ibid.*, 54.

²³ Stephen M. Davis, “The Challenge of Missions in the Twenty-First Century,” *Lausanne World Pulse* April (2008): 23.

have names from our mission history around the world that carry a lot of negative baggage.”²⁴ I find it interesting that in our American culture we have made the term *crusade* a largely taboo word, but we still widely use the term *missions* which, historically, motivated the former. Our cause is not helped when *missions* also happens to be a term our government uses when conducting military operations overseas. So whether use of the term *missions* conjures up images of the Crusades or simply the examples of Western colonialism that abound in history, I would say it is next to impossible to redeem this terminology with the younger generation. Consequently, as Tiplady writes, “We find ourselves looking for new names for the people who receive Christian mission.”²⁵ Why continue to use wording that creates an immediate barrier with most people?²⁶

While this essay argues that the practice of *missions* within the American church has to change, we must start with the terminology we use, deconstructing years of stereotypes we have (often) willingly perpetuated. Bosch offered a similar assessment, noting that *mission* “is historically linked indissolubly with the colonial era and with the idea of a magisterial commissioning.”²⁷ He added, “The very origin of the term ‘mission’, as we still tend to use it today, presupposes the ambience of the West’s colonization of overseas territories and its subjugation of their inhabitants. Therefore, since the sixteenth century, if one said ‘mission’, one in a sense also said ‘colonialism’. Modern missions originated in the context of modern Western colonialism.”²⁸

For many people who equate historical missions expressions with colonialism, to continue using the term *missions* is to only perpetuate negative stereotypes of Christianity. Hoefler explains: “In many of our mission situations, the negative aspects of Christianity are prominent in people’s memories and feelings. Christianity is recalled as a cultural invasion of their societies, if not a military invasion of their countries. ‘Christianity’ is not a religion as much as a culture, in their experience.”²⁹ Any study of missions history will discover multiple evangelism efforts that also included a “Westernization” of the natives, asking them to adopt not just our Western expressions of Christianity, but often our Western dress, expressions, and

²⁴ Hoefler: 25.

²⁵ Tiplady, *Postmission: World Mission by a Postmodern Generation*, 66.

²⁶ Under William Carey’s leadership, the “Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen” was founded in 1792. Talk about loaded terms!

²⁷ Bosch, 228.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 302-303.

²⁹ Hoefler: 27.

cultural identity as well. In discussing common perceptions regarding missions, Sweet adds, “At worst a missionary impoverished the ‘natives’ and put them at risk, making them an easy prey for persecution and elimination, by devaluing local customs and promoting Western values.”³⁰

Consequently, Hoefler calls us to embrace a redefinition of missions: “One of the best ways to reject (our tainted past) is to reject the terminology associated with this heritage.”³¹ While some will incorrectly see a change of terminology as a rejection of missions, I claim that such changes are required if we hope to further the gospel globally. Hoefler adds, “We are called to release our national partners from the burden of past baggage so there can be free flow of the Gospel in their lands. One of the ways we can free them is to give them permission and encouragement to rethink the burdensome and confusing terminology with which the Good News has been wrapped. Once we take off those distracting and confusing wrappings, the beauty of the pure Gospel can be seen and enjoyed and considered by all.”³²

A growing number of missiologists are searching for new terminology: definitions that are free from past baggage, specific rather than ambiguous, and ones that accurately reflect the global mission to which God has called us. Van Engen writes, “Today... Evangelical mission is searching for new, appropriate, creative, and motivating definitions of mission.”³³ Agreeing on more neutral terminology will, at the least, free us of some of the baggage that has encumbered *missions* (and most derivatives thereof) for more than a century.

The terminology we use to describe those on the *receiving* end of missions must change as well. We have also perpetuated countless stereotypes in clinging to terminology that mainstream culture doesn’t use (at best) and despises (at worst). According to Christopher Heuertz, “Missions seems to have a category-laden Tourette’s syndrome marked by the derogatory terms applied to those whom missionaries have attempted to serve: pagans, the lost, locals, etc... the list is long and offensive, each term loaded with assumptions.”³⁴

Heuertz adds, “‘The poor’ is a perfect example of insinuating the power of naming a person or community by merely describing their circumstances. Unfortunately, this term, *the poor*, has been used to create layers within societies as well as malformed characterizations of donor and receptor roles in mission... Ascribing a name based upon a description of someone’s

³⁰ Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 58.

³¹ Hoefler: 28.

³² *Ibid.*, 29.

³³ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 22.

³⁴ Christopher L. Heuertz, “Language and Labels,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2009): 8-9.

circumstances steals dignity and mars identity.”³⁵ He adds, “Affirming human dignity takes imagination, and referring to people as ‘poor’ becomes problematic. Using these kinds of terms only contributes to the powerlessness of people who are poor.”³⁶ The solution? “Rather than reducing our friends to a ‘target audience’ or a possible ‘beneficiary’ of our activity, we seek to establish life-giving relationships that are reciprocally humanizing.”³⁷ Stephan Bauman writes, “As we seek to serve in development, we must push beyond our initial perceptions of need and poverty to discover a vibrant world of human strength, perseverance, ingenuity, and often unprecedented faith.”³⁸

Deprogramming Missions

What the American church has tended to do historically is promote the idea that the church’s mission is a department (rather than an overarching value and thrust for every believer) and that outreach is a program. Just as with any other department of the church, missions has classically been something that people only engage in when they come to church (i.e. view the missions display in the lobby, go hear a missionary present in a class, travel for two weeks with a church group, etc.). We even create separate giving programs (think *Faith Promise*) which communicate that missions is not a part of the mainstream rhythm and focus of the church.

We also use terminology and slogans such as “We’re a church on mission” or “a church of missions” as if missions is simply an optional campaign like *40 Days of Purpose*. But, as Sweet indicates, “The church can never be ‘on a mission’ because that presupposes an ‘off’ switch, and you can’t be ‘off mission’ and still be a church. The church IS mission.”³⁹ As long as missions remains segmented, people will continue to view it more as a *program* than they do a *lifestyle*. Gibbons asks, “On a global level, is missions ancillary, like a department? Or is it really at the heart of your church?”⁴⁰ Missions cannot be a sermon topic that’s relegated to the annual mission week, but rather an ongoing focus that—through multiple intentional and creative approaches—works its way into the DNA of the local church.

³⁵ Ibid., 8-9.

³⁶ Ibid., 10.

³⁷ Ibid., 8.

³⁸ Stephan Bauman, “International Development: Helping or Hurting?,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (2009): 234.

³⁹ Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 64.

⁴⁰ Gibbons, 194.

In moving away from the term *missions*, what we've done at our church (and a plan I will unpack in my book) is to instead emphasize the importance of all Christ-followers being engaged in *mission*. Hocking wrote, "To any one, man or church, possessed of religious certainty, the mission in some form is a matter not of choice but of obligation."⁴¹ Similarly, according to Bosch, "(The church's) mission is not secondary to its being; the church exists in being sent and in building up itself for the sake of its mission."⁴² Mission can manifest itself in many ways, rather than just through specific expressions or geographic areas (*missions*).

Additionally, I propose that the American church abandon its use of the term *missions* (not a program, a department, or a task reserved for the "called") and instead seeks to become a church that is missional with an *intentional* global component. One of our church's most engaging series in recent times took place during our annual global week. Rather than choosing a traditional missions focus, we simply called the series *Outward*. The thesis was that Christ's Great Commission calls the church *outward* to our Jerusalem, our Judea, our Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Being called outward means that mission will take place both locally and globally. The two are not mutually exclusive but are rather inseparable components of the same command.

To deprogram missions means that we must abandon the modernist mindset that missions can largely be reduced to formulas and propositions, or that somehow we "take God" into another culture. We are not in the export business. Rather, we must embrace "the work of God (that) goes ahead of the church and its missionaries" Robert Schreiter adds, "A central task of the missionary is to discern how God is already at work in a given situation and to learn to cooperate with that work."⁴³

Our missiology must flow out of a passion and obedience to Christ, not through strategies or traditional forms that have been birthed by a church or missions agency. As Alan Hirsch describes it in *The Forgotten Ways*, "It is Jesus who determines the church's mission in the world, and therefore our sense of purpose and mission comes from being sent by him into the world."⁴⁴ Or, as he describes more academically, "Christology determines missiology, and

⁴¹ Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry. Commission of Appraisal. and Hocking, 6.

⁴² Bosch, 372.

⁴³ Kalu and others, 15.

⁴⁴ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways : Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2006), 142.

missiology determines ecclesiology.”⁴⁵ I often wonder what the rest of the world thinks about our Western missions efforts, and specifically some of the strategies we employ: sending short-term teams overseas to hand out gospel tracts, dedicating church buildings or civic projects in “our” name (rather than through a local church or ministry), or using short-termers to conduct door-to-door evangelism in another culture. These are just a few examples of how we have perhaps superimposed our ideals and agenda above that of what is best for the host culture. In situations like these I believe that we must recalibrate our missiology (how to reach those in other cultures with the gospel message) back to a proper Christology (seeing incarnational ministry take place as much as possible by the locals, not outsiders).

Missionaries Are Not Just Paid Professionals

While I think there still needs to be some distinction for those who go out and serve on mission in a cross-cultural context, part of the problem we have created is that *missions* has become a calling extended to a select few. To Hirsch’s point (see above), the tendency is to view mission as an extension of the church (something we *do* or hire someone to become) rather than the other way around (missiology determining ecclesiology).

In many churches the call to venture out into uncomfortable or distant places seems to be extended only to those on the “professional” missions roster. Gibbons explains: “If we do these sorts of things in our churches, we generally relegate them to the missions or local outreach departments.”⁴⁶ No wonder we have struggled to involve more people in the adventure. For example, if a *missionary* is only someone who is called to leave one culture and go to another, then what do we call the nationals in other countries who are reaching their own people? Are they not missionaries as well?

Mark Oxbrow summarizes (and agrees with) Roland Allen’s contention that believers “do not need to wait to be selected, trained, and commissioned as professionals in mission before sharing in the privilege of being co-missioners with God.”⁴⁷ Thus, we must move away from this compartmentalized thinking that *mission* is reserved only for those who have received some

⁴⁵ Ibid., 142.

⁴⁶ Gibbons, 78.

⁴⁷ Allen, Roland quoted in Mark Oxbrow, “Recovering Mission: Majority World Mission—a Return to Mission for the Majority,” *Lausanne World Pulse* January (2009): 6.

special calling or have undergone professional training. In a sense, we are all missionaries. All Christ followers possess the capacity to engage in mission: whether in the workplace, at school, in serving at the church on Sunday morning, or engaged in cross-cultural work thousands of miles from home. We need more inclusive language that includes the all-encompassing aspect of missions. We must increase our communication and teaching around the notion that missional opportunities abound all around us and, as such, must be a part of our everyday lives as believers.

Oxbrow also comments on the value of looking at believers elsewhere in the world as a template for the non-dichotomized perspective we should adopt in the West. He writes, “Perhaps the major shift we are currently seeing toward mission from the Majority World will help us recover a deeper, more ancient, understanding of who a missionary is.”⁴⁸ In the two-thirds world, many are engaged in missions although few are paid. In fact, my suspicion is that many national lay leaders would cringe if they knew that in the West, to be a missionary usually means that one is paid. Few bivocational pastors could imagine the luxuries we in the West enjoy with our large budgets and benefit packages.

Author Bethany Newman writes, “Most people believe that mission work is only for the most holy of Christians. Since many believe they do not fit in this category, the majority of believers do not truly believe they can make a difference on the mission field, and certainly not among the unreached nations. The reality is that missionaries are normal people whom God is using for his glory because they are willing to believe that he can.”⁴⁹

Some even question the Scriptural basis of the career missionary. According to Davis, “We have career ‘missionaries’ who bear little resemblance to the New Testament apostle or evangelist.”⁵⁰

If we truly believe in the priesthood of all believers, then it is a given that all have also been invited to participate in the Great Commission. Jesus did not add any qualifiers to His call, insisting that we first take courses in culture mapping or head out under the auspices of a mission agency. Indeed, some are called into full-time, cross-cultural missions. Many others are called to vocations in or near their home zip code. But all are invited to join with Jesus in His mission.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁹ Bethany Newman, “Preparing the Younger Generation for Missions in the 10/40 Window,” *Lausanne World Pulse* March (2007): 11.

⁵⁰ Davis: 23.

Christianity is Neither Western nor White

One of the essential steps in redefining missions is to help people move beyond the dated view that the West is primarily the domain of the Christian faith. While the American church has long enjoyed influence throughout the world, our role is quickly transitioning out of spotlight. To use Zakaria's term, we are witnessing the *rise of the rest* when it comes to growth of the Christian faith, the planting of new churches, the training of new leaders, and even the sending of foreign missionaries. Christianity is no longer something that is "exported" from the West, but is rather a multicultural kaleidoscope of ethnicities and expressions that truly span the globe.

Thus, as Christianity grows outside the United States, it follows that our expressions here on domestic soil will increasingly look less Western and more global. While I believe that the American church has long resisted globalization (in that we want to maintain our Western worship styles, church growth models and leadership structure), I would argue that the growing influence from abroad is inevitable. Milton Acosta writes, "It is widely recognized that the majority of Christians in the world today live in the Southern hemisphere. Along with Christianity gaining a new geographical center, theology, too, is moving south. If you are wondering where your pastor will get his ideas in a decade or two, you might look to Latin America, where the non-Catholic church is growing."⁵¹ Alister McGrath notes that "the styles of Christianity developing in Asia, Latin America, and Africa are noticeably different from those found in the United States, and even more different from those found in western Europe. The Protestantism of the global South tends to be more charismatic or Pentecostal, to maintain traditional moral values, and to have little time for the modernist modes of reading the Bible that have dominated the West until recently. As a result, the Protestant denominations of the global South tend to have more in common with each other than with their counterparts in America or Europe."⁵²

It is clear that the term *missionary* is becoming less likely to be someone from the West. According to "most contemporary mission statisticians," Winter wrote, "the majority of missionaries today (and for the future) will be coming from the Majority World or Non-Western

⁵¹ Milton Acosta, "Power Pentecostals," *Christianity Today*, August 2009, 40.

⁵² McGrath, 440.

World.”⁵³ Because of this, missions is no longer *the West to the rest* but for everyone to everywhere.

From Teacher to Learner

For most of the short history of the American church, we have largely defined missions from the perspective of teacher and sender. In fact, it could be argued that the American church’s only cognitive category for missions this far has been that of something we *export*: we are the ones who send people, training, resources and dollars out into a world that historically has played the role of *receiver*. Our narrative of missions history is defined largely by our accomplishments (global evangelization, Bible translation, leader training, etc.), with surprisingly little discussion given to the host culture and how other cultures factor into the health and growth of global Christianity. Phan explains this incomplete perspective: “Popular history of Christian missions has focused for the most part on what the Western churches—the ‘sending churches’—have done for the mission churches, the ‘receiving churches,’ in the so-called mission lands. In commercial terms, the emphasis is laid on the ‘exporters’ rather on than on the ‘importers,’ and on the exported merchandise rather than on how the imported merchandise is bought and put to use by the locals.”⁵⁴

As the missionary enterprise wanes in the West, however, we will see a corresponding decline in influence, and the world will begin to increasingly look elsewhere for Christian leadership, training and education. Philip Jenkins points out what may be a surprising statistic for some: “Today, some fourteen thousand South Koreans are on mission overseas, a figure second only to the United States.”⁵⁵ Given the rapid growth of Christianity in the Majority World, it is virtually undisputed among missiologists that other countries—think South Korea, China, and Brazil—will soon eclipse America in terms of missionaries sent. And in post-Christian America, it stands to reason (for better or for worse) that we will likely never again be known as the country with the largest missionary force. Additionally, as Phan points out, the conversation within missiology is changing: “contemporary historians of missions are less interested in the senders/exporters and the forms of the exported Christianity than in the importers and their

⁵³ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 194.

⁵⁴ Phan: 194.

⁵⁵ Jenkins, 83.

appropriation and transformation of the received product... What emerges is a more balanced and richer picture of Christian missions... (placing it) in the wider context of cultural preservation and transmission.”⁵⁶

As this decrease of Western-sent personnel continues, so does the trend increase of what missiologists have termed *reverse missions*. We have championed the *sending* aspect of the Great Commission, but I would argue that we in the West are quickly being confronted with a new role we have largely failed to understand thus far: that of us as *receiver*. Bevans writes, “The Christian West... thought missiologically not about itself—it was already converted, it was already ‘the church.’ Missiology was for the sake of the evangelization of the Others...”⁵⁷ Missiologists have noted the growing number of countries that now target the post-Christian West as one of earth’s largest mission fields. According to Vethanayagamony and Chia, “Former mission-sending churches... continue to play significant roles in mission, but as recipients of mission, partly on account of the reverse migration from the rest of the world to the West, and also because of the sharp decline of Christianity in the West.”⁵⁸ Jenkins asks, perhaps prophetically, “Are we likely to see Southern Christians actually converting or rechristianizing the North?”⁵⁹ Vethanayagamony then attempts to answer the question: “Non-Western Christians are becoming the agents for reevangelizing the West.”⁶⁰

We must not expect that these missionaries will bring with them expressions of Christianity that adhere to our familiar Western constructs. They will bring with them their own customs, their unique expressions of Christianity and their God-given strategies. In explaining the trend of Southern Christians coming to the North, Jenkins adds, “In the process (they will be) changing many familiar aspects of belief and practice, and exporting cultural traits presently found only in Africa or Latin America.”⁶¹ In fact, volumes could be written on how different Christianity tends to look in the Majority World. According to Jenkins, “The types of Christianity that have thrived most successfully in the global South... have been far more

⁵⁶ Phan: 194-195.

⁵⁷ Kalu and others, 9.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁵⁹ Jenkins, 244.

⁶⁰ Kalu and others, 60.

⁶¹ Jenkins, 17.

enthusiastic, much more centrally concerned with the immediate workings of the supernatural, through prophecy, visions, ecstatic utterances, and healing.”⁶²

The West is not only experiencing an influx of non-Western Christians through targeted missions efforts, but also through immigration. Jehu Hanciles explains: “America is the definitive immigrant nation, and it remains the chief destination of the world’s international migrants.”⁶³ The result, as Stearns points out, is that “We live in a world that is non-American, non-white, and non-Christian.”⁶⁴ And we are largely comfortable with the increasing ethnic diversity that has come to characterize the West; Tiplady writes, “We value the cultural input that many other nationalities offer and are far more accepting of other races living in our society than were previous generations.”⁶⁵ As more immigrant believers fill our churches and start new ones, it stands to reason that American Christianity will start to change as well. Vethanayagamony and Chia explain: “Christians who migrate to the West not only bring with them their own forms of vibrant Christianity but also reach out to people of the secularized West and those who have abandoned the traditional forms of Western Christianity.”⁶⁶ Regarding the growing number of immigrant congregations in the United States, Hanciles adds, “These congregations are characterized by marked spiritual vitality and a strong commitment to evangelism... their growing presence provides a counterweight to the downturn in Christian observance and church attendance within Western societies.”⁶⁷

Perhaps the worst thing the American church can do is to resist this trend and insist that our Western forms and models continue to rule. Our missions models and expressions must come to reflect the reality of this massive shift rather than resist it. We will have to make a dramatic and, for us in the West, uncharacteristic shift toward one of *learner* and not just teacher. As the global face of Christianity becomes increasingly visible in America, we will have to expand our understanding of everything from worship to leadership to missions practice. In his book *Transforming Mission*, Bosch articulated our need for “a new disposition, particularly on the part of the West and Western missionaries... who have to rethink the necessity and

⁶² Ibid., 125.

⁶³ Jehu J. Hanciles, “Migration, Diaspora Communities, and the New Missionary Encounter with Western Society,” *Lausanne World Pulse* July (2008): 6.

⁶⁴ Stearns, 121.

⁶⁵ Tiplady, *Postmission: World Mission by a Postmodern Generation*, 10.

⁶⁶ Kalu and others, xxi.

⁶⁷ Hanciles: 7-8.

blessedness of receiving, of being genuinely teachable.”⁶⁸ Mission agencies will need to adopt new models for *receiving* rather than *sending*. American churches will need to adapt to *hosting* short-term teams from other cultures as opposed to only deploying our own.

An integral part of this shift is that our teaching and messaging in the church needs to reflect a willingness to learn from those in other cultures. American Christianity must adopt a posture of humility, finding joy in our seat at the table as we feast alongside brothers and sisters from all tribes and tongues. As Andy Sikora explains, “At the core of mission and service is humility. By intentionally taking last place, we give up any rights we have and see others as better than ourselves. When we see ourselves in this, light we are driven to serve everyone we come in contact with. If the core of mission is humility, as church leaders we must start looking at our church’s ministry opportunities and missions projects in a different light. Instead of seeing them as an end in themselves, we have to start wrestling with how they can become a means to an end. After all, the point is not that these people would get involved in another program or project.”⁶⁹

Thus, from top to bottom we must be willing to adopt a new posture of humility and teachability. We must be willing to rethink and retool any approaches that serve as obstacles to us handing the missions baton to the next generation. And we must demonstrate a genuine willingness to learn from those in other cultures. To continue to insist upon primarily an American “brand” of doing missions could very likely ensure that our efforts become largely irrelevant to the rest of the world. Wampler writes, “We must cultivate the humility that allows us to be taught by non-Western Christians.”⁷⁰ Similarly, Bauman asks, “Are we willing to defer to local leaders? Are we willing to take the long road of relationship? Trust takes time, especially when one party has resources and the other does not. With the posture of a servant, we earn trust and the privilege to roll up our sleeves with our brothers and sisters around the world.”⁷¹

Are we willing to do this? It is one thing to accommodate those from other cultures; it is another to suspend our biases and put them on equal footing. I agree wholeheartedly with Vethanayagamony’s bold but accurate hypothesis: “It is hardly feasible that any North American Protestant church would do anything but laugh if it were suggested that an African or Asian be

⁶⁸ Bosch, 456.

⁶⁹ Andy Sikora, “Far Is the New Close,” *Neue Quarterly* 2 (2009): 77.

⁷⁰ Wampler: 56.

⁷¹ Bauman: 234.

called to be the founding pastor/evangelist for a project to plant a new church in an area inhabited by white middle-class folks.”⁷² The irony, of course, is that the reverse (Westerners assuming this role in other cultures) constituted the vast majority of missions efforts for hundreds of years.

Wampler adds, “We must push against the dominating mindset of the West, namely, that we have the final word. This shift in Christianity should not be lamented, but instead embraced as holding new opportunities. Our ideas of God are expanding and we are beginning to see new aspects of the gospel, new sides of the saving work of Christ that we have not been able to see due to our lack of perspective. It is creating a change in our ideas of missions and community.”⁷³ Lon Allison writes, “We need humility to cry out like the Macedonians did to Paul: ‘Come to the West and help us.’”⁷⁴

Ensure Balance in Our Missions Expressions

For a variety of reasons, the American church has tended to gravitate toward creating separate camps and drawing lines of division. Whether it is denominationalism, traditional vs. contemporary, attractional vs. missional, or small church vs. megachurch, it is no surprise that the American church struggles with perception problems as outsiders watch from afar.

Unfortunately, these unnecessary (and often unbiblical) dichotomies are perpetuated in the world of missions as well. Van Engel affirms that “Evangelical missiology has been searching for a new cohesive synthesis.”⁷⁵

My contention is that we will be required to reconcile these differences if we hope to engage the next generation with missions.

Word and Deed as Equal Partners

During the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne (1974), participants from over 150 nations penned the well-known *Lausanne Covenant*. A notable admission from the congress was in response to the church’s desire to dichotomize proclamation

⁷² Kalu and others, 68.

⁷³ Wampler: 56.

⁷⁴ Allison: 2.

⁷⁵ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 23.

and demonstration: “We express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive... we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ.”⁷⁶

Nearly two decades after the Lausanne Covenant, Bosch again emphasized a more holistic balance in missions: “We do need a more radical and comprehensive hermeneutic of mission. In attempting to do this we may perhaps move close to viewing everything as mission, but this is a risk we will have to take. Mission is a multifaceted ministry, in respect of witness, service, justice, healing, reconciliation, liberation, peace, evangelism, fellowship, church planting, contextualization, and much more.”⁷⁷

While we have taken strides in terms of legitimizing both expressions, the reality is that many churches and organizations continue to hold both in separate hands. As Van Engel explains, “One can observe Evangelicals struggling to bring together evangelism and social action once again.”⁷⁸ The late missiologist Ralph Winter was even more pessimistic in his assessment: “In the early twenty-first century, serious polarization still continues regarding linkages between evangelism and social action.”⁷⁹ Barnett affirms the relevancy of this topic: “The question of the priority of word or deed simply will not go away.”⁸⁰

Consequently, there is agreement among many that the church will only be able to fulfill its biblical responsibility for mission by eliminating this dichotomy. Gordon notes, “A narrow focus for mission will result in only a partial fulfillment of the role of the church in bringing the good news. As God’s people we need to be faithful to the whole of our calling, not just the bits we like or find easiest.”⁸¹ Stearns adds, “If the Christian community is truly to be salt and light in a dark world, we will only succeed by embracing the whole gospel. Faith and works must be put

⁷⁶ “The Lausanne Covenant”, The Lausanne Movement <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant> (accessed June 15 2010).

⁷⁷ Bosch, 512.

⁷⁸ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 22.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁸¹ Gordon, 30.

back together again.”⁸² David Hesselgrave describes this as *revisionist holism*, making “evangelism and social action *full and equal partners*.”⁸³

We should be encouraged that there is strong historical precedent for this holistic balance. Ron Sider writes, “Jesus is our only perfect model, and he spent a lot of time on both. We should do both evangelism and social ministry and not claim that the one deserves most of our time and money.”⁸⁴ Gordon adds, “Jesus does not hold evangelism and social action in tension with each other, but has an integral approach, treating people as human beings and responding to every need.”⁸⁵ Samantha Evens writes, “We see in Jesus’ ministry a regard for both the spiritual and physical healing of his people.”⁸⁶ And Bosch framed the discussion this way: “What amazes one again and again is the *inclusiveness* of Jesus’ mission.”⁸⁷

In an interview with *Leadership* magazine, Washington D.C. pastor Mark Batterson describes this growing awareness of holistic missions: “I think the social implications of the gospel have been so deemphasized and neglected that the church is now, in a healthy way, swinging back. Of course some people will swing back into a social gospel that is all social and no gospel. But we should be motivated to care for the poor and reach out to them the way Christ has commanded us.”⁸⁸

Additionally, as more Christians from the Global South emigrate to America, the values they bring with them will also help push us toward greater balance. Vethanayagamony and Chia, in reference to the new era of mission these global believers will push us toward, write, “Ethics will not be dictated by the affluent Global North but by the blending of the salvation and social-justice needs of the Global South.”⁸⁹

The goal for the church is a reflexive pursuit of missions that automatically embraces both word and deed. If we think and act holistically, we will see this unfortunate dichotomy disappear. Palmer explains that this process should be natural more than anything else:

⁸² Stearns, 202.

⁸³ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict : 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today*, 120. Hesselgrave also describes *restrained holism* (retains evangelism as the ultimate priority, but also elevates social action as important) and *traditional prioritism* (makes a distinction between the primary mission of the church and secondary or supporting ministries).

⁸⁴ “Responses to Christopher Little’s ‘What Makes Mission Christian?’,” 79.

⁸⁵ Gordon, 4-5.

⁸⁶ Samantha Evens, “Exploiting Our ‘Outsider’ Role for Good,” *Lausanne World Pulse* December (2009): 16.

⁸⁷ Bosch, 28.

⁸⁸ Mark Batterson, “A City Upon ‘the Hill’,” *Leadership* Summer 2008 (2008).

⁸⁹ Kalu and others, xxi.

“Evangelism (and missions) that reaches out in word and deed, without having to seek a balance, but with the understanding that all we say and do is for the growth of the kingdom, is truly evangelism as an integrated whole.”⁹⁰ Winter spoke optimistically about “the future of Evangelicalism and Evangelical missions (as) likely to involve a difficult and painful shift away from decades of polarization...”⁹¹

There is promise that the church is recapturing a sense of this biblical balance. According to Scott Allen, “Fresh winds are blowing, and the fortress of mental dualism is falling around the world with breathtaking speed. There is ever-increasing evidence that God is leading his bride back to a comprehensive, undivided understanding of reality. Increasingly, Christians are rejecting Gnostic assumptions in favor of a thoroughly biblical worldview—one that unites evangelism and social ministry as essential elements in a larger purpose.”⁹² The key aspect of rethinking missions is to point people to this *larger purpose*, refusing to get hung up on only part of the equation (word vs. deed).

Once the church achieves this balance, Winter envisioned a bright day for missions not just in the West but throughout the world:

A return to a full-spectrum gospel could mean an enormous change. Doors will open. Attitudes about missionaries will change. It will no longer be the case of missionaries thinking that they have to use adroit language to cover up the “real purpose” of their work. Their real purpose will be to identify and destroy all forms of evil, both human and microbiological, and will thus be explainable without religious jargon. This will provide common ground in almost any country.⁹³

Missions is Local and Global

In most circles, the term *missions* carries with it an expectation that the focus is exclusively global. It’s as if we’ve forgotten about our Jerusalem, and the fact that our own zip codes are just as important and legitimate domains of the Great Commission as are the farthest-away locales. We talk extensively about the world’s unreached in missions circles, when the reality is that the United States is quickly becoming a spiritual wasteland, much as Europe is

⁹⁰ Palmer: 22.

⁹¹ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 179.

⁹² Scott Allen, “A Theology for Uniting Evangelism and Social Ministry,” *Lausanne World Pulse* October (2005): 12-13.

⁹³ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 190.

experiencing. According to Frost and Hirsch, “North America is as much a mission field as any other nation or people group on the face of the earth.”⁹⁴

For many people, one of the disconnects with missions is that it doesn’t seem relevant to the *here and now*. People are busy and struggle just to find time to help meet some of the needs in their own backyard, let alone a world away. And even in a globalized world, our ethnocentric American way of doing things doesn’t usually lend itself to investing in issues beyond one’s zip code. But we can and must start there. While the church has been able to successfully bring some along by communicating missions as something that only happens overseas, statistics show we’ve lost considerably more who just haven’t made the connection.

My conviction is that *missions* must cease to exist in only an overseas framework (thus the redefinition). Instead, a *missional church* will equip people to engage others with Christ’s love, and this will happen both locally and globally. If we help people to see that their missions experience starts with their neighbors, their coworkers, their workout partners and playgroup members, then we will see a greater enthusiasm toward this ministry of the church. As people engage in missions opportunities and relationships that intersect with real life, they are likelier to see global missions as a logical and compelling extension of what they are already doing locally. Many of the principles of missions are the same both locally and globally, so we stand to see many more people engage when we begin with their reality, in their Jerusalem. But—and I wish to greatly emphasize this thought—we *must remain intentional and strategic about extending missions cross-culturally and overseas*; otherwise we will default only to our Jerusalem. The old adage “out of sight, out of mind” definitely applies. Thus, it is our responsibility as church leaders to ensure balance.

Another layer to local and domestic missions involves the rapidly changing ethnic landscape in America. Greater numbers of immigrants are inhabiting American cities, each of whom possess the same spiritual needs as those whom we endeavor to reach overseas through the context of traditional missions. We have incredible diversity in nearly every city and metropolitan area, and the steady influx of immigrants ensures that we can have cross-cultural relationships right in our own neighborhood. J.D. Payne noted that “Of all the countries, by far the United States leads the world as a host country, receiving thirty-eight million immigrants in

⁹⁴ Frost and Hirsch, 18.

2005 alone (approximately thirteen percent of the population).”⁹⁵ Allison adds, “Evangelizing immigrant peoples is one of the most pressing issues for churches in the West.”⁹⁶ Mark Russell paints with an even broader stroke: “We are experiencing migration never before equaled in the history of the world.”⁹⁷

Assistance vs. Independence

Years of missions funding sent from the West have undoubtedly led many to faith and grown the church in countless people groups, but this stream of funding has also produced unintended consequences. Academic and missiologist Glenn Schwartz has written extensively about this issue, arguing the merits of independence. His contention is that “unless people are able to use and multiply the resources that God has put close at hand, they will not be able to sustain the work they have to do locally, and they will have nothing to give to those beyond their borders.”⁹⁸

For too long the American church has held the purse strings of overseas efforts, thinking it was helping grow the global church when, in many ways, it was promoting an unhealthy relationship of dependency. Bosch explained this unfortunate dynamic: “The Western church, because of its benevolent paternalism, had created conditions under which the younger churches just could not reach maturity, at least not according to Western church standards... The Western mission agencies taught their converts to feel helpless without money.”⁹⁹

Schwartz also comments on the correlation between our Western thinking and the creation of dependency in other cultures. He writes, “Part of the dependency syndrome has to do with the way we as westerners solve problems. We solve problems with money.”¹⁰⁰ But this, in many ways, has hindered the work of nationals in other cultures. Schwartz adds: “One of the ways foreign funding distorts reality is *that outsiders often set the agenda.*”¹⁰¹ Pius Wakatama

⁹⁵ J.D. Payne, “Immigration and North America: Who in the World Is My Neighbor Anyway?,” *Lausanne World Pulse* March (2009): 19.

⁹⁶ Lon Allison, “The Church in Exile,” *Lausanne World Pulse* August (2009): 2.

⁹⁷ Mark Russell, “Migration, Displacement, and the Kingdom of God,” *Lausanne World Pulse* March (2009): 9.

⁹⁸ Schwartz, 1-2.

⁹⁹ Bosch, 296.

¹⁰⁰ Schwartz, 42.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

adds, “The American dollar crippled indigenous initiative and saddled the churches with expensive programs which they can never dream of financing themselves.”¹⁰²

Not surprisingly, volumes have been written about the counterproductive results of charity and aid sent into other cultures. Bauman agrees: “Fifty years of nearly \$3 trillion in aid has left many people worse off. Many suggest this is because there hasn’t been a fundamental transfer of power accompanying the transfer of wealth. We often spend our energies on designing and implementing projects without due attention to preparing those will lead it.”¹⁰³

These realities leave no choice but to invent and promote more sustainable funding methods for missions personnel and expressions. Scott Moreau notes that this trend toward economic independence is to be expected outside the West: “the economic constraints they face will force them to be more creative than Western missionaries have had to be in securing livelihoods while pursuing God’s call on their lives.”¹⁰⁴

Decades ago, Hocking proposed what ought to more seriously be the thrust of American missions efforts today: “More and more in the future the church in missionary lands will become indigenous in the proper sense of the word, as it certainly should be, and that will mean that it will not be financed with foreign money, or conducted by foreign workers, or projected and patterned on a foreign-made ecclesiastical system. It must become a living organism rather than the copy of a structural pattern.”¹⁰⁵ Even today, many authors and missiologists agree that this will result in a healthier church and a more sustainable missions movement. Schwartz writes, “When churches are healthy and supporting their own programs with local funding, leaders are most likely enjoying the confidence of the members.”¹⁰⁶

I would, however, temper the argument of financial independence with the realization that we in the West also have a responsibility to leverage our resources for the building of God’s kingdom. To simply adopt the position that no help should be sent from the West is an imbalanced response and abdicates us of a clear God-given responsibility in our pursuit of the Great Commission.

Jesus said, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48, NIV). Given

¹⁰² Wakatama, 36-37.

¹⁰³ Bauman: 234.

¹⁰⁴ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 198.

¹⁰⁵ Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry. Commission of Appraisal. and Hocking, 106.

¹⁰⁶ Schwartz, 35.

the funds and material resources we have, the American church has a responsibility to support kingdom work around the world. We have the potential to provide valuable seed money that can birth new ministries, plant churches and help fight (and even eradicate) some of the world's ills. Paul Hiebert writes, "Knowledge of the gospel makes us responsible to share its message of salvation and transformation with all people; to care for the poor, oppressed, and sick; and to bring the gospel to the lost."¹⁰⁷

The key with Western-sent support is balance and moderation. I propose that an initial season of assistance and, to a degree, dependency, is justified as long as financial sustainability is a goal being upheld and pursued by the nationals. Peter Law explains the healthy autonomy that can result: "Where unhealthy dependence has not been created, churches flourish in the context of trusting God to provide for their need of leadership, finance, and vision."¹⁰⁸

Embrace Sustainable Missions Practices

Given the current state of Western missions, the path we are on is anything but sustainable. While the Christian faith flourishes in many other parts of the world, the missions enterprise in the West laments all that is declining: personnel, funding, support of churches and promise moving forward. In fact, as Western dollars sent overseas tighten in the years to come, the issue of sustainability will likely become a barometer by which future missions endeavors will be judged before approval. Steve Murdock asks this question of those planning on creating a ministry or structure within a missions context: "Will what you are planning be sustainable according to current growth patterns within the people group or socio-economic group in which you are working? If not, don't do it."¹⁰⁹

It is time to explore practices that are more sustainable and offer a positive trajectory for the future. This section will explore areas in which sustainability is required and ideas for implementation.

¹⁰⁷ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 99.

¹⁰⁸ Law: 6.

¹⁰⁹ Murdock: 68.

Sustainable Funding

In the next decade, there will be a trend toward sustainable missions (efforts/churches that are self-funded and/or funded locally) and away from funded missions (financed largely by dollars sent from another culture or country). With Western funds for missions in decline, American missionaries all around the world are feeling the pinch. I receive emails and prayer updates from missionaries weekly regarding their budget difficulties (the fall of the US dollar overseas hasn't helped either). As Hesselgrave indicates, "From the U.S. perspective, missions money never meets the need. It always is in short supply... the complexity of missions finance calls for a rethinking that is informed, biblical, sensible, and innovative."¹¹⁰ And that was written in 2005 when missions funding was much more readily available than it is now. Given the current economic climate, "missions money" is in shorter supply than ever before. This will only accelerate the need for missions funding to adopt new paradigms.

Additionally, I contend that traditional missions agencies will have to make many difficult decisions in the years ahead due to declining funds: those better prepared to absorb budget cuts will have to scale back their missionary force, while others will likely have to close their doors. Corwin offers this prediction: "The 'casual donor' is likely to be a lot less reliable as a source of mission income than was previously the case. Only strongly committed churches and individuals are likely to continue their giving at high levels with their own economic situation much more precarious... Likewise, the heavy-lifting major donors (both individuals and foundations) are likely to have far fewer market profits to send toward the agencies."¹¹¹ As it stands, the American church gives relatively little to missions efforts. Stearns notes that "just about 2 percent (of giving in American churches) goes to overseas missions of any kind, whether evangelistic or to assist the poor. The other 98 percent stays right here, within our churches and communities."¹¹²

One area of great promise in support of financial sustainability is microfinance. Russell describes it as "an umbrella term that refers to the provision of small loans and other financial services such as savings and micro-insurance to people who are cut out of traditional banking structures."¹¹³ Russell references a recent United Nations Millennium Development report which

¹¹⁰ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict : 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today*, 228-229.

¹¹¹ Corwin.

¹¹² Stearns, 217.

¹¹³ Mark Russell, "The Spiritual Mission of Microfinance," *Lausanne World Pulse* February (2009): 17.

points out that “the number one intervention that has worked to eradicate poverty in the last eight years is microfinance.”¹¹⁴ Stearns echoes this sentiment: “The emerging microfinance industry... has become one of the most effective weapons we have in the war against poverty.”¹¹⁵ As much as churches and agencies alike have discussed help for the world’s poor, the impact has been small compared to the size and scale of the need. According to Winter, “By taking a quick glance at the current record of missions of good works, it is perfectly obvious that thus far no great dents in world poverty have been achieved by missionaries of Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁶ Utilizing the tools of microfinance, the church has an incredible opportunity to finally make a lasting dent in the scourge of poverty.

Microfinance’s application for missions is not only in the global fight against poverty, but also in the creation of sustainable funding sources for indigenous pastors, church planters and ministry workers (especially as funds from the West continue to dry up). The creation and support of small, locally run businesses can generate profits adequate enough to feed families, pay pastors and build churches.

A related means of financial sustainability is *business as mission* (also known as BAM), where business experts visit other cultures and empower them to start, lead and maximize their businesses with kingdom values. As with microfinance, new-found or increased profits can be used to fund missions efforts. Gibbons writes, “Businesspersons are the fuel for our movement. They can help lead entrepreneurial initiatives that spark the church’s initiatives locally and globally.”¹¹⁷

These kingdom-based business concepts can do more than generate funds for local Christian efforts; they are also catalytic in helping transform communities. Mats Tunehag writes, “The BAM concept is holistic in nature and content; it is built upon the truth that God has the power to transform people and communities spiritually, economically, socially, and environmentally.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹¹⁵ Stearns, 153.

¹¹⁶ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 184.

¹¹⁷ Gibbons, 142.

¹¹⁸ Mats Tunehag, “A Global Overview of the Business as Mission Movement: Needs & Gaps,” *Lausanne World Pulse* January (2009): 13.

Partnering with Nationals

In recent years there has been a substantial shift in missions conversations: one that is increasingly in support of nationals (ministry workers and leaders who are indigenous to their own culture) being the ones who are best equipped to reach their own people group, as opposed to the traditional paradigm of sending in Western missionaries as the “experts”. This is arguably one of the strongest pathways to sustainability in missions. As Western-sent missionaries decrease in number (and, according to some, in effectiveness), missions will increasingly have to depend on nationals and the indigenous church. Additionally, there are many countries around the world where American missionaries can no longer serve legally or safely. In those cases we have no alternative than to support and encourage the work of nationals. In many ways, this is a healthy, sustainable and long-term solution.

Nationals already know the language and understand the local customs. They have credibility and a culturally savvy that some Western missionaries are unable to attain even after years on the field. Sweet writes, “The indigenous church plants solely out of the prepared soil that is there. Everything is done so that the native soil does not become depleted and weak... Only in the indigenous church does the unique, vigorous, truthful spirit of a particular people find its voice.”¹¹⁹ Tiplady adds, “Contextualization is never done best when the missionaries do it—it is the locals who have to do it.”¹²⁰

Another key argument in the support of nationals is that they often require far less funding than that of their Western counterparts. This argument is not new, but rather one that has been a topic of debate for over a century. Michael Jaffarian explains the appeal of this thinking: “This argument has a great appeal to many no-nonsense, business-minded, efficiency-loving, bottom-line, North American donors. To put it bluntly, if nationals cost less and do a better job, why waste good money in any other direction?”¹²¹

This was a topic given significant discussion when Jonathan Bonk wrote *Missions and Money* in 1991. Bonk’s thesis was that the larger the gap between a Western missionary’s paycheck and standard of living and that of their national neighbors, the more the gospel message and credibility is hindered in its transmission. Bonk argued that many Westerners

¹¹⁹ Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 270.

¹²⁰ Tiplady, *Postmission: World Mission by a Postmodern Generation*, xv.

¹²¹ Michael Jaffarian, “The Statistical State of the North American Protestant Missions Movement, from the *Mission Handbook*, 20th Edition,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 1 (2008): 38.

choose to maintain a standard of living that is excessive by local standards, thus the failure of most missionaries to find traction in their ministries. More recently, Bonk has written, “The missionary vocation—being paid to be religious in someone else’s culture—can appear by local standards to be an extraordinarily lucrative way to make a secure and comfortable living.”¹²² In another article he adds, “Gross economic inequity in close social proximity poses complex relational, communicatory, strategic, and ethical challenges for missionaries. These questions emerge from scriptural teaching on the relationship between rich and poor, and between God’s people and their possessions.”¹²³

Brazilian Valdir Steuernagel comments not only on the cost of American missions, but also its lack of reproducibility in other cultures: “The North American missionary enterprise has become very expensive, and for the paradigms and possibilities of the Third World, impossible. Following this reasoning, if we simply copy the typical model of the missionary agency developed in the US, we will fall into a bottomless pit. This approach will not work since that model presupposes and requires heavy financial resources, both to be sent to the field and to pay for the administration of the missionary machinery.”¹²⁴

The problem, as discussed earlier, is the American church’s reluctance to make this transition. We still depend primarily upon Western-sent personnel as if there are few, if any, nationals ready to assume ministry in the foreign culture. Engel and Dyrness ask, “What justification can be given for missionary-sending practices dating back to the turn of the twentieth century when the Two-Thirds World church has now assumed the leadership and momentum in such a clear and powerful way?”¹²⁵ While we’re comfortable with nationals as experts in every other strata in society, we still often insist on Americans as the only worthy carriers of the gospel torch. Once nationals *are* allowed to take over, Westerners all too quickly voice their skepticism by bringing up issues of dependency, accountability and greed.¹²⁶ Schwartz adds his voice to those who are critical of this paternalism: “The attitude that an

¹²² Jonathan J. Bonk, “Mission and Mammon,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31, no. 4 (2007): 169.

¹²³ Bonk, “Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem... Revisited,” 172.

¹²⁴ Valdir Steuernagel, “A Mission Voice from Latin America: Partnering for World Mission,” *Lausanne World Pulse* April (2008): 18.

¹²⁵ Engel and Dyrness, 24.

¹²⁶ While this is anecdotal, it is amazing to me the number of missiologists I have talked to (many of whom have decades of rich missions experience behind them) who are largely advocates for change in missions, but are still skeptical of the ability of nationals to become sustainable and responsible with missions. Consequently, these are the reasons given that I hear most.

‘outsider’ can do the job better than ‘local people’ is often at the heart of how we as westerners view ourselves... This kind of arrogance has enormous implications, not only for the Christian movement, but also in international affairs.”¹²⁷

It could be argued that the size of our current American missionary force is hindering indigenization in certain parts of the world. Where God is blessing and fruit is being produced, missions efforts are for the better. But there are likely many other personnel currently serving in cross-cultural settings who are unproductive and not working in a healthy partnership with the local church. Some are not even able to work in partnership with each other.¹²⁸ Hocking wrote, “Where missionaries on the field are ill-qualified for the broad constructive work now needed they should be withdrawn and only persons of the highest type and quality should be sent out for the future, as they are called for from the fields where they are needed.”¹²⁹ Daniels asks, “Could it be that our efforts to maintain recruiting levels for new missionaries is counterproductive to the spread of the gospel? ...I fear that in the push to keep the recruiting pipelines full, we have accepted too many people who are quite limited in the ability, or even willingness, to shed the cultural package they grew up with. This is a huge obstacle to the growth of the gospel, particularly in places where people are chafing against misguided Western-culture imperialism.”¹³⁰

This perception of imperialism will likely remain a given as long as Westerners remain in missions roles. While much of it is unmerited, it nonetheless remains an unfortunate result of past missions efforts that went astray, compounded with lingering anti-American sentiment around the globe. While there will still be a place for missionaries from the West (to be discussed more later in this essay), the American missionary movement must embrace partnerships with nationals on a much more serious and intentional level if they hope to see people of other cultures become Christ followers. Until we take this dramatic (and much-needed step) toward contextualization with nationals, we will promote the unfortunate reality Tim Timmons writes about: “Making Christianity the primary way to God implies and requires that Christians must convert the world to Western Cultural Christianity... It creates a situation where people of other religions are the ‘enemy of our faith’ who must convert to ‘our side,’ instead of simply follow

¹²⁷ Schwartz, 244.

¹²⁸ Early into my missions leadership at the church where I currently serve, I was shocked by the amount of infighting I saw between American missionaries.

¹²⁹ Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry. Commission of Appraisal. and Hocking, 108.

¹³⁰ Daniels: 425-426.

Jesus within their context.”¹³¹ Daniels adds that we must “start disconnecting our presentation of the gospel from the Western package of democracy, individualism, and free-market capitalism.”¹³²

One of the key components of this transition is to gain the support of Western mission agencies which largely exist to maintain the current enterprise of sending Americans. Missiologist Samuel Escobar offers this critical assessment: “The frequent tendency of Western mission agencies to bypass their indigenous partners and to perpetuate their own ‘independence’ is an indication of failure.”¹³³ To Escobar’s point, Western mission agencies have had minimal involvement in partnering with nationals. However, recent statistics reveal that even this is changing. Jaffarian notes this significant trend: “The number of non-North Americans partially or fully supported through North American mission agencies is now far greater than the number of North American missionaries (long-termers plus middle-termers) sent and supported from the churches... such an extreme change in the profile of workers is causing an extreme change in the global impact of the North American Protestant missions movement.”¹³⁴

Fortunately there is hope that postmoderns have much less of a problem getting behind the missions efforts of nationals than they do the moderns who preceded them. If anything, they’re enthusiastic. Murray Decker asks, “Will this North American (Millennial) generation effectively bridge the cultural distinctions that created so much tension between earlier generations of missionaries and national believers, or will they merely succumb to an easier form of cultural minimalization? Evidence would show that North American Millennials are more willing to submit to the leadership and vision of non-Western leaders than ever before...”¹³⁵

As missions continues to see a steep decline in money given and personnel sent, it will only benefit the church to assume a more proactive posture in addressing this fundamental issue. Our role, then, should transition from one of sender (perpetuating the Western missionary enterprise) to one of partnership. Jim Harries explains how this partnership would look in an African context: “Instead of Western missions ‘running the shop’ in Africa... the West is to be a helper, facilitator, or a junior party in a partnership agreement, offering expertise to ‘oil the

¹³¹ Tim Timmons, “Christianity Isn’t the Way - Jesus Is,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25, no. 3 (2008): 158.

¹³² Daniels: 422.

¹³³ Escobar, *The New Global Mission : The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone*, 68.

¹³⁴ Jaffarian: 37.

¹³⁵ Murray Decker, “The Emerging College Generation and Missions: Issues, Attitudes, Postures and Passions,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43, no. (2007): 319.

wheels of a process that would anyway be happening in its absence.”¹³⁶ Similarly, Schwartz offers this guideline: “Missionaries should not seek or accept a position of responsibility that could be filled by a local person.”¹³⁷

Kingdom-Based Partnerships

For too long, Western missions efforts have been defined almost as much by what has divided us as what has brought us together. Many of our categories are actually definitions that explain our area of division: evangelistic vs. works based missions, churches vs. agencies, liberal vs. conservative, Western-supported vs. indigenously funded, etc. If outsiders perceive the American church as an institution known for its infighting, the world of missions is no exception. At Tokyo 2010, delegates included this statement in the conference declaration: “We confess that we have not always valued each other or each other’s work. We repent of those wrongs and will endeavor to bring an end to competition where it exists, and reconcile where there is hurt, misunderstanding and mistrust.”¹³⁸ Other missiologists would agree that our current approach to missions is still too individualistic and has largely resulted in addition—rather than multiplication—in terms of lives and communities impacted. In response, Harries offers this concise observation: “Recent decades have seen radical changes in mission methodologies. Talk has turned to partnership.”¹³⁹

We can either perpetuate a missions approach that largely consists of individual churches and agencies sending out individuals and families, or we can explore new partnerships that enable us to accomplish more together than we can alone. Priest, Wilson and Johnson write, “Mission in the contemporary world is most effectively carried out through partnerships. Partnerships of the right sort between mission agencies, mission training institutions, mission pastors, indigenous ministries, and U.S. megachurches can fruitfully bring wisdom and resources and energy together in a way that furthers God’s missionary purposes in the world today.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Jim Harries, “Partnership, Cooperation, and Vulnerability: Building a Solid Foundation for Mission Praxis in Africa,” *Lausanne World Pulse* May (2008): 10.

¹³⁷ Schwartz, 82.

¹³⁸ “Tokyo Declaration: Making Disciples of Every People in Our Generation,” *Mission Frontiers* 32, no. 4 (2010): 15.

¹³⁹ Harries: 10.

¹⁴⁰ Priest, Wilson, and Johnson: 102.

Yong Cho offers an optimistic perspective that the global Church already possesses the resources needed to complete world evangelization. He explains: “If we all work together, there are more than enough missionary personnel to finish the task. The issue is not a lack of resources to reach the remaining unreached peoples. It is simply a matter of better coordination.”¹⁴¹

Perhaps one of the largest coordination gaps today is between the church and missions agency. Agencies have typically been the ones who train and send missionaries, but trends reveal that more churches are deploying personnel directly to the field (thus bypassing the traditional mission agency). Terry notes “the increasing number of megachurches that are doing missions directly instead of working through missions agencies.”¹⁴² In response to a 2007 megachurch survey, the authors speak to this trend: “48 percent of all megachurches, and 78 percent of African American megachurches, act as their ‘own sending agency for some or all of the missionaries’ whom they support.”¹⁴³ Additionally, a growing number of churches are bypassing the traditional missions agencies and deploying personnel to the field directly.

Agencies will have to more intentionally involve the church as a key to their survival. Barnett offers this bold challenge to mission agencies: “Eliminate the sense that you are competing with the local church, whether it is a sending or receiving church. Dispel the thought that you are the expert. Abolish the ‘them/us’ syndrome. If you cannot get your organizational mind wrapped around traditional, organic, and/or emerging forms of sending churches, then... recognize that it’s your problem, not theirs, and find a solution.”¹⁴⁴

Not surprisingly, some churches are choosing to forgo missions agencies and are instead forging their own alliances. One such example is Saddleback’s P.E.A.C.E. Plan which is building bridges between the American church and those throughout the rest of the world in an effort to reach the unreached and serve the world’s poor. Missiologist Paul Kemp also advocates direct support relationships between churches here in America and in other cultures. He writes, “Identify areas of need and find sustainable ways to meet them. The key word here is ‘sustainable.’ Remember: creating dependence is counterproductive. Empower your sister church.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Yong Cho, “Challenge and Opportunity for the Global Network of Mission Structures,” *Mission Frontiers* 32, no. 4 (2010): 16.

¹⁴² Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 241.

¹⁴³ Priest, Wilson, and Johnson: 100.

¹⁴⁴ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 231.

¹⁴⁵ Paul Kemp, “How to Partner with a Church in a Developing Country,” *Neue Quarterly* 2 (2009): 202.

Building such bridges will be essential to fulfilling the Great Commission. Winter emphasized that “it is a fact that most missionaries, and especially their individual converts, rarely have the wherewithal of either knowledge or power to make major, fundamental changes in society.”¹⁴⁶ Consequently, as Hesselgrave points out, “With increased personnel from non-Western nations, it is obvious that missions and missionaries from all over the world must work together as never before.”¹⁴⁷ He adds, “Culturally, Easterners and Westerners do not have the same notions of what leadership is and how it is encouraged, recognized, and expressed... global partnership of churches and missions offers particular challenges.”¹⁴⁸

Building healthy partnerships with our brothers and sisters in other cultures is key. In discussing the growth of the church outside the West, Vethanayagamony writes, “This conceptual shift involves not only a new humility on the part of the church in the West but also a new form of missionary engagement. The missionary task must be done by Christians from all the churches acting together and no longer by one-sided initiatives from or within the West.”¹⁴⁹ He adds, “Mission is no longer a one-way street; we need to learn from each other and be enriched by each other.”¹⁵⁰

It is time for the church to think outside the box; to expand its resource capability and distribution network beyond what is currently being done. We must find better and more compelling ways to mobilize the billions of Christians worldwide to address social ills or, to use a phrase Rick Warren has coined, the *global giants*. Churches must learn to partner with businesses. Missions agencies must learn to connect outside their own traditions and denominations. In *The Paradox of a Global USA*, N.J. Demerath III discusses the growing trend of a partnership between Christian organizations and the government. He notes that a number of these agencies “receive major funding from the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, which have virtually no alternative vehicles of aid distribution.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 185.

¹⁴⁷ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today*, 232.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁴⁹ Kalu and others, 68.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁵¹ Mazlish, Chanda, and Weisbrode, 96.

Green Missions

I will argue that our current missions praxis almost completely lacks a category and understanding of creation care (about the only thing that comes close is the movement toward providing clean drinking water for those in the Two-Thirds world). Not only are there surprisingly few conversations within the world of missions around this topic, but the American church (largely) continues to promote a consumerist version of Christianity that only encourages more consumption and excess. If anything, we tend to write off environmental issues as ones belonging to a liberal agenda, rather than seeing the importance of our God-given role as earth's stewards.

The reality is that creation care is not just an issue that Christians ought to be taking seriously. It should become a center piece of our missiology, since the good news we endeavor to share around the globe must also speak to the broken and damaged world in which we live. Bonk describes it as “perhaps the most pressing missiological agenda of the twenty-first century.”¹⁵² Academic Allan Effa adds, “One of the great contemporary matters requiring an informed missional response is the environmental crisis.” He adds, “The church, in every camp and tradition, is grappling with its responsibility toward creation and seeking to integrate this in its missionary praxis.”¹⁵³ And yet, as academic Willis Jenkins acknowledges, “Missiology rarely discusses the significance of earthly context or ecological dynamics for mission theology.” He adds, “For all its attention to culture, missiology seems to have little to say about the landscapes formed by ecology and culture in reciprocal relation.”¹⁵⁴

At the Micah Network Fourth Triennial Global Consultation in Kenya, members drafted this admission:

Our failure to be faithful stewards has caused the current environmental crisis, leading to climate change, and putting the earth's ecosystems at risk. All creation has been subjected to futility and decay because of our disobedience... We have embraced false dichotomies of theology and practice, splitting apart the spiritual and material, eternal and temporal, heavenly and earthly. In all these things, we have not acted justly towards each other or towards creation, and we have not honoured God.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Jonathan J. Bonk, “Mission and the Groaning of Creation,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 4 (2008): 170.

¹⁵³ Allan Effa, “The Greening of Mission,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 4 (2008): 171.

¹⁵⁴ Willis Jenkins, “Missiology in Environmental Context: Tasks for an Ecology of Mission,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 4 (2008): 176.

¹⁵⁵ “Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 4 (2009): 182.

Jenkins adds, “Loss of ecological integrity has led to an ecology of human suffering, where the hills fall down upon the poor, and to an economy of invisible exploitation, where one community’s use of resources strips bare the place and provisions of another community.” In response, he writes, “Such conditions call not just for adapted responses of relief and development but for reimagining theologies of reconciliation, justice, and forgiveness.”¹⁵⁶ Similarly, the Micah Network’s members pledge to “teach and model care of creation and integral mission.”¹⁵⁷

In addition to this network of leaders, a growing number of missiologists are calling for Creation care as a legitimate and mandatory expression of missions. According to Bevans, “There cannot be a Christian life that is not committed to justice, to peacemaking, to Christian unity, to ecological responsibility.”¹⁵⁸ Jenkins adds, “What we need now is an ecology of mission that can show how environmental issues matter within the practices of following God’s love across terrains.”¹⁵⁹ Rhoads and Rossing add, “If the church exists for the sake of the world, it must pay attention to what is happening to the world and cease to concentrate on an individualistic spiritual mission of personal salvation without also addressing the need to restore creation as a whole. A holistic Christian mission connects the interrelationship between human beings and the rest of creation.”¹⁶⁰

The good news is that the world of missions is uniquely poised to address these issues, given the partnerships and distribution system (the universal local church!) that span the globe. The church is very much connected through mission, and we have an amazing opportunity to take the lead on elevating the importance and conversation around Creation care. Jenkins writes, “Because it reflects on movement across social boundaries and geographic terrains, missiology is exceptionally well placed to address the distributional character of environmental problems.”¹⁶¹

Another component of Creation care is how clearly it fits within the framework of justice, something (as discussed throughout this essay) that has captured peoples’ hearts. Rhoads and Rossing call for mission to “embrace a Christian ethic that acknowledges the interrelationship

¹⁵⁶ Jenkins, “Missiology in Environmental Context: Tasks for an Ecology of Mission,” 178.

¹⁵⁷ “Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change,” 184.

¹⁵⁸ Kalu and others, 10.

¹⁵⁹ Jenkins, “Missiology in Environmental Context: Tasks for an Ecology of Mission,” 177.

¹⁶⁰ Kalu and others, 129.

¹⁶¹ Jenkins, “Missiology in Environmental Context: Tasks for an Ecology of Mission,” 177.

between ecological conditions and issues of human justice... We have separated human justice and Earth care to our detriment.”¹⁶² They add, “We need to expand our commitment to include countering the degradations of Earth, and we need to double our efforts for human justice. It is all of one piece.”¹⁶³

This will require nothing short of significant and immediate action. Unfortunately the church, for much of its history, has tended to dialog and debate more than it acts. Vethanayagamony and Chia write, “Nothing short of a thorough-going reformation is needed for churches to transform their teaching and practice so as to make caring for all creation foundational to every mission.”¹⁶⁴ Thus, the merits of environmental justice must make a dramatic transition from a talking point to an action step. Jenkins adds, “Environmental justice both interprets an important aspect of mission context and names a significant objective for mission practice... Missiology must find ways to name and condemn environmental misuse, to promise environmental health, to offer ecological restoration, and to invite the world into a geography of grace.”¹⁶⁵

Finally, one of the questions worth asking (which I will not attempt to answer in this essay) is how we continue to juxtapose the 1.5 million people *annually* we send around the world on short-term missions trips with the inevitable environmental impact that degree of travel causes? One can only imagine the number of flights required to transport all those people each year and the massive carbon footprint created by all that travel. Do the ends justify the means? Is the environmental impact of all these trips a necessary evil, or does it merit a significantly larger-scale conversation around the sustainability and wisdom of the short-term enterprise we in the West have built?

Engaging the Next Generation Is Key to the Future of Missions

Mission Frontiers magazine said it well: “The time is ripe for the effective rebuilding of the widespread student mission movement across the emerging generation.”¹⁶⁶ This sums up my passion for this project: to see this rebuilding begin so that all generations engage in mission.

¹⁶² Kalu and others, 133.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 135.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., xxiii.

¹⁶⁵ Jenkins, “Missiology in Environmental Context: Tasks for an Ecology of Mission,” 178.

¹⁶⁶ Ryan Shaw, “Rebuilding the Corporate Student Mission Movement,” *Mission Frontiers*, March-April 2006, 8.

Unfortunately, the task will not be easy. In my 2009 nationwide survey of churches, one question asked participants, “*What factors (both in America and in the American church) are hindering the cause of missions today?*” Responders were then asked to indicate agreement with one or more statements. Out of twelve options, over half (52%) agreed with the statement, “The American church’s difficulty in engaging younger generations with world missions.”¹⁶⁷ For a variety of reasons, the church has largely failed to get traction in this area. While there is promise around the proliferation of short-term missions and also the social justice movement, the task of engaging the Millennial generation remains huge.

Millennials constitute the largest generation in American history (95 million) and have the potential to perhaps transform the world unlike any previous generation. Millennials are globally minded, cause-driven, action-oriented and eager to make a difference. This generation has already demonstrated an overwhelming desire to fight injustice and help the world’s needy. If the church can create and amend missions expressions that tap into these key values, we could actually be poised to see a resurgence of missions interest in the West (albeit one that will likely look different from past expressions). Without widespread involvement and ownership among members of the next generation, we may very well fail to pass forward the missions torch that was so faithfully handed us by past generations of Westerners who sacrificed greatly so that the world may know.

Thus, in studying Millennials, they demonstrated some widely held values and beliefs that should inform the way we chart a path for missions in the future:

Globally Aware

One of the most distinctive characteristics of today’s youth and young adults is that they are more connected to the world around them than any previous generation. Frauke Eicker explains the clear cause of this global worldview: “Typically raised in a Western context, this generation is the first to have grown up in a global culture defined by media such as television and the Internet.”¹⁶⁸ Kimball explains the outward focus that accompanies this global mindset, describing them as “culturally sensitive and globally aware. No longer do they perceive things

¹⁶⁷ Olson.

¹⁶⁸ Frauke Eicker, “Innovista: Reaching the Emerging Generation in Europe and Eurasia,” *Lausanne World Pulse* June (2006): 5.

only according to their local context, or even only according to American context.”¹⁶⁹ Graeme Codrington adds, “Millennials are living in an age of unprecedented diversity and exposure to other cultures, surrounded by digital media.”¹⁷⁰

Millennials are likely to reject missions expressions that aren’t contextualized to another culture. The idea of Westerners “bringing in Jesus” simply will not gel with a generation that has learned to affirm the value of all people, regardless of geographic location or ethnicity. For those who embrace faith, they are also likely to think of God as actively at work in all cultures, whether or not there is an established Christian presence. To this point, Sweet asks, “If you think about it, isn’t it the height of theological arrogance the notion that you and I take Jesus to anyone? You mean Jesus never arrived on the scene until *you* got there?”¹⁷¹

The emerging generation is also likely to reject missions expressions that position us as the expert. For example, they are unlikely to embrace the classic paradigm of Westerners entering other cultures to teach or evangelize. While missions can indeed claim a rich history of successfully accomplishing these very things, Millennials are likely to see these activities as little more than American imperialism. Besides, as an increasing number of countries are poised to overtake the United States in terms of missions activity and commitment, the time has come for us to listen and learn. This will be difficult for us to do, but indeed an imperative part of gaining the respect of the next generation. Gibbons recommends we learn this third-cultural principle: “Listen more than we speak. Americans, in particular, are known for our loudness and inability to listen respectfully and well.”¹⁷²

One benefit of the global ethos defining Millennials is that for those who do feel called into foreign missions, they are much more likely to thrive in a cross-cultural context without the attitude of isolationism or superiority that many of their missions ancestors were unfortunately known for. Johnson, Crossing and Ryu write, “Compared to their parents, emerging postmodern youth around the world are more open to other cultures—a distinct advantage for effective mission work.”¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Kimball, 75-76.

¹⁷⁰ Graeme Codrington, “Leading and Connecting with the Next Generation by Understanding Generational Differences,” *Lausanne World Pulse* June (2008): 6.

¹⁷¹ Leonard I. Sweet, *Nudge : Awakening Each Other to the God Who’s Already There*, 1st Ed. ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 72.

¹⁷² Gibbons, 197.

¹⁷³ Johnson, Crossing, and Ryu, 2.

We will likely find the greatest motivation for engaging Millennials by allowing them to see what is happening in other cultures, where there is a remarkable zeal toward and embrace of missions among the next generation. While missions in the American church continues to lose its footing, the baton has more than adequately been passed to much of the two-thirds world. Law notes this exciting trend: “A resurgence of robust enthusiasm for missions is surfacing across the vast continents in a generation of young people ready to take this message of hope to their dying post-modern, post-Christian world.” He adds, referencing the great missionary to China of the nineteenth century, “Hudson Taylor’s single-minded passion to see the Kingdom of God ushered in is being witnessed again in the hearts and mission aspirations of young men and women from China and throughout Asia, Australia, Africa, and Latin America.”¹⁷⁴

Community

Another value held closely by Millennials is that of community. In a world of broken relationships, they yearn for meaningful and substantial connections that go the distance. Eicker explains: “Because many... have seen their families break down, those in the emerging generation value friendship above all else. This results in a strong desire for community.”¹⁷⁵

Unfortunately, at times traditional missions expressions have emphasized individuality over and above that of community. We have typically built metrics and measured effectiveness around missionary prayers letters, numbers of individual conversions, personal evangelism and mission as something that is largely lived out individually. Phil Butler describes the modern missionary movement as one that “has been so heavily influenced by Western culture and its highly individualistic forms of lifestyle and Christian witness.”¹⁷⁶ Similarly, Rick Warren has characterized the old model of missions as “Pay, pray and stay out of the way.”¹⁷⁷ This paradigm may have worked in the past, but not for a generation that is relationally wired. They want to be hands-on and see meaningful connections develop.

Thus, the church must do a better job at making the connection between missions and this widely held generational value of community. According to Frost and Hirsch, the connection is a

¹⁷⁴ Law: 7.

¹⁷⁵ Eicker: 5.

¹⁷⁶ Phil Butler, “Effective Church Planting Is Partnership,” *Lausanne World Pulse* September (2005): 15.

¹⁷⁷ Rick used this phrase at a Saddleback PEACE Plan briefing I attended in fall 2005.

logical one: “Christian mission is a relational activity that happens through the conduit of human relations.”¹⁷⁸ Bevans adds, “We have moved from a missiology of power to a missiology of relationship and vulnerability.” He adds, “What this means in concrete is that being in mission is about sharing deeply in people’s lives: building real relationships and friendships with those we serve...”¹⁷⁹

As such, the generic missions laundry list of names (referring to the standard roster of supported missionaries) will no longer cut it. Churches will have to find creative and personal ways to share stories and foster heart connections. J.M. Terry states what should be an obvious truth: “Churches and missions agencies realize that young adults in North America will only support missions if they feel a personal connection with the missionaries.”¹⁸⁰ One of the best ways to promote this relational dynamic is to coordinate short-term trips, as much as possible, in conjunction with a church’s missionary who is already serving on the field (as opposed to traveling under the auspices of a third-party organization).

Additionally, the value of relationship ought to be given a high priority by missions agencies, especially in the area of recruitment for the future. Murray Decker explains the likely outcome: “Mission agencies that tap into these relational networks will do better than those who depend on big campaigns and slick promotional marketing.”¹⁸¹ Thus, Millennials are not going to be engaged primarily by programs and campaigns, as they “prefer smaller, more intimate and more in-depth relational mission efforts.”¹⁸²

Past motivators for missions (reaching the unreached, fulfilling the Great Commission before Christ’s return, etc.) are likely to be much less effective than that of the prospect of relationship. Neither will guilt tactics work. Decker adds, “This generation of students responds to an invitation to relationship, not guilt. Guilt-based appeals are not just bad theology; they are a poor mobilization strategy.”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Frost and Hirsch, 47.

¹⁷⁹ Kalu and others, 8.

¹⁸⁰ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 240-241.

¹⁸¹ Murray Decker, “The Emerging College Generation and Missions: Issues, Attitudes, Postures and Passions,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2007): 318.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 317.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 321.

Desire to Serve

One of the greatest areas of possibility in terms of connecting Millennials with missions has to do with their eagerness to serve and make a difference. Erwin McManus writes, “All of us have a deeply rooted longing not only for our lives to be different but to make a difference in the lives of others. We are created with a need to have hope and to give it.”¹⁸⁴ Millennials seem to get this truth, as they are eager to pitch in and often do so spontaneously. According to Tiplady, “One of the characteristics of postmodernity is the desire for immediacy, for involvement, for tangible and focused involvement.”¹⁸⁵ These sentiments are echoed by Graeme Codrington who adds, “They are sociable, optimistic, environmentally aware, collaborative, influential, and achievement-oriented... they want to make a difference in the world.”¹⁸⁶

Additionally, in an increasing measure, Millennials are very much drawn to the idea of doing their part to minimize the brokenness and injustice they see in today’s world. Perhaps jaded by the selfishness and excesses of those older than them, youth are willing to set aside some of their comforts in order to help balance out some of the inequality that is so prevalent in the world around them. Howe and Strauss explain this reaction: “Millennials will also correct for what today’s teens perceive are the excesses of middle-aged Boomers—the narcissism, impatience, iconoclasm, and constant focus on talk (usually argument) over action.”¹⁸⁷

Needless to say, the church has a great opportunity to promote missions as the ultimate fulfillment of these values. Especially for those missions efforts that align with Millennial values (i.e. service ministry, social justice, compassion efforts, etc.), the opportunities are limitless given the church’s presence and involvement around the globe. The key is that Millennials are presented with opportunities to engage personally and not just watch someone else fix the problem from a distance. Decker summarizes: “The Millennial generation brings a ‘can do’ spirit to missions. They are fixers. They are not content to sit, watch and wait... Backed by the resources of their supportive parents, current students appear far less apathetic or paralyzed to

¹⁸⁴ Erwin Raphael McManus, *Soul Cravings : An Exploration of the Human Spirit* (Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson Books, 2006), “Destiny: entry 20”.

¹⁸⁵ Tiplady, *World of Difference : Global Mission at the Pic ‘N’ Mix Counter*, 90.

¹⁸⁶ Codrington: 7-8.

¹⁸⁷ Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising : The Next Great Generation /by Neil Howe and Bill Strauss* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 66.

initiate action. They want to be involved, but that does not necessarily translate into eager ‘joiners’ of existing mission structures.”¹⁸⁸

Holistic Worldview

Frost and Hirsch write, “The new global culture... sees a need for a greater integration between spirit and matter. Its perspective on spirituality is more incarnational and immanent than dualistic. In fact, its worldview is closer to the classic Judaistic spirit than to Hellenistic consciousness.”¹⁸⁹ This global culture is also painfully aware of the brokenness of the world in which we live. Consequently, as Wright points out, “We need a holistic gospel because the world is in a holistic mess.”¹⁹⁰

At least in my conservative evangelical circles, we’ve so emphasized the evangelism and church planting aspects of missions that we’ve forgotten the social responsibility to which Christ also calls us. We are not just to be the mind of Christ, but also His hands and feet. Younger generations are naturally drawn to acts of compassion, and missions has been so slow to get this. I love this quote from the Latin American Congress on Evangelism: “To discuss whether we should evangelize or promote social action is worthless. They go together. They are inseparable. One without the other is evidence of a deficient Christian life. So we must not try to justify service for our neighbor by claiming that it will help us in our evangelism. God is equally interested in our service and in our evangelistic task.”¹⁹¹ Similarly, Engel and Dyrness write, “We have too long perpetuated a Western privatized faith on the field that dichotomizes evangelism and social transformation in a destructive way.”¹⁹²

This value of holism must drive us to see people and communities over and above numbers and projects. Our partnerships in other cultures must foster a great contextualization of the gospel that enhances a culture, not divides it. “Rather than pulling people out of their community, isolating them and adding them into our Christian community,” writes Siga Arles, “we should work to make them followers of Christ within their existing communities, to

¹⁸⁸ Decker, “The Emerging College Generation and Missions: Issues, Attitudes, Postures and Passions,” 320.

¹⁸⁹ Frost and Hirsch, 134.

¹⁹⁰ Wright, “Re-Affirming Holistic Mission: A Cross-Centered Approach in All Areas of Life,” 12.

¹⁹¹ Samuel Escobar, “The Social Impact of the Gospel,” in *Is Revolution Change?* ed. Brian Griffiths (InterVarsity Press, 1972), pp. 100,98. Quoted in Escobar, *The New Global Mission : The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone*, 146-147.

¹⁹² Engel and Dyrness, 21.

dialogue, to extend the church as an inclusive community, to count them in, to develop religious harmony, and to seek peace with all.”¹⁹³

Drawn toward Compassion and Repelled by Injustice

It is widely known that the next generation tends to quickly embrace efforts that help the oppressed, needy and forgotten in our world. They resonate with the notion that “the righteous care about justice for the poor” (Proverbs 29:7, NIV). David Kinnaman describes Millennials as “more sensitive to issues related to justice and poverty.”¹⁹⁴ Youth and young adults tend to possess a generational ethos that stirs them toward action, especially if they think that their efforts may result in tangible change somewhere else in the world. Bauman describes the “justice renaissance here in the West.” He adds that “the younger generation, called the ‘Justice Generation’ by some, is reaching out in unprecedented ways.”¹⁹⁵

Compassion and justice issues have become all the rage in media: whether it is U2’s Bono, American Idol’s annual *Idol Gives Back* telethon, or Oprah’s funding of African orphanages, culturally we have come to a place where it is valued and even expected that we will leverage our Western resources and excess for the benefit of global causes. Bill and Melinda Gates have even brought philanthropy to the nation’s billionaires: joining forces with Warren Buffett and others, they are committed to eradicating some of the world’s deadliest diseases. Not surprisingly, a recent Barna poll found that 86% of all Americans describe themselves as “caring deeply about social injustice.”

The ubiquity of global news feeds (Twitter, Google News, RSS, etc.) means that today’s youth are more familiar than ever with events developing around the world. Even events and conditions that would have likely gone unnoticed in past years (especially in farther reaches of the world) are quickly capable of going viral when an emotional story gets broadcast in cyberspace. One widely known example is the *Invisible Children* documentary that profiles children who are forced to night commute in Uganda. Filmed and produced by Christian college students from Biola University, the movie aims to raise awareness of the Ugandan situation lest

¹⁹³ Arles: 21.

¹⁹⁴ “Despite Benefits, Few Americans Have Experienced Short-Term Mission Trips”, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/20-donorscause/22-despite-benefits-few-americans-have-experienced-short-term-mission-trips> (accessed April 23 2009).

¹⁹⁵ Bauman: 232.

more children and youth be kidnapped and recruited to fight and kill as members of the Lord's Resistance Army. This viral film has engaged thousands of students across the country and has been shown in churches and public schools alike.¹⁹⁶ I personally know students who have mobilized their entire class at school to raise hundreds of dollars for this cause. For the naysayers who contend that today's youth are lazy and uninterested in anyone but themselves¹⁹⁷, I would unhesitantly point to movements such as this that have captured the hearts of American youth.

While the emerging culture has largely rejected organized religion, it's interesting that they see Jesus as a model of compassion and mercy. Kimball explains: "(They) think of Jesus as one who stood up for the poor and oppressed. They have tremendous respect for him because of that."¹⁹⁸ As the church engages in missional activity that includes compassion, we will earn the respect of outsiders. Kimball adds, "Those who like Jesus but not the church are watching to see if we are taking the poor and oppressed as seriously as Jesus did."¹⁹⁹ Missions is an excellent conduit through which people of all ages can engage in acts of compassion (both locally and globally) and address issues of social justice.

The task the church faces is connecting the next generation with expressions of Christ's mission and love beyond just humanitarian efforts. Anders Bjorvand affirms this challenge: "The focus among new generations has been on relief work without the eternal perspective of missions to go alongside... We need effective tools to teach coming generations of holistic missions where relief efforts and the good news of eternal salvation go hand in hand."²⁰⁰ We will need to find compelling ways to champion the Great Commission in such a way that the emerging culture sees deed *and* word as inseparable and essential components of Jesus' ministry.

¹⁹⁶ See <http://www.invisiblechildren.com>

¹⁹⁷ I recognize this statement is anecdotal but is in reference to the many articles, writings and even caricatures in the media that portray today's youth in this unfortunate way.

¹⁹⁸ Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church : Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007), 111.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 111. Please note I am not advocating a missions focus that only advocates compassion. There is still a tremendous need for evangelism, leader training and church planting. But we must look for creative and compelling ways to engage the emerging culture and highlight the fact that missions is still relevant.

²⁰⁰ Anders Torvill Bjorvand, "The Missionary Game: A Tool for World Missions," *Lausanne World Pulse* September (2006): 39.

Authenticity over Agenda

Millennials have an uncanny ability to sniff out an agenda. This is why tactics such as door-to-door evangelism, crusades, and Christian media are finding less effectiveness in bringing people to faith. Millennials tend to have a holistic perspective on life. They embrace authenticity but generally dislike programs. In the book *Unchristian*, David Kinnaman discusses the primary objections outsiders have toward Christianity. One of the six themes that emerged in their research is that Christians are “too focused on getting converts.” He writes, “Outsiders wonder if we genuinely care about them. They feel like targets rather than people. They question our motives when we try to help them ‘get saved.’”²⁰¹ Whether with global missions or local outreach, Millennials are likely to avoid anything that emphasizes conversion above holism.

The difficulty for the church will be reversing a pervasive trend that, for years, has largely rendered agenda and missions as inseparable. In discussing Jesus’ ministry, Bonk writes, “He showed his followers that any proclamation of the Good News that does not intersect with the actual needs of ordinary people is not good news, but mere religious propaganda.”²⁰² If we attempt to set the agenda of what we think people in other cultures need (rather than listening to them and engaging in a thoughtful process of contextualizing the gospel for them), we will only continue to perpetuate unfortunately stereotypes in missions.

On the *Out of Ur* blog, Dave Gibbons (in regards to his experience with the Southeast Asia tsunami relief) reflected on a previous relief effort: “While in Thailand, the Muslims we worked with on one of the southern islands were sick of the Western ‘help’ they received. They said after the tsunami, ‘western Christians came to give us things without asking what we needed, and then they took pictures with their banners and left.’ Their conclusion, ‘The Christians used us.’”²⁰³ N.J. Demerath III, referring to similar situations in which missionaries have held help in one hand and an agenda in the other, says, “Through it all, the scent of a chauvinistic imperialism was in the air for those inclined to sniff.”²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian : What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity-- and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2007), 29.

²⁰² Bonk, “Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem... Revisited,” 174.

²⁰³ Dave Gibbons, “God’s Voice in the Global Market Meltdown”, Christianity Today http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2008/11/gods_voice_amid.html#more (accessed November 19 2008). Dave is the Senior Pastor at NewSong Church in Irvine, California.

²⁰⁴ Mazlish, Chanda, and Weisbrode, 95.

Part of the pathway toward authenticity which will be attractive to the next generation is for us in the modern missions movement to own our past and repent for the colonialism and imperialism in missions history. We must, in the words of Stephen Bevans, “First of all repent of and ask pardon for the mistakes and even sins of those who have gone before us.”²⁰⁵ We must also own up to the times we have allowed agendas and numbers to supersede relationship. In *The Changing Face of World Missions*, the authors note the “many majority world Christians who charge that Western missiologists rely excessively on numerical goal setting and quantification.”²⁰⁶ Arles adds, “The desire for denominational number growth motivates some to work very hard to improve the numbers, even by outright ‘sheep-stealing’ through offering various incentives. Some groups have used the data simply to pat themselves on the back for an increase in their numbers.”²⁰⁷

If the church in the past has, indeed, tended to institutionalized missions, moving forward we must redefine our scorecard. Butler notes our propensity to “demand to have short-term if not ‘instant’ results.”²⁰⁸ This must change, even if it means the results for our churches and missions agencies look much different than in the past. Arles challenges us to embrace the larger picture: “We may be tempted to look to our numbers and lose sight of the missional priority of compassion and love, which should lead us to enter the world of humans with an incarnate passion for wooing them into the body.”²⁰⁹ If we hope to engage Millennials with missions, then the emphasis in our efforts must be on relationship, life change and community transformation.

Empowerment and Equality

Frost and Hirsch, in *The Shaping of Things to Come*, discuss “a generation that values egalitarianism and community.”²¹⁰ While Millennials are drawn to the concepts of equality and partnership, they are likely to reject most forms of paternalism and hierarchy. Not only do the latter run contrary to the ethos of the youth generation, but they are not complimentary with a world in which both Christianity and missions successes are flourishing primarily outside the

²⁰⁵ Kalu and others, 7.

²⁰⁶ Pocock, Van Rheenen, and McConnell, 38.

²⁰⁷ Arles: 20.

²⁰⁸ Butler: 17.

²⁰⁹ Arles: 20.

²¹⁰ Frost and Hirsch, 21.

West. The classic top-down missions structure will no longer work; we now must do as much (if not more) learning as we do leading. I like what Schreiter describes as “mission from the ground up.” He explains: “This entails listening before speaking, contemplating before acting.”²¹¹

One of the issues I’ve found that come up again and again in conversations with younger people is the paternalistic idea of the Western missionary who “sets up shop overseas” (as one college student put it) and calls all the shots. While this generalization certainly wouldn’t apply to all, I do know a number of missionaries who would aptly fit this caricature. Rather than stepping into another culture and establishing our American leadership structures and hierarchy (as I’ve seen many a missionary do), members of the emerging culture would advocate a more complementary partnership whereby we work alongside nationals and in accordance of the ethos of their community.

The next generation also needs to be encouraged by the reality that Christianity is truly a global religion, not one that is primarily Western. Vethanayagamony explains: “Christianity was once the religion of the confident, technologically advanced, and rising affluent, and sometimes those things were seen as a mark of God’s favor. Christianity, now increasingly, is associated mostly with rather poor people and with some of the poorest countries on earth.”²¹² He adds, “What excites the Christian imagination about this development is that after the long years when the gospel was compromised by being intertwined with imperial power and economic exploitation, it is now restored to the poor and marginalized, who are its original agents.”²¹³

Missions must also take more seriously the role of women in global evangelization and outreach. Dana Robert notes that “the majority of Christians in the emerging churches of the world are women—a fact that holds both for the major ecclesiastical groupings and for geographic areas of greatest Christian growth.”²¹⁴

The irony of the Millennial egalitarian mindset concerns the perceptions of entitlement and selfishness with which other generations have tended to label Millennials. Jonathan Bonk, among many other authors, comment on this growing sense of entitlement: “For us North

²¹¹ Kalu and others, 15.

²¹² Ibid., 65.

²¹³ Ibid., 69.

²¹⁴ Dana L. Robert, “World Christianity as a Women’s Movement,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 4 (2006): 185.

Americans, there is apparently no disembarking from the one-way consumer escalator that raises one generation's luxuries to the level of the next generation's basic entitlements."²¹⁵

Digital

Finally, whether Western or non-Western, today's youth are more digitally savvy, wired and connected online than ever before. Missions has not exactly been known for being on the technological leading edge, and this will have to change if we are to engage Millennials with a missions understanding and commitment.

We will have to increasingly embark on digital missions not only as a means of reaching the youth generation in our own culture, but around the globe as well. Ken Cochrum writes, "To reach this unchurched generation, we must reevaluate the effectiveness of our attractional 'come-to-us' models and keep pressing toward innovative incarnational 'go-where-students-are' models of evangelism and discipleship. Increasingly, this means we must be where they are: online. This is particularly crucial for students living in the shadows of Islam."²¹⁶

Better Define the Remaining Roles for Americans

For better or worse, there are numerous countries and regions where it is no longer safe nor legal for American missionaries to serve. Or in countries such as India where large numbers of Western missionaries remain²¹⁷, the public is increasingly seeing Christianity as a threat to their historical and cultural expressions of faith. Similarly, in Russia where *freedom of religion* is supposedly a right protected by the government, the reality of increasing persecution against Christians bears witness to a different story. Even in Cambodia where people are generally free to do what they want, some provinces are making it increasingly difficult for American missionaries to conduct ministry. Bosch observed, "In the traditional 'mission fields' the position of Western mission agencies and missionaries has undergone a fundamental revision. No longer do missionaries go as ambassadors or representatives of the powerful West to territories subject

²¹⁵ Bonk, "Mission and Mammon," 170.

²¹⁶ Ken Cochrum, "Are Today's Students on Your Radar?," *Lausanne World Pulse* August (2009): 21.

²¹⁷ Note that the vast majority of American missionaries in India are not there visibly and by way of a missionary visa, but do so more covertly and often under a business or educational visa.

to white, 'Christian' nations. They now go to countries frequently hostile to Christian missions."²¹⁸

Preparing the Next Generation

As has been discussed in this essay, the youth generation is eager and ready to serve, and given its global mindedness, one could assume that they are more suited for cross-cultural engagement than any previous generation. They want to do their part to bring hope and healing to a hurting world, and have a holistic ethos that compels them to go far behind shallow or superficial change. At face value, it looks like Millennials are well poised to carry the missions torch in exciting and substantive ways.

From a traditional missions perspective, the reality is a bit more muted. Connecting these globally-minded young adults with our current missions models is not likely to happen. Projections reveal that Western mission agencies will be facing a crisis of finding new recruits. *Mission Frontiers* magazine states the obvious: "The number of longer-term global laborers coming out of the student world is on the decline."²¹⁹ While there does seem to be optimism (my nationwide survey is one source that affirms this) that the youth generation is looking to participate more in certain kinds of missions work, longer-term commitments are unlikely to happen within our present constructs.

The key is that we must be willing to redefine what constitutes a missions commitment. In reference to younger, emerging leaders, Tiplady writes, "They see retention not so much in remaining with an individual organization for thirty years, but journeying their spiritual pilgrimage with Jesus for a lifetime, and that may mean a mix of mission and commercial work, tent making and supporting or a series of two- or three-year roles with a variety of organizations."²²⁰ Assuming the face of Western-sent missionaries becomes more refined and specialized, it means that our traditional one-size-fits-all training methods are becoming outdated. Oxbrow adds, "It will mean rethinking training, as Christian entrepreneurs and business people seek to be fully equipped gospel carriers as they move cross-culturally."²²¹

²¹⁸ Bosch, 364.

²¹⁹ Shaw, "Rebuilding the Corporate Student Mission Movement," 8.

²²⁰ Tiplady, *Postmission: World Mission by a Postmodern Generation*, 48.

²²¹ Oxbrow: 7.

To Oxbrow's point, the issue of training and missionary preparedness also represents a significant paradigm shift in the world of missions. Churches and missions agencies alike tend to have very defined constructs into which a candidate must fit if they are to be declared "ready" for cross-cultural work and marketable for fundraising among churches and individuals. Bonk argues that by the time the missionary candidate has finally been cleared and deployed to serve on the field, many are too consumed with responsibilities and ongoing fundraising to have time to learn the language, let alone truly incarnate the culture.

As we respond eagerly to members of the next generation who are interested in making a missions commitment, it will be critical that we have relevant and effective systems in place to train and prepare them for cross-cultural ministry. Hesselgrave writes about the *re-amateurization* of missionaries, describing the many students and young adults who rushed onto the mission field in the late nineteenth century. All had great enthusiasm for the mission field, but lacked adequate training and readiness for a cross-cultural experience. Consequently, many mistakes were made and the cause of overseas missions was set back decades. As missions agencies scramble to find new missionary recruits and likely lower their expectations for who is accepted, Hesselgrave fears another re-amateurization will take place: "Work too often is carried on by missionaries who lack what they need to be effective, either because they have invested too much of their lives in education or too little."²²²

In response to the lack of advance preparedness plaguing many new missionaries, Winter advocated preparing potential candidates before schooling even begins. He writes, "It is unwise for mission agencies to wait until young people are college graduates to recruit them for the cause of missions. If they can be contacted years earlier they can be advised about the courses to take in college and the answers to intellectual problems they encounter."²²³

Another area of sending must be addressed: deploying missionaries into a cross-cultural context who haven't yet demonstrated a missional commitment in their own backyard. If people haven't fulfilled a missionary role within their own culture, how can the assumption be made that they will suddenly do so overseas? African national Pius Wakatama writes, "It is unfortunate, but true, that there are many men and women who went overseas as missionaries who at home never had the experience of leading someone to Christ, teaching Sunday school or preaching a

²²² Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict : 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today*, 205.

²²³ Ralph D. Winter, "What Are Mission Frontiers?," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 22, no. 4 (2005): 156.

sermon.”²²⁴ Missions starts in our Jerusalem, and perhaps more prospective missionaries need to be encouraged to set aside their lofty plans to reach another people group until they have made an effort to reach their neighbors, friends and coworkers. Wakatama adds, “American Christians should also be encouraged to be missionaries among their own people of all races, instead of always being challenged to go overseas.”²²⁵

Thus, as we reach out to the next generation in the hopes they commit to missions, we must also juxtapose our desire with the reality that the roles for Westerners in cross-cultural missions are shrinking. The only model that offers hope of success moving forward is a higher-caliber, more selective missionary force. Perhaps we would be wise to follow the recommendation of a missions-minded group in 1932: “The Commission is convinced that a much more critical selection of candidates should be made, even at the risk of curtailing the number of missionaries sent out. Those appointed should have the benefit of a carefully planned training for their work; great pains should be taken in the designation of appointees to specific tasks and locations. Whenever possible, nationals should have a voice in their selection and retention, and if feasible, the early years of their service should be of a probationary nature.”²²⁶

More recently, Stephen Davis has echoed the same concerns of greater training and preparedness for those who do deploy to the field:

“We would do well to insist on raising the bar for missionary training. At the very least we should expect some exposure to the disciplines of a biblical theology of missions, history of missions, studies in world religions, and some exposure to cultural anthropology... we should not be quick in sending missionaries who have not been adequately prepared, who have not developed relational and theological skills, and who have not demonstrated abilities and effectiveness in the area of their calling. Cross-cultural competency cannot be learned in a classroom.”²²⁷

Multipliers

Multiplication is the process of leaders who train other leaders. This is a biblical model in which “fruitful workers and faith communities intentionally develop and reproduce leaders, acknowledging emerging leaders early in the process of building a community of faith. They

²²⁴ Wakatama, 84-85.

²²⁵ Ibid., 110.

²²⁶ Laymen’s Foreign Missions Inquiry. Commission of Appraisal. and Hocking, 327.

²²⁷ Davis: 24.

mentor leaders who in turn mentor others.”²²⁸ It is modeled by Paul when he writes to Timothy, “You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others” (2 Timothy 2:2, NLT). The multiplication of godly leadership continues to be desperately needed around the world. Given the rapid growth of the Christian faith in the Global South, it will take many more trained leaders who can plant new churches and mentor/disciple those new to the faith.

There is still a valuable role for Americans who serve as *multipliers*, or a trainer of trainers. The idea is that an American pastor or leader (with an education and experience relevant to those in another culture) pours into national leaders, with the eventual goal of fully equipping the national leaders to carry out the training on their own. In order to prevent a cycle of dependency from developing (Western-sent leaders who remain rather than fully empowering local leadership), Gailyn Van Rheenen notes that “churches must be initiated with a comprehensive strategy for phasing out missionary personnel once local leaders have been trained.”²²⁹

Multiplication is not just limited to church leadership. Many Westerners have reproducible skills—from numerous professions and walks of life—that can be shared with potential leaders in other cultures who want to model kingdom values. The key is that the process results in multiplication (a Westerner who empowers the locals to reproduce leadership themselves), not addition (often the classic Western-sent career missionary who remains for decades in a foreign setting). In a *Christianity Today* interview, Rick Warren explains this dynamic: “The role of professionals is to train amateurs. When a dentist says, ‘I’d like to go to Latin America and pull teeth,’ that’s great. That’s addition. I’d like him to go to Latin America and train people how to pull teeth. It’s not just addition—it becomes multiplication. In the Great Commission, Jesus says, ‘And teach them to do all things I’ve commanded you.’ He doesn’t say, ‘Do it for them.’ He says, ‘Teach them to do.’”²³⁰

²²⁸ Eric Adams, Don Allen, and Bob Fish, “Seven Themes of Fruitfulness,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 26, no. 2 (2009): 80.

²²⁹ Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Missions : Biblical Foundations & Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Pub. House, 1996), 174.

²³⁰ Timothy C. Morgan, “After the Aloha Shirts,” *Christianity Today*, October 2008, 44.

Creative Access Platforms

Fewer and fewer countries approve of vocational missionaries (especially from the West given recent geopolitics). But in those areas where missionary work is restricted or even illegal, those called to missions can still benefit from potential points of entry (albeit limited ones). Terry explains: “Because many nations no longer grant traditional missionary visas, missionaries use creative access to gain entry into closed countries.”²³¹ This creative access is most likely to take place when an individual possesses a desired skill(s), whether teaching English to nationals, starting a business based on kingdom values, or providing leadership for any number of companies and organizations in the Majority World that are eager to benefit from the skills of someone who has been trained in the United States.

Much has been written about the establishment of businesses in other countries that promote kingdom values as a part of the company’s ethos. They pay fair wages to their employees. They conduct business from a moral and ethical foundation. They respect all workers and value their contributions. And they create environments where it is safe to have spiritual discussions and address issues of deeper meaning. Terry adds, “Some Christian entrepreneurs have founded businesses in the Majority World in order to bless the people economically and win a hearing for the gospel. This... will increase in the current century.”²³²

Others go into a country or community to meet humanitarian needs. This can provide access to even the remotest and most restrictive of regions, as evidenced by three doctors our church supports (both full-time missionaries) in Pakistan and Indonesia. Mike Barnett explains the open doors this work often provides: “Humanitarian aid and development platforms, schools, hospitals and the like often result in favor and good will among the locals that leads them to be open to the gospel. Such a platform answers, ‘What do you have for me?’”²³³

It is through these creative access avenues that individuals can build bridges with the surrounding community, “living out a model of evangelization and church planting that depends on everyday disciples of Christ for witness, teaching, mentoring, and community.”²³⁴ As an

²³¹ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 244.

²³² *Ibid.*, 244.

²³³ Mike Barnett, “Creative Access Platforms: What Are They and Do We Need Them?,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* Jan 2005 (2005).

²³⁴ Pocock, Van Rheenen, and McConnell, 211.

increasing number of countries close their doors to missionaries and traditional missions expressions, we will need to explore those avenues that still lead to open doors.

Proponents of Justice

While much has been written about the challenges inherent in cross-cultural service when a missionary is not indigenous to the host culture (i.e. lack of language skills, cultural savvy, etc.), there are times when foreigners can also assume a role that locals could not. In cultures where locals are often harassed or persecuted for speaking out against the status quo (often the result of government policies and/or inaction), there are times when foreigners can have a unique advantage in terms of bringing attention to issues that locals may not easily be able to do. While global perception of America remains mixed, the fact remains that in many cultures Americans are looked upon as “experts.” Evens explains: “Even on an interpersonal level, foreigners, particularly Western foreigners and especially those with white skin, are assumed to be experts and attributed with social status and education often undeservedly.”²³⁵

Using the example of supporting Cambodian activists, Evens adds, “As foreigners, we have a tremendous opportunity to use this unmerited power to advocate for justice, bring international attention to issues of injustice, and even to extend some protection to (foreign) activists... In the struggle for God’s justice for the oppressed, the outsider has a unique opportunity to leverage national efforts to seek justice and peace. This represents a ‘talent’ that I believe God will ultimately hold us accountable to unearth and use for the good of his kingdom.”²³⁶

Technology

Given the ubiquity of the internet in practically every culture, the opportunity is greater than ever to leverage the internet in our outreach efforts. According to Global Media Outreach CEO Walt Wilson, “We are the first generation in all of human history to hold in our hands the

²³⁵ Evens: 15.

²³⁶ Ibid., 15.

technology to reach every man, woman, and child on earth.”²³⁷ Just recently (August 2009) the disputed re-election of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad proved the power of the internet in even the most repressive of cultures: as the government enacted widespread internet blockages in an effort to stem the news of widespread protests, Iranian youth utilized social networking sites like Twitter to voice their angst to a global audience. In other cultures where information is also tightly controlled and freedom of religion is restricted (i.e. China, Saudi Arabia), anyone with internet access can still make their way online and visit a growing number of websites that clearly point people to faith in Jesus Christ. Academic Peter Fischer-Nielsen writes, “Although some regimes try to control which websites a population can visit, it is almost impossible to suppress unwanted information altogether given the fluent and decentralized character of the Internet combined with the receiver’s possibility of surfing the Internet in privacy.”²³⁸ Wilson adds, “Some could be arrested or killed for seeking Christ openly. We must make the gospel available and actionable on computers, laptops, and hand-held devices to communicate privately in words and videos in native language.”²³⁹

My contention is that the internet is just as valid a mission field as any geographic locality or missions group. Eric Célérier (a pioneer in internet evangelism) writes, “I do not see the Internet as a tool. Instead, I consider the Internet to be a missionary field. In 1865, Hudson Taylor created the China Inland Mission because he had the vision to reach China with the gospel. The 1.2 billion people using the Internet are just as important as the ones Taylor was seeking to reach.”²⁴⁰ Tony Whittaker adds, “The Web has enormous potential for pioneer evangelism (including in 10/40 Window countries), as well as for discipling believers.”²⁴¹ Later in Célérier’s article, he calls on the Christian community to step up its efforts in taking the internet more seriously as a mission field. Fischer-Nielsen adds, “The complex nature of the Internet (being a medium, an information archive, and a social space) demands equally complex thinking from the Church.”²⁴²

²³⁷ Walt Wilson, “Internet—the Transition of Everything from Atoms to Bits,” *Lausanne World Pulse* November (2008): 25.

²³⁸ Peter Fischer-Nielsen, “Online Mission,” *Lausanne World Pulse* October/November (2009): 8.

²³⁹ Wilson: 26.

²⁴⁰ Eric Célérier, “The Internet: The New Missionary Challenge of the Twenty-First Century,” *Lausanne World Pulse* May (2008): 29.

²⁴¹ Tony Whittaker, “Digital Ministry—Incredible Mission Opportunities,” *Lausanne World Pulse* February (2009): 18.

²⁴² Fischer-Nielsen: 7.

If the projections for global internet use are true (Whittaker references the “second billion” internet users that will come online soon, most of whom will come from the non-Western world), there is plenty of room for many additional websites that provide online faith communities and offer insight into Scripture, faith and discipleship. Just the fact that millions annually profess faith in Jesus Christ via Christian websites, internet evangelism has more than proven its place as a valid missions expression.

Bible Translation

Many people groups remain around the world that lack access to the Bible in their own language. Doug Birdsall reflects on some sobering facts concerning the number of people groups that still lack access to the complete Bible: “Even with great increases in Bible translations over the last century, still less than ten percent of the world’s languages have complete Bibles. Only 458 of the world’s 7,299 languages have full translations of the Bible, while 4,723 languages are without any scripture translations.”²⁴³

While Bible translation is by no means a new expression of missions, it nonetheless represents a critical component of fulfilling the Great Commission: connecting the world’s unreached with the transforming message of the gospel. According to Eshelman, “Scripture translation is the number one priority throughout the world because it’s impossible to do ministry without a Biblical foundation.”²⁴⁴ The paradox is that there seems to be less interest than ever in Bible translation efforts. In the 2007 survey of megachurches referenced earlier in this essay, it was revealed that “Most megachurches see Bible translation as a relatively low priority (which) would also suggest that most of these churches are not orienting their mission commitments to the least Christian portions of the world.”²⁴⁵

In response, Avery Willis writes, “We must have Scriptures that speak in every language to every culture.”²⁴⁶ However, as missiologist and translation expert Gilles Gravelle points out, “the number of people training in the West to do Bible translation is on the decline.”²⁴⁷ There is

²⁴³ Doug Birdsall, “Advancing Scripture Translation,” *Lausanne World Pulse* September (2009): 1.

²⁴⁴ Eshleman: 11.

²⁴⁵ Priest, Wilson, and Johnson: 101.

²⁴⁶ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 152.

²⁴⁷ Gilles Gravelle, “Bible Translation in Historical Context: The Changing Role of Cross-Cultural Workers,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 27, no. 1 (2010): 13.

still a tremendous need for skilled individuals who can help further this task, and Americans have been blessed with many of the resources that facilitate this process (i.e. availability of technology, proximity to Bible translation organizations headquartered on American soil, cost effectiveness of printing and publishing, etc.). Gravelle adds, “I tend to think (God) is not satisfied until people can know Him more deeply and completely within their own language and cultural setting.”²⁴⁸

Perhaps one of the most compelling arguments for Scripture translation as it pertains to the next generation is the potential for the positive social impact that often happens. Harriet Hill explains this positive relationship: “Mother-tongue Scriptures are needed today both for comprehension and so that the Gospel message can permeate, revitalize, and transform local cultures.”²⁴⁹ Academic Chandra Mallampalli notes that translation “is not strictly a linguistic enterprise but encompasses many aspects of local culture.” He adds that it could even “be seen as a means of cultural preservation and as the antithesis of cultural imperialism of any kind.”²⁵⁰

Bible translation must not just take place on the printed page, but through a variety of technologies and media. In reference to the hundreds of millions of people around the world that remain illiterate, Professor Viggo Søggaard writes, “A strategy for ‘distributing’ scripture to non-literates will need to be substantially different from the approaches used when distributing printed scripture... Recent calls for holistic involvement and engagement material are of extreme importance for agencies that aim at fulfilling their mandate of reaching all people.”²⁵¹

One of the primary challenges with existing Bible translation methods (though still very much needed) concerns the masses of people on the planet who are illiterate. Willis explains: “More than two-thirds of the world’s population are oral communicators and do not comprehend literate presentations of the gospel commonly used by Westerners and indigenous leaders who were influenced by Western missionaries.”²⁵² Consequently, we must embrace methods that promote newer technologies that contextualize the gospel into visual and oral forms for the world’s unreached. Experienced Bible translator T. Wayne Dye notes that “today the focus is on

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 18.

²⁴⁹ Harriet Hill, “The Vernacular Treasure: A Century of Mother-Tongue Bible Translation,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 2 (2006): 86.

²⁵⁰ Chandra Mallampalli, “World Christianity and “Protestant America”: Historical Narratives and the Limits of Christian Pluralism,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 1 (2006): 9.

²⁵¹ Viggo Søggaard, “Advancing Bible Translation for Non-Reading Audiences,” *Lausanne World Pulse* September (2009): 6.

²⁵² Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 150.

developing avenues for making the Bible available orally or visually.”²⁵³ Organizations such as *Faith Comes by Hearing* and *Global Recordings Network* manufacture digital audio players that can easily be customized to include audio presentations specific to a particular language, dialect and culture.

Rethink Our Approach to Short-Term Missions

One of the current discussions in missions circles has to do with the value of short-term missions trips. In recent years these trips have been one of the primary ways that churches engage their members in cross-cultural missions. According to Robert Priest, “By 2005, approximately 1.6 million adult U.S. church members were traveling abroad every year on short-term mission (STM) trips, with the average (median) amount of time spent in service abroad per trip (not counting travel time) now being eight days.”²⁵⁴ He then estimates that “the number of U.S. Christians traveling abroad on (short-term) trips is likely to be somewhere between two and three million per year.”²⁵⁵ Many other studies also point to this exponential growth in the years ahead.

Clearly short-term trips have become a popular option for churches looking to engage their people. Naomi Frizzell writes, “For some North American churches, the number and frequency of short-term mission trips can be a badge of honor of sorts.”²⁵⁶ Priest notes that “mission trips have largely replaced summer retreats or youth camps as the annual youth event for church youth groups.”²⁵⁷

The benefit, of course, is that we are seeing increasing numbers of people demonstrating interest in missions. In fact, in my survey of churches participants were asked this question: “*What factors are helping advance the cause of missions in the American church?*” Again a variety of options were offered. What was interesting is that responders ranked one response far higher than any others. More than 8 out of 10 (81%) chose this statement: “*Willingness of Americans to go on short-term missions trips.*” So one of the paradoxes this survey uncovered is

²⁵³ T. Wayne Dye, “Scripture in an Accessible Form: The Most Common Avenue to Increased Scripture Engagement,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 26, no. 3 (2009): 124.

²⁵⁴ Kalu and others, 85.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁵⁶ Naomi Frizzell, “New Publication Examines North American Short-Term Missions,” *Lausanne World Pulse* February (2009): 30.

²⁵⁷ Kalu and others, 88.

that while Americans are hesitant—even unwilling—to make long term commitments or sacrifices, we are also willing to engage in opportunities that expose us to missions and even enable us to serve.

Clearly short-term trips have their benefits and are accomplishing the task of moving a greater number of people toward an understanding and practice of missions. But there is considerable room for adjustment and improvement. Along with many other changes that need to be made within the word of missions, so we must also rethink our approach to short-term experiences.

Mission or Tourism?

Until recently, there has been widespread support within the Christian community around the value of these trips. The general consensus has been that these short-term experiences are just as much *missions* as our other traditional endeavors. As Karla Koll points out, “Many of the guidebooks available in abundance in Christian bookstores... simply assume that these short-term trips are mission.”²⁵⁸

But a growing debate has surfaced in recent years regarding the value of these trips. Brad Greenberg summarizes a common perception about those who engage in short-term trips: “The overwhelming majority of American missionaries today are ‘vacationaries.’ Joining mission trips of two weeks or less, they serve in locales where Christianity already predominates.”²⁵⁹ Stetzer agrees, adding that these trips are “so often really Christian tourism in disguise.”²⁶⁰ And the Washington Post discussed the criticism around these trips as being “too expensive” and “lacking in value.”²⁶¹

Frizzel then summarizes some of the key debate issues concerning these trips: “Have we gone too far in encouraging churches to engage their members in short-term mission trips? If so,

²⁵⁸ Karla Ann Koll, “Taking Wolves among Lambs: Some Thoughts on Training for Short-Term Mission Facilitation,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 2 (2010): 96.

²⁵⁹ Greenberg.

²⁶⁰ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 79.

²⁶¹ Washington Post article entitled “Churches Retool Mission Trips: Work Abroad Criticized for High Cost and Lack of Value” dated July 5, 2008. Online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/04/AR2008070402233.html?hpid=topnews>

at what expense—both literally and figuratively?”²⁶² Critics would agree that these trips are, to a large degree, a distraction to the indigenous missions force.

Reducing Our Western Footprint

Whereas the traditional thinking around short-term trips was that they were enthusiastically embraced by those on the field (often nationals), closer examination is revealing otherwise. A growing number of people are adding their voice to the belief that while short-term missions trips are beneficial for the *sending* church, the benefits are much more fleeting when assessing the *host* culture. As Americans, our style is often to travel overseas with a clear sense of our agenda (sometimes what *we* think the host culture needed), but much less consideration is often given to what our hosts would say *they* need. Academic Brian Howell points out that “an unintended consequence of this emphasis... is that short-term missions become decontextualized.”²⁶³

In fact, Vethanayagamony and Chia comment that many of our efforts may not even be effective: “Though the majority of short-term mission teams head to the Global South, this does not mean that the missionaries are equipped to engage the Christians there, many of whom are more devout and dynamic.” They add, “This new paradigm of mission is often more for the benefit of the missionaries and their home church than for those on the receiving end.”²⁶⁴ Frizzell asks a related question that we must ask of ourselves: “Do the national and field workers who play host to these trips find them beneficial—or are they more of a distraction to their real work?”²⁶⁵ We will not find helpful answers in response to quick questions. It will take the cultivating of long-term relationships to uncover the honesty and critical observation we will need moving forward.

Sweet asks us to strongly consider the impact our efforts will make on the host culture. He asks (and these questions could very easily apply to many of the projects that fall under the umbrella of short-term missions), “How many of our ‘missional projects’ have left other peoples with that colonizing feeling of being ‘benighted barbarians’ and seeing their societies (at best) as

²⁶² Frizzell: 30.

²⁶³ Brian M. Howell, “Mission to Nowhere: Putting Short-Term Missions into Context,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 4 (2009): 206.

²⁶⁴ Kalu and others, xxii.

²⁶⁵ Frizzell: 30.

underdeveloped versions of our own? How many of our missional initiatives have left native peoples feeling like they just had an invasion more than a gift?”²⁶⁶ We must avoid any semblance of colonialism or paternalism if we hope to characterize our short-term missions expressions as kingdom-building.

Another recurring area of criticism concerns the dependency that is created with unnecessary amounts of funds suddenly flood the local mission field. Koll explains: “The effects of the short-term mission movement are being felt on the ground in communities throughout the Third World, as the material aid and economic resources brought by short-term mission groups to local churches and communities are deepening and broadening dependency.”²⁶⁷ Much still needs to be done in terms of minimizing our stereotypical American “footprint” when serving in other cultures.

The solution, regardless of how difficult this paradigm shift may be, is that we need to send short termers—whenever possible—only at the request of the nationals and not as a way to advance our own agenda (think of the countless iterations of VBS that would fall into this category). Sending churches and agencies alike will need to place a much higher priority on listening and learning from the nationals as opposed to coming in as the “experts” or the great benefactors. Koll expresses doubt whether this will ever take place: “I suspect that as long as mission is defined by the act of going, the task undertaken, or the target population, it will be impossible for the groups who travel to understand listening as a vital part of what they are called to do in that new place.”²⁶⁸ Only time will tell whether missions can embrace this difficult but vital change.

Commitment or Convenience?

Another primary (and, for many, surprising) discovery regarding short-term trips is that they correlate with fewer Americans making longer-term missions commitments (especially in the case of the classic career missionary deployment). While the classic thinking was that short-term missions stimulated interest in longer-term commitments, this no longer seems to be the case. Jaffarian writes, “The North American missions movement is sending well more than sixty

²⁶⁶ Sweet, *So Beautiful*, 230.

²⁶⁷ Koll: 93.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

times as many mission-trip participants as long-term missionaries. Put another way, for every long-term missionary serving overseas there are more than sixty mission-trip participants, nearly all of them untrained or lightly trained laypersons.”²⁶⁹

One explanation is that short-term missions have become much more attractive to Westerners given the decreasing value of long-term commitment and sacrifice in our culture (this was expressed by multiple ministry leaders who responded to my 2009 missions survey). Jaffarian wonders if the trend “is also driven by the hollow hope, expectation, and rhetoric about the impact of short-term missions activity on long-term missions commitment.”²⁷⁰

Missiologists are also noting how the vast sums of money spent on short-term missions trips are coming at the expense of longer-term, more substantial missions work. Winter wrote, “The massive trend to send out young and old for two weeks will continue to drain money from more serious mission, adding helpful education to the local sending churches but little direct or indirect contribution to missions.”²⁷¹ Moreau offers a similar perspective: “The reality of immediate global awareness of crises and a shorter span between donor interest and donor fatigue may well combine to tempt Evangelical missionaries and organizations to focus their energies on shorter and shorter projects rather than longer-term strategies.”²⁷² And Priest writes, “The results are clear that the explosion of (short-term missions) coincided with a plateauing and decline of career missions, and that the... expansion reflected or at least coincided with a redirection of resources away from career missions rather than an increase in the amounts given in support of career missions.”²⁷³

To use a business term, we need a better *conversion rate* in terms of connecting short termers to a longer-term missional lifestyle. People will continue to embark on short-term trips, and this we need to applaud and encourage. The key is better follow up and more holistic thinking around how a two-week experience translates to something greater than just a past memory accompanied by a passport stamp. I would even go so far as to say churches should not offer short-term missions without a longer-term strategy that benefits every participant upon their return. Priest adds, “Churches that self-consciously recognize both the strengths and limitations

²⁶⁹ Jaffarian: 36.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 36. Elsewhere in the article Jaffarian reiterates what many other missiologists have researched as well: that short-term missions commitments have not only failed to translate into longer-term missions commitments, but that they have actually come at the expense of the latter.

²⁷¹ Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, 178-179.

²⁷² Ibid., 198.

²⁷³ Kalu and others, 87.

of short-term missions will make (them) simply one valued element with a wider array of global mission commitments and strategies.”²⁷⁴

Partnership over Projects

Seth Barnes notes that “most people are tactical, not strategic—they are more motivated to fill their calendars than they are to push for missiologically sound partnerships.”²⁷⁵ One of the dangers in short-term missions is to focus on team building (amongst ourselves) but not relationship building with our hosts. Most any group can “parachute” in and fulfill a week or two-long project, but what kind of long-term relationship is cultivated with those on the field? What ongoing investments and sacrifices are made in the local, on-the-ground church after the big trip fades into the past? Too often the American church has failed to help trip participants connect the dots between a summer trip and an ongoing partnership in which team members are vested for the long haul.

It is imperative that churches connect these short-term experiences with a longer-term, more substantial relationship. Howell asks, “Would it not be desirable to build, at the congregational level, a partnership approach to short-term missions and to cultivate specific relationships over the long term, possibly involving exchanges in which leaders from partner congregations abroad could visit their counterparts on this continent to serve and learn in their own short-term mission experiences?”²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 99.

²⁷⁵ Seth Barnes, “Future of Short-Term Missions,” *Lausanne World Pulse* March (2006): 14.

²⁷⁶ Howell: 211.

SECTION 4: THE PROJECT

Overview

My artifact will be a book that helps church leaders to better engage the next generation with global missions. The book will explore key paradigm shifts taking place in missions today as well as a pathway for rethinking missions approaches in ways that are more reflective of today's world and today's church.

In many church and ministry circles, missions is trending in one of two directions: either it is declining (fewer dollars given and personnel sent according to numerous agencies and missiologists), or it is becoming primarily social gospel and humanitarian in focus. The latter is especially true with Millennials who gravitate toward cause-oriented missions.

Thus, *Rethinking Missions* will attempt to help churches and people interested in missions recapture an understanding and practice of missions that is balanced and reflective of the rapidly changing world in which we live. The key will be holistic and engaging expressions of mission that allow us to respond faithfully to Christ's Great Commission.

Chapter Summary

1. The Starting Point

This chapter will provide a brief introduction to mission in the Bible and why its pursuit is so imperative to the life of a follower of Jesus Christ. When we discover our missional DNA our lives are transformed, and when a church engages in mission together it becomes fully alive. A commitment to mission (God's *missio Dei*) also requires that we engage in missions (cross-cultural expressions that lead people closer to Jesus Christ). A foundational understanding of global missions is key to reading through the rest of the book.

2. A Whirlwind Tour of Missions History

Missions is not a recent development out of a modernist mindset. Its roots are biblical in nature and its earliest expressions were carried out by the first century church. Their obedience toward and passion for missions was one of the key catalysts in growing the early church from a small fledgling group to, today, the world's largest faith and movement. America and the West

played key roles in furthering missions efforts in the latter part of the last millennium. Unfortunately, due to disagreements over biblical teaching and practice, in the early twentieth century the American church allowed word (proclamation) and deed (demonstration) to take different paths. Ever since, missions has become increasingly segmented in the West.

3. Missions Headwinds

While missions continues to grow and find its footing around the world, its condition is quite different in the West. Churches and Christians alike are disconnecting from traditional missions efforts, and both funding toward and personnel sent (cross-culturally) are in sharp decline. The term “missions” has become increasingly encumbered by baggage from the past and negative perceptions in the present. Some of the other key challenges missions is facing will be discussed in this chapter as well.

4. The Global Shift

As globalization has dramatically reshaped the world in which we live, missions and global Christianity have been impacted as well. Christianity’s center of gravity has shifted away from the West and toward the Global South, meaning missions efforts are now globally owned rather than Western led. America is quickly transitioning from a *sending* nation to a *receiving* nation and must quickly come to terms with its new role as *learner* (in terms of missions) rather than *teacher*. Additionally, future missions success in the West will be contingent upon our ability to partner with nationals.

5. Missions for Millennials

Much has emerged regarding the key values that are embraced and emulated by the next generation of youth and young adults. Discussion will be given to some of these key values and characteristics that not only define Millennials but are highly relevant to a discussion of missions (some of which are complimentary and others pose great challenges). Strategies will be explored for passing the missions baton to the next generation, and emphasis given to how missions understanding and expressions must change to make this critical transition.

6. Strategies for Reengagement

This chapter will explore why a redefinition of *missions* is necessary and how we can do it. Discussion will be given to deprogramming missions—transitioning away from missions as a *program* within the church and toward an overarching church ethos that involves all in the Great Commission. Readers will also be called to recapture a sense of balance and holism in missions (i.e. local and global, works and deeds, etc.) that is still greatly missing in our American missions practice. It is time to implement a new missions scorecard, requiring us to embrace the right values moving forward.

7. Long-Term Thinking About Short-Term Trips

Short-term missions trips have become a huge enterprise in the American church, and statistics point to the numbers only growing larger in the years ahead. There are both benefits and challenges surrounding these trips, and discussion will be given to both. In talking to nationals (people in foreign contexts who often serve as the hosts for these trips), a mixed bag of responses emerge about the impact on the host culture. This chapter will encourage trip participants to travel more lightly, leaving our Western assumptions and baggage at home. Keys will also be explored to developing more sustainability and effectiveness with short-term trips in the future.

8. A Global Movement

The future of global Christianity is promising and exciting, although it will likely look far different from what we have understood in the West. Discussion will be given to some of the key missions expressions that are thriving around the world as well as some of the most promising paradigms moving forward (i.e. microenterprise, church planting movements, indigenous leader training, technology-based ministries, etc.). We must learn to transition missions from an American mindset to one that is truly global, and one that truly embraces and engages the next generation. The brightest days of world missions are yet ahead of us, and this last chapter will help push readers toward the realization of this vision.

SECTION 5: PROJECT SPECIFICATION

Audience

My readers will be church leaders (both paid clergy and lay leaders) who are interested in building a more effective bridge between global missions and the next generation. Most will be aware that missions as practiced in the American church faces challenges (at best) and a crisis (at worst). Perhaps they have become frustrated by the growing disconnect between traditional missions expressions and the average churchgoer. Additionally, these leaders have likely seen that youth and young adults are becoming increasingly disengaged from traditional missions expressions, although sufficient evidence will be presented in the book to articulate the problem.

I believe that this book's readers are likely looking for ways to better connect the next generation with the pursuit and fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission. They are likely already looking for a toolkit (practical ideas and strategies) for better connecting their churches with missions. Thus, being able to read a book with specific recommendations and action steps will be useful for churches who get the *why* but don't yet understand the *how*.

Goals and Strategies

- to provide a brief backdrop of missions in the American church and what has worked as well as what has not worked
- to point out and articulate the current state of missions and why it demands change
- to help readers understand the key global shifts that have changed the way missions takes place
- to help readers understand the next generation of Millennials and how missions expressions can change to better complement their values
- to offer a redefinition of missions that is more balanced, holistic and missional
- to provide strategies for reengaging the church with global missions efforts already taking place
- to enlarge the reader's vision of what God is currently doing around the world

I believe that readers will respond positively to the observations, ideas and strategies proposed in the book. Even if missions is working well in their individual churches, I want them to see that there is a greater trend within the American church that requires our urgent attention. Thus, my desire is to see all churches (whether traditional, modern or emerging) embrace a renewed vision and passion for helping the next generation to pursue its God-given mission. My passion is to see the next generation embrace this mission, engaging holistically with both word (evangelism, church planting) and deed (good works, helping the needy).

Guidance and Feedback

I have already talked to some authors who have agreed to look at the book in a draft form and offer input: Mark Batterson (National Community Church) and Dave Gibbons (NewSong Irvine). I have some other authors I will be pursuing as well (including Dan Kimball and Richard Tiplady with whom I have communicated). Additionally, I will be sharing the draft with some missions pastors/leaders who understand the issues well and will be invited to comment on the material

Once the book is published, the most obvious way of tracking the book's interest and success is by the number of copies sold. I would also hope that readers would offer reviews (as is possible on Amazon.com) that would be positive and would enthusiastically recommend the book to others.

Rationale

I am choosing to write a book because it is the most accessible medium for the widest possible audience. It also will allow me to give adequate treatment to the examples, observations and strategies I propose. Additionally, a book format will allow for easiest distribution overseas where current missions personnel (part of the audience that will want to read this book) can be limited in resources (i.e. limited access to computers, internet, etc.).

Budget

While I would love to see the book picked up by a Christian publisher, I am also aware of the challenges of getting an unsolicited manuscript noticed and published. Thus, I realize the most likely pathway may be the self-publishing route (most likely through Xulon Press). I anticipate spending about \$4000 to get the book edited, published and printed (enough for an initial print run of 500 to ensure availability on Amazon.com).

Standards of Publication

Although the book will be written for a mainstream (vs. academic) audience, the writing style will largely adhere to Turabian. Adjustments will be made if and when a publisher signs the book.

Promotion

As part of some of Xulon Press' self-publishing packages, marketing is included (including on Amazon.com). So I would utilize this route and would hopefully be able to offer and present an associate seminar (something like a National Outreach Convention would be a good start) where I could present some of the issues discussed in the book and then drive traffic online to purchase the book. I would also hope to be able to write one or more articles for a missions-related magazine or journal (i.e. Lausanne World Pulse, Evangelical Missions Quarterly, Outreach Magazine, etc.) with the same intended outcome. Finally, through my personal connections (both at churches and missions agencies) I would hope to be able to get the word out as a way of generating interest in the book.

I will also be building/hosting a website to complement the book (most likely after the book has been published). I have already registered two domain names (RethinkingMissions.com and RethinkingMission.com) that would parallel the intended book title (Rethinking Missions).

SECTION 6: POSTSCRIPT

It is hard to believe that the wonderful journey of studying with my SFS7 cohort is drawing to a close. The past three years have made for a truly transformational experience, as this doctoral program quickly went beyond academics and impacted me on a very personal level. The friendships built, the teaching and mentoring that guided me, the discussions on Monday mornings and in the online forms that enriched me, and the paradigm shifts that challenged me have all coalesced into an unforgettable season of life for which I am truly grateful.

When I first applied for the program—in all my naiveté as I just naturally assumed that the workload would be much *less* than what it actually was—I had a clear sense that I wanted to write on global missions and how the American church could more effectively help transition it to future generations. In the interview prior to acceptance at GFES, Loren Kerns and I then talked about my passion for this area of study and how it might fit alongside the program. He was incredibly affirming of my direction and voiced his desire to see a global mindset and ethos championed in our cohort. This discussion was a key piece in my decision to move forward with the LEC/SFS program, and I am grateful that my focus upon this subject remained strong for the duration of the program. I have so appreciated Loren and his help throughout the program (not to mention the free entertainment he offered in our Second Life chats on Monday mornings!).

With all the books I ordered throughout this program—both relating to Len’s reading lists as well as those pertaining to my project—I have become convinced that the best investment I have made over the past three years (besides my tuition payments) was in Amazon.com’s \$79 annual *Prime* membership. This allowed me to receive free (and fast!) shipping as I scrambled to complete the weekly readings. While it was difficult to find points of intersection between much of what Len assigned and my research related to global missions, the mix of books ultimately made for a rich and rewarding experience. My thinking was nudged and shaped and sometimes redirected in so many areas—in my views of the Church, leadership (or *followership* as Len has helped me to understand), Scripture, the global Christian faith, and even my relationship with Jesus Christ. It was against this textured backdrop that *Rethinking Missions* found its footing and began to take shape.

From the beginning, my primary advisor Phil Newell has been a godsend. As I put together my initial essays that attempted to cover anything under the sun related to missions, Phil

walked alongside me and offered wise, helpful counsel that helped me to begin to narrow my focus. Drawing from his own missions experience and understanding, he both complimented and challenged me in numerous ways. It was such a privilege to get feedback beyond grammar and syntax and academic structure. Phil encouraged me to explore areas I hadn't yet uncovered, pushed back on claims and concepts that he thought were too limiting, and inspired me to dig deeper in an effort to uncover a greater sense of what God is doing around the world. Now I just need to find a way to continue receiving his coaching and advice beyond the doctoral program!

As I continued work on my project (often times wrestling with it), I also continued a pretty ambitious travel schedule to different countries of the world. In fact, in just the three years I have been enrolled at GFES I have managed to visit nearly two dozen countries, and was in Hong Kong when I first learned about Loren and Tom Davis' idea to have me lead the microfinance project in Ethiopia. But as I continued my work on *Rethinking Missions*, I only fell more in love with this area of study and research as I experienced firsthand what God was up to elsewhere. I visited churches, met with leaders, listened to church planters, prayed alongside underground church pastors and saw a Christian faith that is more alive and supernatural than what I have settled for at home in my comfort zone. Many of my key insights in this project were written on airplanes right after leaving a city or country that had opened my eyes wider and enlarged my heart. Thus this project really was a labor of love, proving to be just as much fun as it was challenging.

In addition to Loren and Phil, I also want to thank Kimberly Shumate (my expert advisor) for her invaluable guidance as I wrote the first two chapters of the book (also called *Rethinking Missions*). She was affirming but also bold in her coaching, helping me to become a better and more effective writer. I am grateful as the partnership continues—she has offered to serve as my literary agent as we pray and wait for a publisher to pick up the book. Thanks to Kimberly for her help and all I can do is hope that as she continues to twist arms that someone will give! And in the final few weeks I greatly benefitted from Steve Lewis' feedback and eye for detail.

Finally, studying under Len Sweet was an adventure—and honor—that I never thought I'd get to experience. After reading so many of his books and being influenced by his thinking, enrolling at GFES was a no-brainer after learning he led our program. His teaching, observations and musings have left quite a mark on my life. The final advance at his home in Orcas was the icing on the cake and an experience I'll never forget. I will greatly miss being a part of SFS7.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acosta, Milton. "Power Pentecostalism." *Christianity Today*, August 2009, 40-42.
- Adams, Eric, Don Allen, and Bob Fish. "Seven Themes of Fruitfulness." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 26, no. 2 (2009): 75-81.
- Allen, Scott. "A Theology for Uniting Evangelism and Social Ministry." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. October (2005): 12-14.
- Allison, Lon. "The Church in Exile." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. August (2009): 1-2.
- Allison, Lon. "Wanted: A Gps for Global Mission." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. July (2009): 1-2.
- "Americans Struggle with Religion's Role at Home and Abroad", The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life <http://pewforum.org/press/?ReleaseID=13> (accessed November 10 2008).
- Arles, Siga. "World Religion Database: Realities and Concerns." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 1 (2010): 20-21.
- Barnes, Seth. "Future of Short-Term Missions." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. March (2006): 12-14.
- Barnett, Mike. "Creative Access Platforms: What Are They and Do We Need Them?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, no. Jan 2005 (2005).
- Barnett, Mike, and Michael Pocock. *The Centrality of Christ in Contemporary Missions* Evangelical Missiological Society Series. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2005.
- Batterson, Mark. "A City Upon 'the Hill'." *Leadership*, no. Summer 2008 (2008): 44-48.
- Bauman, Stephan. "International Development: Helping or Hurting?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (2009): 232-236.
- Birdsall, Doug. "The Verbal Proclamation of the Gospel." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. October (2008): 1.
- Birdsall, Doug. "Advancing Scripture Translation." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. September (2009): 1-2.
- Bjorvand, Anders Torvill. "The Missionary Game: A Tool for World Missions." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. September (2006): 39-40.
- Bonk, Jon. *Missions and Money : Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem* American Society of Missiology Series. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991.

- Bonk, Jonathan J. "Mission and Mammon." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31, no. 4 (2007): 169-170.
- Bonk, Jonathan J. "Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem... Revisited." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31, no. 4 (2007): 171-174.
- Bonk, Jonathan J. "Mission and the Groaning of Creation." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 4 (2008): 169-170.
- Borlase, Craig. "Service or Evangelism?" *Neue Quarterly*, no. 1 (2008): 96-99.
- Bosch, David Jacobus. *Transforming Mission : Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* American Society of Missiology Series. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991.
- Butler, Phil. "Effective Church Planting Is Partnership." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. September (2005): 15-17.
- C  l  rier, Eric. "The Internet: The New Missionary Challenge of the Twenty-First Century." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. May (2008): 29-30.
- Cho, Yong. "Challenge and Opportunity for the Global Network of Mission Structures." *Mission Frontiers* 32, no. 4 (2010): 16-17.
- Claydon, David, and Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. *A New Vision, a New Heart, a Renewed Call*. 3 vols. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2004.
- Cochrum, Ken. "Are Today's Students on Your Radar?" *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. August (2009): 20-22.
- Codrington, Graeme. "Leading and Connecting with the Next Generation by Understanding Generational Differences." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. June (2008): 5-9.
- Corwin, Gary. "Doing Missions Like It's 1930?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (2009): 140-141.
- Daniels, Gene. "Decoupling Missionary Advance from Western Culture." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (2009): 420-427.
- Darku, Rev. Dr. Nii Amoo. "The Verbal Proclamation of the Gospel." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. October (2008): 5-7.
- Davis, Stephen M. "The Challenge of Missions in the Twenty-First Century." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. April (2008): 21-25.
- Decker, Murray. "The Emerging College Generation and Missions: Issues, Attitudes, Postures and Passions." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2007): 316-323.

- Decker, Murray. "The Emerging College Generation and Missions: Issues, Attitudes, Postures and Passions." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43 (2007): 319.
- "Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 4 (2009): 182-184.
- "Despite Benefits, Few Americans Have Experienced Short-Term Mission Trips", <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/20-donorscause/22-despite-benefits-few-americans-have-experienced-short-term-mission-trips> (accessed April 23 2009).
- Dowsett, Rose. "Beyond Evangelism: Authentic Disciples." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. May (2007): 11-14.
- Dye, T. Wayne. "Scripture in an Accessible Form: The Most Common Avenue to Increased Scripture Engagement." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 26, no. 3 (2009): 123-128.
- Effa, Allan. "The Greening of Mission." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 4 (2008): 171-176.
- Eicker, Frauke. "Innovista: Reaching the Emerging Generation in Europe and Eurasia." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. June (2006): 5-6.
- Engel, James F., and William A. Dyrness. *Changing the Mind of Missions : Where Have We Gone Wrong?* Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Erickson, Millard J., and L. Arnold Hustad. *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Escobar, Samuel. *The New Global Mission : The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003.
- Escobar, Samuel. "Building a Solid Theological Foundation for Mission Policy and Praxis." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. May (2008): 4-7.
- Eshleman, Paul. "The State of the Unfinished Task." *Mission Frontiers* 32, no. 4 (2010): 10-11.
- Evens, Samantha. "Exploiting Our 'Outsider' Role for Good." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. December (2009): 14-16.
- Fischer-Nielsen, Peter. "Online Mission." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. October/November (2009): 7-9.
- Frizzell, Naomi. "New Publication Examines North American Short-Term Missions." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. February (2009): 30-31.

- Frost, Michael, and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come : Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003.
- Geiger, Eric. "Common Unity." *Neue Quarterly*, no. 3 (2009): 31-37.
- Gibbons, Dave, "God's Voice in the Global Market Meltdown", Christianity Today http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2008/11/gods_voice_amid.html#more (accessed November 19 2008).
- Gibbons, Dave. *The Monkey and the Fish : Liquid Leadership for a Third-Culture Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009.
- Gibbs, Nancy. "Generation Next." *Time*, March 22 2010, 72.
- Gordon, Graham. *What If You Got Involved? Taking a Stand against Social Injustice*. Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003.
- Gravelle, Gilles. "Bible Translation in Historical Context: The Changing Role of Cross-Cultural Workers." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 27, no. 1 (2010): 11-20.
- Green, Jocelyn. "Pinching Pennies." *Christianity Today*, January 2008, 17.
- Greenberg, Brad A. "How Missionaries Lost Their Chariots of Fire." *The Wall Street Journal* (2010). <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704895204575321101671590716.html?KEYWORDS=BRAD+A+GREENBERG> [accessed July 13, 2010].
- Haass, Richard N. "The World That Awaits." *Newsweek*, 11/3/08 2008, 28-32.
- Hanciles, Jehu J. "Migration, Diaspora Communities, and the New Missionary Encounter with Western Society." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. July (2008): 5-9.
- Hansow, Morgan. "Africa Is Not That Sexy." *Relevant*, Nov/Dec 2009, 26.
- Harries, Jim. "Partnership, Cooperation, and Vulnerability: Building a Solid Foundation for Mission Praxis in Africa." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. May (2008): 10-14.
- Hesselgrave, David J. *Paradigms in Conflict : 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005.
- Hesselgrave, David J., and Ed Stetzer. *Mission Shift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010.
- Heuertz, Christopher L. "Language and Labels." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2009): 8-10.

- Hill, Harriet. "The Vernacular Treasure: A Century of Mother-Tongue Bible Translation." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 2 (2006): 82-88.
- Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways : Reactivating the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2006.
- Hoefler, Herbert. "What's in a Name? The Baggage of Terminology in Contemporary Mission." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25, no. 1 (2008): 25-29.
- Howe, Neil, and William Strauss. *Millennials Rising : The Next Great Generation /by Neil Howe and Bill Strauss*. New York: Vintage Books, 2000.
- Howell, Brian M. "Mission to Nowhere: Putting Short-Term Missions into Context." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 4 (2009): 206-211.
- Jacquin, Dick. "Retiring into Uncertainty." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. June (2008): 23-27.
- Jaffarian, Michael. "The Statistical State of the North American Protestant Missions Movement, from the *Mission Handbook*, 20th Edition." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 1 (2008): 35-38.
- Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom : The Coming of Global Christianity*. Rev. and expanded ed. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Jenkins, Willis. "Missiology in Environmental Context: Tasks for an Ecology of Mission." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 4 (2008): 176-184.
- Johnson, Todd M., Peter F. Crossing, and Bobby Jangsun Ryu. "Looking Forward: An Overview of World Evangelization, 2005-2025." In *Lausanne 2004 Forum on World Evangelization*, 12: Center for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2004.
- Jørgensen, Knud. "The Uniqueness of Christ and Committed Pluralism." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. March (2010): 7-9.
- Kalu, Ogbu, Peter Vethanayagamony, Edmund Chia, and Chicago Center for Global Ministries. *Mission after Christendom : Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission*. 1st ed. Louisville, Ky.: Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 2010.
- Kelly, Mark, "Lifeway Research Unchurched Americans Turned Off by Church, Open to Christians", LifeWay Research
<http://www.lifeway.com/common/clickthru/0,1603,Link%253D238505,00.html?X=/article/?id=166950> (accessed Nov 10 2008).
- Kemp, Paul. "How to Partner with a Church in a Developing Country." *Neue Quarterly*, no. 2 (2009): 200-203.

- Kim, Chong H. "The 5th International Korea Mission Leaders Forum: Another Reformation on the Horizon." *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 23, no. 1 (2006): 17-29.
- Kimball, Dan. *The Emerging Church : Vintage Christianity for New Generations*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003.
- Kimball, Dan. *They Like Jesus but Not the Church : Insights from Emerging Generations*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007.
- Kinnaman, David, and Gabe Lyons. *Unchristian : What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity-- and Why It Matters*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2007.
- Kirk, J. Andrew. *Mission under Scrutiny : Confronting Contemporary Challenges*. 1st Fortress Press ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006.
- Kisau, Paul Mumo. "What Postmodernism Means for Evangelism." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. February (2007): 9-12.
- Koll, Karla Ann. "Taking Wolves among Lambs: Some Thoughts on Training for Short-Term Mission Facilitation." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 2 (2010): 93-96.
- "The Lausanne Covenant", The Lausanne Movement <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant> (accessed June 15 2010).
- Law, Peter. "Evangelism and Church Planting: Implementing the Ministry Multiplication Cycle." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. August (2008): 5-8.
- Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry. Commission of Appraisal., and William Ernest Hocking. *Re-Thinking Missions; a Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years*. New York, London,: Harper & Brothers, 1932.
- Lee, Sandra. "Engaging in the Digital Age: Harnessing Its Power for Good." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. October/November (2009): 33-35.
- Long, Justin. "Increasing Momentum for Unreached People Groups." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. September (2005): 19-20.
- Loveless, Rebecca. "The Mis-Education of Missions: Redefining Missions for Long-Term Change." *Neue Quarterly*, no. 3 (2009): 72-75.
- Mallampalli, Chandra. "World Christianity and "Protestant America": Historical Narratives and the Limits of Christian Pluralism." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 1 (2006): 8-13.

- Mazlish, Bruce, Nayan Chanda, and Kenneth Weisbrode. *The Paradox of a Global USA*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Christianity's Dangerous Idea : The Protestant Revolution-- a History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First*. 1st ed. New York: HarperOne, 2007.
- McLaren, Brian, Elisa Padilla, and Ashley Bunting Seeber. *The Justice Project*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009.
- McManus, Erwin Raphael. *Soul Cravings : An Exploration of the Human Spirit*. Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson Books, 2006.
- McNeal, Reggie, and Leadership Network (Dallas Tex.). *Missional Renaissance : Changing the Scorecard for the Church*. 1st ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009.
- Moreau, A. Scott, Gary Corwin, and Gary B. McGee. *Introducing World Missions : A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey Encountering Missions*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004.
- Morgan, Timothy C. "After the Aloha Shirts." *Christianity Today*, October 2008, 42-45.
- Murdock, Steve. "Cutting the Purse Strings: How to Avoid and Overcome Paternalism." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2009): 66-72.
- Newman, Bethany. "Preparing the Younger Generation for Missions in the 10/40 Window." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. March (2007): 10-12.
- Olson, Jon. 2009. Missions survey conducted by author.
- Oxbrow, Mark. "Recovering Mission: Majority World Mission—a Return to Mission for the Majority." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. January (2009): 5-8.
- Palmer, Jon Jeffrey. "Evangelism as a Whole: A Passion for Souls with Compassion for People." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. October (2008): 19-22.
- Payne, J.D. "Immigration and North America: Who in the World Is My Neighbor Anyway?" *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. March (2009): 19-23.
- Phan, Peter C. "World Christianity and Christian Mission: Are They Compatible? Insights from the Asian Churches." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 4 (2008): 193-200.
- Pitterle, John. "Great Commission Prioritization of Countries: Helping to Make Completing the Great Commission More Meaningful for All Believers." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. January/February (2010): 18-20.

- Pocock, Michael, Gailyn Van Rhee, and Douglas McConnell. *The Changing Face of World Missions : Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends Encountering Missions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Priest, Robert J., Douglas Wilson, and Adelle Johnson. "U.S. Megachurches and New Patterns of Global Mission." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 2 (2010): 97-102.
- "Responses to Christopher Little's 'What Makes Mission Christian?'" *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25, no. 2 (2008): 75-85.
- Robert, Dana. "From Missions to Mission to Beyond Missions." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (1994).
- Robert, Dana L. "World Christianity as a Women's Movement." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 4 (2006): 180-188.
- Robert, Dana Lee. *Christian Mission : How Christianity Became a World Religion* Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion Series. Chichester, U.K. ; Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Robinson, Martin. *To Win the West*. London: Monarch Books, 1996.
- Ross, Kenneth R. "The Centenary of Edinburgh 1910: Its Possibilities." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 4 (2006): 177-179.
- Russell, Mark. "Migration, Displacement, and the Kingdom of God." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. March (2009): 8-11.
- Russell, Mark. "The Spiritual Mission of Microfinance." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. February (2009): 15-17.
- Salmon, Jacqueline L. "Churches Retool Mission Trips: Work Abroad Criticized for High Cost and Lack of Value." *Washington Post*, July 5 2008, B01.
- Samson, Will. "A Step toward Practical Justice." *Neue Quarterly*, no. 2 (2009): 58-61.
- Schwartz, Glenn J. *When Charity Destroys Dignity : Overcoming Unhealthy Dependency in the Christian Movement*. Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2007.
- Shaw, Douglas. "The Gospel & International Studies: Can We Make the Connection?" *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. May (2010): 17-20.
- Shaw, Ryan. "Rebuilding the Corporate Student Mission Movement." *Mission Frontiers*, March-April 2006, 8-9.

- Shenk, Wilbert R. "Reflections on the Modern Missionary Movement: 1792-1992." *Mission Studies* IX-1, no. 17 (1992): 62-78.
- Sikora, Andy. "Far Is the New Close." *Neue Quarterly*, no. 2 (2009): 76-77.
- Søgaard, Viggo. "Advancing Bible Translation for Non-Reading Audiences." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. September (2009): 5-8.
- Stearns, Richard. *The Hole in Our Gospel*. Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2009.
- Steuernagel, Valdir. "A Mission Voice from Latin America: Partnering for World Mission." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. April (2008): 15-18.
- "Support of Overseas Missions Linked to Growth", *Philanthropy Journal*
<http://philanthropyjournal.org/archive/96716> (accessed April 19 2009).
- Sweet, Leonard. *So Beautiful*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009.
- Sweet, Leonard I. *The Church of the Perfect Storm*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008.
- Sweet, Leonard I. *Nudge : Awakening Each Other to the God Who's Already There*. 1st Ed. ed. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010.
- Thornton, Philip, and Jeremy Thornton. "Why They Don't Go: Surveying the Next Generation of Mission Workers." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2008): 204-210.
- Timmons, Tim. "Christianity Isn't the Way - Jesus Is." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25, no. 3 (2008): 157-160.
- Tiplady, Richard. *Postmission: World Mission by a Postmodern Generation*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002.
- Tiplady, Richard. *World of Difference : Global Mission at the Pic 'N' Mix Counter*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003.
- "Tokyo Declaration: Making Disciples of Every People in Our Generation." *Mission Frontiers* 32, no. 4 (2010): 14-15.
- Tunehag, Mats. "A Global Overview of the Business as Mission Movement: Needs & Gaps." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. January (2009): 13-15.
- U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*. Washington D.C.: The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008.
- Van Rheenen, Gailyn. *Missions : Biblical Foundations & Contemporary Strategies*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Pub. House, 1996.

- Veith, Gene Edward, "Who Gives Two Cents to Missions?", *WORLD Magazine* <http://www.worldmag.com/articles/11176> (accessed April 19 2009).
- Wakatama, Pius. *Independence for the Third World Church : An African's Perspective on Missionary Work*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1976.
- Walls, Andrew. "Culture and Coherence in Christian History." *Evangelical Review of Theology* 9, no. 3 (1984).
- Walls, Andrew F., and Cathy Ross. *Mission in the Twenty-First Century : Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2008.
- Wampler, Mark. "A Gospel of Many Colors: Converting Christianity from the Hold of the West." *Neue Quarterly*, no. 2 (2009): 50-57.
- Whittaker, Tony. "Digital Ministry—Incredible Mission Opportunities." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. February (2009): 18-20.
- Wilson, Walt. "Internet—the Transition of Everything from Atoms to Bits." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. November (2008): 25-28.
- Winter, Ralph D. "What Are Mission Frontiers?" *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 22, no. 4 (2005): 155-158.
- Woodberry, Robert D. "Reclaiming the M-Word: The Legacy of Missions in Non-Western Societies." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25, no. 1 (2008): 17-23.
- Wright, Chris. "Re-Affirming Holistic Mission: A Cross-Centered Approach in All Areas of Life." *Lausanne World Pulse*, no. October (2005): 9-12.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God : Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2006.
- Zakaria, Fareed. *The Post-American World*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.

APPENDIX: MISSIONS SURVEY

DESCRIPTION:

These are the results of an online survey I conducted in April 2009 via SurveyMonkey.com (this is an online service that allows users to distribute customized surveys). The survey was distributed to 225 evangelical churches across the country, and the person providing overall leadership of the church's global missions ministry (whether paid or volunteer) was asked to complete the questionnaire.

The primary agent for distributing the survey was WorldVenture (www.worldventure.com), a missions agency based in Littleton, Colorado. WorldVenture agreed to send a survey invitation to partnering churches, 185 of which responded and completed the survey.

The other agent for distributing the survey was the South Bay Missions Network, a listing of churches based primarily in the San Francisco Bay Area. 40 of these churches participated in the survey.

Both surveys were identical, with the exceptions of questions 14 and 16 (both noted). In the case of all other questions, results were combined and reported.

In some of the questions, responses representing a primary or majority opinion have been presented in bold.

Additionally, after responding to certain questions, participants were allowed to provide responses in order to better explain their decision. A number of these responses have been provided in the following pages to allow greater insight into these missions-related topics and trends. Where appropriate, responses have also been grouped into various categories.

1. In what part of the country is your church located?

Midwest (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI)	11.6%	26
New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)	12.0%	27
Mid Atlantic (DC, DE, MD, NJ, NY, PA)	23.6%	53
South (AK, AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)	5.8%	13
Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)	0.9%	2
West (AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)	46.2%	104

Answered question: 225
Skipped question: 0

2. What is the size of your church?

Under 100	26.7%	60
100-499	48.9%	110
500-999	13.8%	31
1000-1499	4.9%	11
1500-1999	1.6%	5
2000-3000	2.2%	2
Over 3000	2.7%	6

Answered question: 225
Skipped question: 0

3. What would you say is the largest age group in your church?

Under 18	5.4%	12
18-24	0.0%	0
25-34	7.2%	16
35-44	28.1%	62
45-54	30.0%	66
55 and over	29.4%	65

Answered question: 221
Skipped question: 4

4. What is your church's annual budget?

Under \$100,000	13.3%	29
\$100,000-249,999	29.4%	64
\$250,000-\$499,999	22.9%	50
\$500,000-\$999,999	17.0%	37
\$1,000,000-\$2,000,000	8.7%	19
Over \$2,000,000	8.7%	19

Answered question: 218
Skipped question: 7

5. Think for a moment about the state of global missions as practiced by the American church. In the next five years, do you think today’s youth (please select one statement):

Will be less involved in global missions than that of previous generations.	40.0%	79
Will have about the same missions involvement as that of previous generations.	26.8%	53
Will be more involved in missions than that of previous generations.	33.3%	66

Answered question: 198
 Skipped question: 27

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

The majority of responders indicated a feeling that missions involvement in the near future will decline among youth:

*Fewer young people are indicating interest in missions.
 Don't see the passion for going to the nations in today's youth.
 Trend has been negative, no indicator of improvement...
 Based on what I see in our church, youth do not seem to have the vision for missions.
 As the American church continues to decline, the number of youth involved will decline as well.
 Their focus is growing larger, attracting more people with larger buildings and more programs.
 We may see fewer committed and fewer of those who are going into career missions.
 Today's youth (even Christian ones) are more pluralistic... hence they are less inclined to proselytize.
 Too many of today's youth lack a solid biblical foundation... most are Biblically illiterate...*

Another recurring theme was the perception that the next generation is largely focused on self (thus the decreased interest in missions):

*They are given over to one cause: self.
 Today's youth seem less altruistic and more centered on "me".
 Kids are more self-centered today, seeking high-paying jobs and a comfortable lifestyle.
 Seem less likely to be involved in anything. I don't think mission involvement will be much different.
 Passion for missions is gone because of the selfishness of the youth.
 Although I see some signs of hope, I believe we are very much in the "me" generation.
 Are living more for self than the Lord. More involved with entertainment: American Idol, etc.
 Too many Christians... are more consumed with self than total submission to the Lord.*

Others saw a decline in missions activity as part of a larger trend involving the American church:

*The church does not emphasize missions much anymore.
 Due to the overall decline in Christianity and increase of secularization.
 I believe it to be the case in the American church.
 American churches are not missional in nature...they resemble our culture which is me, me, me.
 Our church could be closing.*

On the other hand, a number of responders were hopeful that the next generation is more cause-driven and globally minded:

More into experience.

Postmodern shift = participation & experiences.

I see our youth as being more committed to a cause than the previous generation.

I see greater activism in the teens of today than any other generation

This generation of youth is much more globally aware and concerned.

Young people are more global minded with needs to express compassion.

I see a growing global awareness, social concern, travel accessibility, etc...

Global awareness of politics and needs is so much stronger than in previous decades.

I have read that the post Gen-X generation is much more people-oriented and willing to serve.

Consequently, many felt that this will most likely translate into greater short-term missions involvement:

Short-term missions have become more popular with teens.

In our church, more youth than ever are taking short-term trips.

Introducing them through short-term trips has created involvement.

We may see more short-term projects by those who are committed.

Globally, travel is more accessible and our church will be more involved in short-term missions.

But perhaps at the expense of longer-term commitments:

I think more individuals will be involved, but for shorter lengths of time.

More are interested in missions trips or short-term missions, but not long commitments.

Unfortunately it will be increasingly dominated by short-term missions trips.

Unfortunately this involvement will be short term mission work and not career.

Some also saw the next generation as less likely to embrace traditional expressions of missions:

I believe youth are more interested in missions, but less in an agency.

When it comes to supporting their parents' missionaries, the next generation will not be as involved.

Personal involvement may increase, but financial involvement will probably decrease.

I personally think more will be involved at some level but fewer in the full-time "career" sense.

More will consider "tent-making" opportunities.

INSIGHTS:

Note that over 40% of the respondents saw the next generation as being **less involved** in missions than previous generations. Additionally, a quarter of the respondents saw little to no change in involvement. This leaves **less than a third** of the respondents who envision the next generation as being **more involved** in missions.

6. In your opinion, what in missions needs to change in order for it to become more engaging and relevant to younger generations? (check all that apply)

More emphasis on social justice issues	28.9%	54
Less emphasis on evangelism and conversion	2.7%	5
More support of nationals (people indigenous to their own culture)	46.0%	86
More focus on sustainable funding for missionaries (i.e. microfinance, self-support paradigms)	42.2%	79
More support of indigenous leadership and worship styles	35.3%	66
Increased focus on the parts of the world where Christianity is growing most rapidly	16.0%	30
Change of terminology (i.e. find new terms that are more neutral than “missions”, “evangelism”, etc.)	18.2%	34
Develop more holistic approaches to missions	35.8%	67
Different recruitment strategies for new missionaries	30.5%	57
Better integration with the church (as opposed to the standalone approach of missions as a separate ministry)	68.4%	128
More willingness on the part of the American church to learn from those in other cultures	46.5%	87
Less emphasis on missions agencies, more focus on the local church when it comes to sending	39.6%	74

Answered question: 187

Skipped question: 38

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

The largest number of responders indicated a desire to see the church more intentional about teaching on the themes that relate to missions:

- Renew a carry-your-cross and die for Jesus message. They want to be challenged.*
- A spiritual revival to awaken the saints to the importance of evangelism.*
- A change of heart, to see others (the lost) as God sees them.*
- We need to stress being part of something bigger than yourself and impacting the world eternally.*
- An emphasis on the call to evangelize.*
- More leadership development within the church.*
- Communicate that missions is worthy of your whole life.*
- Emphasize “mission” rather than “missions.”*
- We need to train young people to serve... the standard week-long missions trip doesn't do that very well.*
- They need to have a much better knowledge of God's Word and of the history of Christian missions.*
- They need more emphasis on the global context of the church; not so much on its own felt needs.*

A recurring theme was that people want to see greater integration of missions within the church:

- Integrate a missional church and personal life of leaders; develop a missiology for local church.*
- Integration of missionaries with churches besides reports.*
- Personal involvement.*
- I think hearing from missionaries that are involved in the grass roots verses reports from someone else.*

*It should be emphasized more in the local church, ex. newsletters, missionary visits, etc.
The younger generation need personal buy-in, they need to have a stake in it; suspicious of institutions.
More relational, less committee and institutional.*

Also the ongoing issue of having to raise support was perceived as an obstacle in terms of the next generation making longer-term commitments:

*Missionaries spend most of their leave time trying to raise support.
It's super hard to get resources when you are a missionary; where does one go to find monthly support?
Somehow we need to be able to send our young people into the field with the backing they need.
More willingness of individual churches to support those they send, making that support a priority.
Monthly costs for maintaining missionaries are much higher than some pastoral salaries.
Walk alongside people interested in missions early on by supporting them through seminary, college, etc.*

Finally, some comments about the support of nationals (those indigenous to their own culture):

I feel the church should lean more towards support for indigenous missionaries. They do not require the high support it takes to send a missionary to the field today and they have the language, fit into the culture, and do not require all the necessities that missionaries feel they need on the field.

INSIGHTS:

Especially given all the possible responses, the **overwhelming majority** of responders (65.4%) indicated the need for missions to be **better integrated** into the overall life and ministry of the church. Churches have traditionally thought of missions as a **specific ministry** of the church rather than an overall mindset and value.

Survey responders also identified the need to **support more nationals** (missionaries who are indigenous to their own culture) as another key area in which missions needs to change. This seems to be indicative of a **more global, ethnically diverse** mindset among today's youth.

The third key area where responders indicated a need to change is in the area of the American church's willingness to **learn from those in other cultures**. Many of the last century's missions efforts stemmed from the church's desire and commitment to be a missionary-sending nation. We successfully introduced the gospel to new people groups, created world-class missions organizations and were instrumental in the growth of the church in other cultures.

Today, the American church is in decline. Missiologists such as Andrew Walls note Christianity's migration into the **global south**. Many project that America will soon cease to be the largest missionary-sending country in the world. Perhaps the next generation is looking for us to complement our past successes with an increased posture of **humility** and a **willingness to learn** from those in other cultures.

7. Please select a statement that summarizes your opinion:

Missions interest among Christians in America is increasing	15.4%	30
Missions interest has remained about the same	32.8%	64
Missions interest among Christians in America is generally in decline	51.8%	101

Answered question: 195

Skipped question: 30

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

Some saw the decline in missions as linked to overall cultural trends:

US culture is "all about me."

Americans are self-centered as a whole.

Americans are lethargic and don't have "others oriented" attention spans.

Too much self-focus on the part of individuals.

There is a stronger focus on self and not on sacrifice.

Materialism and consumerism are killing us.

We've become too consumed with self-preservation.

Affluenza. We are better off economically than 99% of today's world, yet it is "not enough."

Declining passion for God. Adoption of American narcissistic cultural norms.

Folks don't seem interested in things happening far away.

America is too busy with their own problems to worry about different countries. It's sad.

And many saw this self-centered mindset as becoming increasingly prevalent in the church:

Apathy in the world and the churches in general.

Because the church is all about me!

Christians are becoming insular, consumers.

Indifference toward the lost. More emphasis on self.

People don't have a passion for the lost. They are secure and that is enough.

The trend toward self-centeredness in churches has not reached its peak.

Christians are becoming more and more "self" oriented, much like the Laodicean Church in Rev. 3.

Others saw this decline as linked to overall trends in the American church:

The overall decline in the American church will have corresponding effect in missions.

Because tragically most things about the current American church are in decline.

The focus has been on the decline of the church in America and the great need to reach our own culture.

Because most churches are struggling to keep from declining and striving to grow.

If giving in churches is lower, doesn't it reason that giving for missions is in decline.

The church in the US is in significant decline. It is failing to raise up fully devoted followers of Christ.

We have made converts, not disciples, and this is coming back to severely haunt us.

If it is not working here, why should we export it overseas?

I believe the church has bought into the secular world view and to instant gratification.

Overwhelmed with problems at home. Spiritual narcissism.

Many Christians are more interested in their own lives than those around the world they never met.

Increased sense of acceptable pluralism in the pew.

We are less outward-focused, we don't really believe the world is lost apart from Christ.

As well as the recurring theme of missions not being more integrated into the overall church ministry:

*Churches do not draw attention to missions.
Lack of being a priority from the pulpit.
A failure to give missions her proper place in church ministry.
Opportunities to hear from missionaries in person in local church are rare.
Fewer opportunities for missionaries to share their ministry in churches.
There are fewer church attenders interested in hearing missionaries when they come to our church.
I believe that there is more focus on the mission fields within our own backyard.
Promotion of missions is yielding to development of disciples locally.*

Still others commented on the issue being generational:

*Younger people prefer short term goals.
Young people need a cause bigger than themselves to believe in: something to give their lives to.
Most people under 40 have no interest in missions.
The apathy among the present generational church is growing; we need revival.*

Funding is again expressed as an issue:

*Economic crunch.
Sending money and Americans globally is on the decline.
The senders in the US want to keep more of "their" money when they should be supporting missionaries.
Lack of funds is stumbling block for people being willing to go.
Funding is declining and missionary candidates are harder to find.
The long time it takes to raise support to go to the field.
Financial hardships and little "real contact" with supported missionaries.*

And other insightful responses:

*The way we do missions must change... old models don't work, and new models are not yet developed.
Missionaries that go to the field today are not as dedicated and only stay for a short duration.
Increase in short term, decrease in long term.
Interest in foreign missions declining, but local missions interest is growing.
There are many faithful people who are just too busy to add a missions program to their agendas.
We are justifying short-term missions as having fulfilled our responsibility.
Most Christians rarely, if ever, lead anyone to the Lord and thus see the power of the gospel.
The old style has held on so long that the people have lost the desire to mold itself in the old.
A new way of thinking is needed for the American Church as to its role locally, nationally and globally.*

INSIGHTS:

The fact that **over half** of the responders (52.1%) see missions interest in decline further demonstrates trends that don't bode well. Additionally, **only 13%** indicated optimism that missions interest will actually **increase**. For the American church, our work is certainly cut out for us if we are to generate missions excitement and ownership with the next generation.

8. Think about future giving patterns. Do you think American Christians, in general,

will be giving more to global missions in the next 5 years?	14.7%	29
will be giving about the same amount as they are now	35.5%	70
will be giving less to global missions in the next 5 years?	49.7%	98

Answered question: 197
 Skipped question: 28

INSIGHTS:

This response is consistent with that of the **previous question** (regarding missions interest among Christians in America) and also the projections of numerous missiologists and missions organizations. Again, more than half of those who responded see a likely **decline** in the dollars given to missions. If this decrease in giving does, indeed, prove to be true in the next five years, it likely means **fewer dollars** will be available for both **missions personnel** and **missions agencies**.

Consequently, new missionaries will likely have to rely increasingly on **self-funding methods** (including tent making in other cultures) and less on funds from churches. Churches will likely have **smaller missionary rosters** (see also the response to question 12), resulting in fewer numbers of missionaries who will be successful at finding their funding from traditional sources.

9. What factors are helping advance the cause of global missions as practiced by the American church? Please select any of the statements below with which you'd agree (please note these are not necessarily statements of fact but instead designed to assess trends):

Willingness of Americans to serve on the missions field	25.1%	48
Willingness of Americans to serve in a long-term capacity	13.6%	26
Willingness of Americans to go on short-term missions trips	80.6%	154
Availability of Americans with so many different skills and gifts	60.7%	116
The quality and degree of our missionary preparedness and training	31.4%	60
The church's growing focus on the 10/40 Window over the past decade	40.0%	76
The knowledge most Americans have of global issues	35.6%	68
Effectiveness of American mission agencies	20.4%	39

Answered question: 191
 Skipped question: 34

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

Greater cultural awareness of global news and issues.

*Being multi-cultural is more common now in America.
 The use of new media to tell the story.
 The change in international politics.
 Internet and e-mail increase communications.
 Visits from nationals from other countries; increased awareness of needs.*

Better partnerships

*Strategic bi-directional partnerships allowing us to focus efforts with like-minded indigenous ministries.
 The willingness of churches and agencies to partner with vital national ministries.
 Programs like Perspectives, Social Justice Movements (i.e. "Invisible Children").
 Humility and sincere partnering of mission agencies with churches.
 We have resources that if released appropriately can fund global missions effectively.*

Recognition of changing paradigms.

*The West is increasingly post-Christian. We must look holistically at our involvement "here" and "there".
 Willingness to stop being denominational in focus and reach out for Christ instead.
 The trend is to train indigenous people to do ministry in their country, rather than we doing it for them.
 Energy still available from young retirees.
 Recognizing that the traditional roles of missionaries is changing.
 We are sending out tent-makers and those supporting and resourcing established and indigenous works.
 More people willing to serve but not convinced that they need significant training for their service.*

INSIGHTS:

It appears that the greatest **point of entry** for missions moving forward will continue to be **short-term missions trips**. Responders clearly felt that American Christians still have a great deal to offer (gifts, skills, experience) in a cross-cultural context. Our **passion** and **diverse skills** have the potential to continue pushing missions in some exciting directions.

The key for the next generation is to continue to **engage them** with a **variety of experiences** that connect them with missions.

A number of responders also commented on our need to embrace the **changing paradigms** of missions. The key, perhaps, is that we do a better job of **educating people** (in our churches and agencies) as to what these changes look like and how we can proactively respond. While the message and goal of missions will never change, we must remain **open** and **flexible** to the new ways in which God is working around the world.

10. What factors (both in America and in the American church) are hindering the cause of global missions today? Please check any of the statements below with which you'd agree (please note these are not necessarily statements of fact but instead designed to assess trends):

General dislike of America on the world scene	33.7%	66
Insistence that people in other countries do it our "American way"	36.7%	72
Lack of biblical understanding as to what missions is and why we do it	62.2%	122
Lack of preparedness/training of the missionaries we do send out	13.3%	26
Our unwillingness as Americans to make long-term commitment or sacrifice	76.0%	149
Our unwillingness as churches to talk more about missions and promote it	44.4%	87
Outdated/irrelevant terminology used in the world of missions	22.0%	43
The American church's difficulty in engaging younger generations with world missions	51.5%	101
Our preference of sending Americans instead of supporting nationals	40.0%	78
The growing gap between missions methodology/practice and our rapidly changing world	30.1%	59
Past paradigms of missions that are viewed negatively (i.e. the Crusades, paternalistic models in other cultures, etc.)	32.7%	64
Ineffectiveness of American mission agencies	11.7%	23

Answered question: 196
 Skipped question: 29

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

As previously noted, some mentioned how our increasingly inward focus is hindering missions:

*Christians being too comfortable and unwilling to step out of their comfort zone.
 The general disinterest and neutral attitude of Americans who have had it easy for a long time.
 Materialism, self-centeredness, building projects, massive church budgets spent largely on themselves.
 The American Church has in many cases lost sight of its own mission and responsibility.
 Spiritual timidity and apathy.
 Bad theology... Christ followers less willing to die to self.*

Others commented again of the church's failure to emphasize missions:

*Who is supposed to generate interest for missions in the local church?
 A "missions" emphasis instead of a missional focus for every Christ-follower.
 Lack of understanding that missions is not simply something we "do". It's our core purpose and identity.
 Do we really believe those without Christ are lost?*

Some commented on the cost of mission agencies and/or sending American missionaries:

*The increasing cost of sending US missionaries to other countries.
American missionaries are too expensive!
Agency model of sending Americans seems ineffective at times, esp. relative to supporting nationals.
In my opinion, the vast amount of resources spent by agencies for overhead, headquarters, marketing.
Candidates having difficulty raising support; also having educational debts to pay off.
Negative experience in previous involvement in the way funds were raised and managed.*

And other insightful responses:

*We are still locked into the old methods of missions and not updating our systems with the new needs.
Hardening of the world against the Gospel (end times).
Unfamiliarity of the church with partnering in national ministry.
Much of the world is in civil or drug wars.
Young people do not necessarily look at lifetime careers.
Failure of agencies to really “connect” with the local church for more than just money.
Churches and missions focus on conversion rather than making obedient disciples/followers of Christ.*

INSIGHTS:

The purpose of this question to help **identify obstacles** to missions progress and, ultimately, passing the baton to the next generation. Overwhelmingly, responders indicated our propensity to **look inward** and **serve ourselves** instead of others. This is very antithetical to the premise of missions which is to look **beyond ourselves** to even parts of the world we will likely never see. From the tone of the responses received, it appears that the American church needs to do a much better job emphasizing the importance of giving ourselves away.

Another blind spot, according to nearly two-thirds of the responders, has to do with our lack of **biblical understanding** of what missions is and why we do it. Many likely saw this as primarily the church’s responsibility, as **over half** of all responders (52%) also noted the church’s **inability to engage** the next generation with missions.

11. How many missionaries does your church support (may include domestic personnel):

9 or fewer	29.1%	57
10-19	34.7%	68
20-29	18.9%	37
30-39	7.7%	15
40-49	3.1%	6
50-59	3.1%	6
60 or greater	3.6%	7

Answered question: 196
 Skipped question: 29

12. What is your church’s preference for the number of missionaries it supports? Please choose ANY of the following statements with which you would agree:

We would rather support as many missionaries as possible, even if the amount of financial support given is lower	8.4%	16
We would rather support fewer missionaries, but at higher financial levels	74.3%	142
Our church is looking to support more missionaries (increase our roster size) moving forward	37.7%	72
Our church is looking to support fewer missionaries (decrease our roster size) moving forward	9.9%	19

Answered question: 191
 Skipped question: 34

INSIGHTS:

Especially given the funding issues facing missions in the years ahead, it seems logical that churches will be financially supporting **fewer missionaries**. While this will likely make it more difficult for new missionaries to find new partners, it also means that churches are looking to become **more relationally connected** with the missionaries they do support. The past paradigm of churches embracing larger missionary rosters seems to be giving way to more **strategic, focused and personal support**.

**13. What is your primary criteria for adding new missionaries?
Please choose ANY of the following statements with which you would agree:**

We add missionaries based primarily on their “strategic fit” with our vision/strategy/areas of calling	52.3%	101
We add missionaries based primarily on their region of ministry (geographic location)	17.6%	34
We add missionaries based on a personal relationship (people with whom your church has an existing relationship)	60.1%	116
We give special preference to missionaries who are “home grown” (come from within your church)	67.4%	130
We give special preference to nationals (people indigenous to their own culture)	8.3%	16
Other key criteria for adding missionaries? (explain below)	17.6%	34

Answered question: 193
Skipped question: 32

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

Provided in response to “Other key criteria for adding missionaries”

Most responses mentioned common beliefs and/or denominational affiliation.

*Doctrinally compatible.
We must share common fundamental beliefs.
With dual denominational affiliation, we try to balance the missionaries from both denominations.
We give preference to Conservative Baptist Missionaries.
A majority of our missions funding is supposed to go to CB missionaries.
Church-related mission agency: WorldVenture, Mission Door, etc.
Same denomination.
We have to agree doctrinally with the agency they will serve with.
Our church has vision and mission statements, and we expect our missionaries to have similar beliefs.
We don't limit our support to those in our Association, but we give weight to that factor.
We try to have a balance of at least 50% Conservative Baptist mission agencies on our roster.
We work with the cooperative program from the Southern Baptist Convention.
We have a consortium arrangement with other like-minded churches to attempt mutual support.
We expect a high level of practical and theological preparedness.*

Geographic location.

*Strategic areas such as Eastern Europe when the wall came down.
We look to the 10/40 window.*

Specific area of ministry focus and/or demonstrated effectiveness.

*Church planting ministries and international students are priorities.
We are attempting to lower the support of home missions and increase our indigenous support.
Those who are directly involved in bringing salvation to the nationals.
We fund 30% local, 30% traditional foreign, 30% national. Seek to keep this balanced.
Those who are winning the lost to Christ.*

No specific criteria. Selection is primarily based on God's leading.

God directed.

We add missionaries on a case by case situation as we feel we have the resources to help.

We tend to select people who effectively convey their burden for a particular ministry.

Prayer for God's leading; recommendation by Missions Committee; doctrinal stand.

Hear their passion for ministry in a personal interview.

Sometimes a missionary comes to speak and there is a sense of chemistry; we are glad to support them.

Home grown or relationally connected with the sending church:

A missionary that has great influence with someone in our church: that goes a long way.

We give some elevated priority to missionaries sent from a church that supports one of our missionaries.

We tend to support those missionaries that visit the church. We support whom we see.

If God is leading them and they come from our church, we want to support them in whatever way we can.

Other insightful responses:

When a missionary retires we add another. Some of ours desperately need to retire.

What opportunities can they provide to mobilize us to make an impact in their ministry setting?

Our automatic "YES" to sending those called from within our church family has created a situation where we have to say NO to every "outside" request.

We are not adding missionaries. We are soon beginning a major overhaul of why and how we will do mission. Our system is broken.

We have developed a comprehensive evaluation matrix to assess fit and level of partnership (objective tool to make a subjective decision). Look more towards partnerships than discrete missionaries.

We try to focus on missionaries who have a "tie" to our area so that we can have better communication and when they come "home" on furlough they are apt to visit our church.

We like to support missionaries from our state as much as possible, as it is easier to see them when they are stateside.

We desire to support missionaries not only monetarily but by partnering with them. We want to visit them on short-term trips a minimum of one time per year (but preferably two or three times). It is important that our visions are similar.

INSIGHTS:

There still seems to be a large desire for many churches to support those missionaries who are **home-grown** and/or have some kind of **personal connection** to the church family. Many also noted the precedent of supporting missionaries who are compatible with the **church's beliefs** and/or **denominational focus**. This seems to emphasize a continued importance that new missionaries partner with a **missions agency** as opposed to going it alone.

14. From your vantage point, which future global missions trends would you agree with? (Please note that these are not designed to be statements of fact, but rather to assess areas where churches may see agreement).

Please check ANY that apply:

The United States is becoming less influential in the practice and funding of global missions	57.1%	93
Fewer American missionaries will be sent into other cultures in the next five years	46.0%	75
More American missionaries will be sent into other cultures in the next five years	4.9%	8
Nationals are taking more ownership of the way missions is being done in other cultures	74.2%	121
Churches will look more to missions agencies to help with their missions efforts	10.4%	17
Churches will look more to other churches to help with their missions efforts (ex: Saddleback's PEACE Network of Churches)	19.6%	32
Missions will have to undergo dramatic changes in the US in order to stay relevant for the next generation	40.5%	66
Missions is going to become more holistic in practice	33.1%	54
Churches will focus less on "missions" and more on the idea of becoming "missional"	47.2%	77
There will be more focus on and participation in short-term missions trips in the future	66.9%	109
There will be less focus on and participation in short-term missions trips in the future	6.1%	10
America will be increasingly looking to other countries and cultures for insight into missions practice and strategy	49.1%	80
Other countries and cultures will be increasingly looking to America for insight into missions practice and strategy	3.1%	5

Answered question: 163

Skipped question: 22

NOTE: THIS QUESTION DID NOT APPEAR IN ONE OF THE TWO SURVEYS

15. What terminology is commonly used to describe your church's missions ministry?

Missions	78.9%	142
Global Outreach	13.9%	25
Global Ministry	7.2%	13

Answered question: 180

Skipped question: 45

16. How would you describe the face of your missionary roster moving forward?

We would like to support more nationals (people indigenous to their own culture)	14.1%	20
We would like to support more Americans (who then go and serve cross-culturally)	23.9%	34
We want to see a balance between the two	62.0%	88

Answered question: 142

Skipped question: 43

NOTE: THIS QUESTION DID NOT APPEAR IN ONE OF THE TWO SURVEYS

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

Trend toward supporting Americans:

We would have a personal relationship with our own that we would not have with nationals.

That balance will likely still be sharply tilted toward us sending out Americans.

Our church wants to send more people from within our own ranks.

We would like to support more Americans that are willing to go and serve cross-culturally.

Trend toward supporting more nationals:

We want to send people from here; but we are anxious to support nationals.

Our roster is almost completely Americans, however we would like to support more nationals.

We do not currently support any nationals. We want to change that.

Prefer a balance between the two:

We are seeking to maintain a balance between the support of Nationals and Americans.

Who knows? We try to do what God leads us to do. Both may be valid.

Both are important in God's plan.

I believe that both have their special place in missions.

I think we see the need of a balance, yet we in the past have just supported Americans.

For us a balance would be from 90% American to 70% American / 30% nationals.

I think that there is a willingness to support anyone who has a heart and a call.

Commented on wanting to support fewer missionaries overall:

We want to support fewer, but more deeply.

We would like to support fewer better.

We will support fewer at greater support. Most would be from our church.

Other insightful comments:

This (supporting more nationals) is where we would like to focus, but the number of our own people being "called" has prevented such a shift, at least financially. The financial packages for American workers are outrageous, though we see the rationale for such numbers. For instance, a family of six going to France is trying to raise \$110,000 annually plus outgoing expenses. Our Missions Team members gag at such numbers, especially considering our indigenous partnerships and how much "further" funds go in those situations...at least seemingly.

I can't have an opinion concerning the missionary roster, since I haven't heard much about supporting nationals.

Yes; many Americans simply are better trained and equipped to serve, but nationals already have the cultural edge.

We are less focused on whether they are nationals or locals and more focused on whether they are passionate, equipped, and share a common vision of the gospel and common ministry DNA.

Currently we don't have the infrastructure/expertise/contacts to identify, oversee and evaluate nationals.

Our church does not support any nationals directly.

Balance is not to imply 50:50; we believe church planting movements require involvement of nationals, but even that should be limited as raising money from the states limits reproducibility.

The missionary mandate to make disciples of all nations necessarily means cross-cultural engagement. This is not American paternalism. I have supported Bolivians going to Cuba, for example. But to support financially Bolivians in their cultural context would lead to greater paternalistic dependence, not less.

We would need more information regarding the support of nationals, although I know we would not oppose this.

We are yet undecided on how we will move forward.

The church has not moved into supporting nationals because there are so many Americans seeking support. Individuals within the church are supporting nationals on their own.

Unreached peoples cannot be reached by nationals so both traditional and indigenous are needed.

INSIGHTS:

Participants do not seem to think that the era of the **Western-sent missionary** is over, although **other trends** reflected in this survey (less participation in missions in the future, fewer dollars given, etc.) seem to indicate that the number of long-term Western-sent personnel will **continue to decline** in the years ahead.

It is likely that any **increase** in Western-sent personnel will be reflected in **short-term** commitments.

17. Think for a moment about the various age groups in your church. How do you think each of these groups feel about the concept of “missions” (as practiced in the American church)? Please rank each age group based on what you think their response would be (1 representing unfavorable and 5 representing favorable).

	Unfavorable: dislike the idea of “missions” and what it represents	Impartial: neither like or dislike the term	Favorable: embrace missions and what it represents	Rating Average		
Youth (incl. high school)	1.1% (2)	5.4% (10)	44.6% (83)	25.8% (48)	23.1% (43)	3.64
College	0.5% (1)	8.0% (15)	36.4% (68)	32.6% (61)	22.5% (42)	3.68
Adults: 21-29	0.0% (0)	9.1% (17)	33.7% (63)	33.7% (63)	23.5% (44)	3.72
Adults: 30-39	0.0% (0)	3.2% (6)	28.1% (52)	42.7% (79)	25.9% (48)	3.91
Adults: 40-49	0.0% (0)	2.2% (4)	15.4% (28)	42.9% (78)	39.6% (72)	4.20
Adults: 50-59	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	10.0% (19)	24.7% (47)	65.3% (124)	4.55
Adults: ≥ 60 years	0.0% (0)	1.6% (3)	8.1% (15)	12.4% (23)	78.0% (145)	4.67

Answered question: 190
Skipped question: 35

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

Youth and younger adults represent a smaller “support base” for missions:

Most younger people don't even have missions on their radar.

Younger ones need more exposure.

Older adults more likely to be supportive of missions:

I think as we get older, we begin to look beyond our own spheres and see the need of others.

I think everyone has a favorable attitude toward missions, but only our 60+ saints are passionate.

Also insightful:

There is generally a positive vibe about global ministry in our church. For the older folks, this can take on the form of being married to a particular form of “doing missions”. For this reason, there may be a slight decline in positive thinking about “missions” in the younger age brackets.

INSIGHTS:

Participants indicate that **older generations** are more likely to be **enthusiastic toward** and **supportive of** missions expressions.

18. How is your missions budget funded?

A separate budget funded by designated giving	30.4%	58
A percentage of the church's overall budget	51.8%	99
Other	17.8%	34

Answered question: 191

Skipped question: 34

19. What percentage of your church's annual budget is appropriated to missions? Or, if your missions budget is funded separately, about what percent of the overall church budget would missions equate to?

Under 5% of the church's annual budget	4.3%	8
5-8%	12.8%	24
9-11%	26.6%	50
12-14%	16.5%	31
15-17%	8.0%	15
18-20%	10.6%	20
Greater than 20%	21.3%	40

Answered question: 188

Skipped question: 37

20. What is your church's annual missions budget?

Under \$50,000	48.7%	93
\$50,000-\$99,999	27.2%	52
\$100,000-\$199,999	10.5%	20
\$200,000-\$299,999	6.3%	12
\$300,000-\$399,999	2.6%	5
\$400,000-\$499,999	2.1%	4
\$500,000-\$599,999	0.0%	0
Over \$600,000	2.6%	5

Answered question: 191

Skipped question: 34