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THE SENT LIFE: DISCOVERING THE MISSION OF GOD AND THE CHRISTIAN'S PLACE IN IT

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## ABSTRACT

THE SENT LIFE: DISCOVERING THE MISSION OF GOD AND THE CHRISTIAN'S PLACE IN IT

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The church in the West today has separated something that was never intended to be divided. This critical error impacts the very core of who a Christian is which informs and empowers what a Christian does. Jesus said, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you," and in doing so He designated all Christians as "sent ones." This means living on mission as a sent one is not reserved for a special class of Christians, but is the very calling of all Christians. Since that is true, all Christians need to understand and be equipped for the mission of God. In a survey of 36 church members, participants showed that 88% thought that the mission of God could be explained succinctly; however, in that same survey, the participants themselves were not able to define the mission of God succinctly nor consistently. Christians cannot join a mission that is unclear. This work provides clear and reproducible discipleship training on the mission of God. Flowing out of that teaching, this work also helps Christians to discover their place in God's mission. There is great impact when discipleship leads all Christians to understand the mission of God and their role in it. When the whole church understands and embraces the mission of God, this will result in an unleashing of the greatest missionary force into the world, both locally and globally.

Abstract Length: 230

## CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Abstract.....  | ii  |
| CONTENTS .....   | iii |
| TABLES AND FIGURES.....                                      | v   |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....                               | 1   |
| The Statement of the Problem.....                            | 2   |
| The Statement of Limitations.....                            | 9   |
| The Theoretical Basis for the Project.....                   | 12  |
| The Statement of Methodology .....                           | 15  |
| The Review of the Literature .....                           | 18  |
| Books .....  | 18  |
| Scripture.....   | 27  |
| CHAPTER TWO: A PERSONAL JOURNEY .....                        | 35  |
| The Story of Movement Church .....                           | 35  |
| CHAPTER THREE: THE MISSION OF GOD .....                      | 41  |
| The Need for the Mission of God .....                        | 41  |
| The Mission of God Diagram and Biblical Foundation.....      | 42  |
| Implications of the Mission of God .....                     | 75  |
| CHAPTER FOUR: DISCOVERING WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN SENT TO DO..... | 79  |
| Introduction to the Process.....                             | 79  |
| Personality.....   | 81  |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Spiritual Gifting .....                         | 97  |
| Life Formation .....                            | 109 |
| Putting it Together.....                        | 116 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION .....                  | 122 |
| APPENDICES .....                                | 128 |
| APPENDIX A: Research Questions and Results..... | 128 |
| Bibliography .....                              | 139 |
| Vita.....                                       | 144 |
| IRB Approval/Waiver .....                       |     |

## TABLES AND FIGURES

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1 Mission of God Diagram .....                            | 42  |
| Figure 2 God created the heavens and the earth .....             | 45  |
| Figure 3 Creation of Adam and Eve .....                          | 47  |
| Figure 4 Man created in God's image.....                         | 49  |
| Figure 5 The Fall and Marred image of God implications .....     | 58  |
| Figure 6 God choosing Abraham .....                              | 60  |
| Figure 7 God creating Isreal .....                               | 63  |
| Figure 8 God sending Jesus .....                                 | 67  |
| Figure 9 Jesus' work on the cross .....                          | 69  |
| Figure 10 The Gospel redeemed the image of God in humanity ..... | 71  |
| Figure 11 Jesus gathered disciples .....                         | 72  |
| Figure 12 Jesus sent His disciples to the nations .....          | 74  |
| Figure 13 Front sheet of "What Are You Sent To Do" .....         | 80  |
| Figure 14 Table of Personality Traits.....                       | 84  |
| Figure 15 Second sheet of "What Are You Sent To Do" .....        | 119 |

## INTRODUCTION

One thing that is common among church leaders today is the desire to see a greater missional output among Christians. No matter how different the current landscape of America is, every church, pastor, denominational leader, network leader, and any other Christian leader wants to increase the mission activity within the church. In other words, most, if not all, see mission activity as a desired outcome for the church.

Statistics show that by and large the church is not growing in America as it is in other areas considered more “missionary frontlines.” The Pew Research Center found that during the decade between 2009 and 2019, self-identified Christians dropped 12%. Within that same decade, people in the United States who described themselves as atheists, agnostics, or of no religion, increased by 17%.<sup>1</sup> While those statistics are sobering at best, the religious landscape around the world is not as bleak. *The Washington Post* reported during the same decade that, “Today, the Christian community in Latin America and Africa, alone, account for 1 billion people.”<sup>2</sup> That same article goes on to report that one out of four Christians in the world is African, and suggests that statistic “will grow to 40 percent by 2030.” Asia’s Christian

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Lipka, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace, An update on America’s changing religious landscape.” <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/> (accessed August, 08, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Wes Granberg-Michaelson, “Think Christianity is dying? No, Christianity is shifting dramatically.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/05/20/think-christianity-is-dying-no-christianity-is-shifting-dramatically/> (accessed August 10, 2020).

population is projected to reach 460 million by 2025. And in China there are more Christian worshippers on any given Sunday than in the United States. The point is that Christian growth is happening around the world in places where it is more difficult to be a Christian, but not in America, where it is seemingly easier to be a Christian. Though there are many underlying and complex reasons for this, it is the conviction of this work that a major contributing factor to the decline is the disconnect in theory and practice between the mission of God and the nominal Christian often found in the American church.

This work seeks to provide a biblical foundation for understanding God's mission and for applying that mission to every Christian. The desired outcome is for Christians to understand God's mission and to be able to find their place in it by discovering what they have been sent to do. This process will reinvigorate the missional thrust of God's people by enlisting and equipping all of God's people for all of His mission. The days of putting God's mission into the hands of the "professionals" is over and it is time for the full church to embrace the full mission of God and be fully equipped to live it out.

### **The Statement of the Problem**

A huge obstacle that prevents many Christians from embracing a missional life and living all of life on mission is the disconnect between the average Christian's understanding of God's mission, and a lack of clarity about his or her place in His mission. The church's on-ramp into God's mission should be discipleship, but too many discipleship plans inform Christians on how to study the Bible, pray, go to church, and participate in "church" activities, but do not necessarily emphasize being sent out on mission for the Lord. The missional component to

discipleship has either bypassed mission, reserving it for the professional class of Christianity, or it disregards it altogether. In doing so, “mission” is only applicable for “professional missionaries.”

Christian leaders want to see a greater mission impulse, but there does not seem to be a discipleship effort nor a discipleship focus in place for such a desired outcome. The current landscape of discipleship helps Christians who have officially received their “call” to be a “missionary,” but does not equip every Christian for the mission of God. This work seeks to provide a practical discipleship tool to help all Christians both understand the mission of God and to find their place in His mission.

Contributing to this problem is the fact that “mission” activity, as it is currently understood, has been compartmentalized to a subset of Christians which allows the vast majority of those outside that subset to not fully engage in God’s mission. For too many, mission is only for the professional missionaries and not applied to all Christians. Mission truly is for missionaries when all Christians wear the mantle of “missionary” and this understanding becomes a regular part of Christian discipleship. Missionaries, however, are all too often defined as those specially called to go “over there,” wherever “there” may be. Although it is not the scope of this paper to solve or speak fully into that particular issue, it is relevant here because churches are not discipling all Christians to engage in the mission of God because not all Christians are considered missionaries. For example, in *When Everything is Missions*, Spitters and Ellison define a missionary as someone who is “(a) sent (b) across a boundary to where the gospel is not known (c) to see a church planted that (d) can reach that region with the gospel once the



missionary leaves.”<sup>3</sup> This definition provides the premise of their book which is that not every Christian is a missionary. However, it is unnecessary and even perilous to bifurcate a division between missionary work and church work. It is the view of the writer that when such a definition excludes the vast majority of Christians, then the unintended consequence is a disengagement with the mission of God both locally and globally. A disengagement with the mission of God is a major contributing factor to the decline of the church in America.

When all Christians embrace the mission of God, then discipleship can train and equip all Christians for mission. A subset of Christians, i.e. individuals who feel specifically called as “missionaries,” receive a high level of training compared to the average Christian church member. On one hand this makes sense if the extra training is specific to the culture the missionaries are going to enter. But this selective focus leaves the vast majority of Christians devoid of missional discipleship. While again it is not the purview of this paper to delve into that specific conversation, it is one of the factors leading to a decline in participation with the mission of God. Christians are not being discipled into God’s mission because the prevailing thought is that mission work is for someone else: only those who feel specifically called to go overseas.

The current landscape of discipleship equips Christians to be effective Christians in the church but has failed to equip them for mission outside the church. That training is for the “professional missionaries” and the rest of the church gets in on that missional effort simply through giving, praying, and potentially going on short-term trips to visit the missionaries. This discipleship disconnect has happened because mission has been reserved for those going

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<sup>3</sup> Denny Spitters and Matthew Ellison, *When Everything Is Missions* (Orlando: FL, 2017), 69.

overseas and therefore not seen as applicable to the Christian who doesn't get on an airplane. This has led to the church being filled with people who know what to do in the church but not what to do in the world. Christians are too often disciplined for Sunday services but not for missional living. One needs to look no further than the current situation of the American church to see that there is a problem.

Another result from a lack of missional discipleship is the view that the church *does* mission when in reality the church *is* mission. A proper understanding of the mission of God roots God's people, the church, into His mission in its identity and not just its activity. The church is missional by nature, which means that God's people who make up His church are missional by nature. Discipleship should inform and equip Christians into that understanding.

When "normal" Christian discipleship tries to equip in discipleship, it does not approach the process missiologically. Yet discipleship needs to have a missiological atmosphere because to be like Jesus is to be on His mission. When mission casts a shadow over all aspects of discipleship, it rightly aligns the disciple in God's mission.

Most discipleship plans revolve around two aspects, knowledge of God and activity of the Christian life. While these are important, they are incomplete unless they are connected to God's mission. Knowledge and activity untethered to God's mission leaves the Christian with a compartmentalized view of God and his or her own purpose in life. Knowledge of God is its own thing; Christian activity is another and there isn't a comprehensive thread to tie it all together. It is the view of the writer that knowledge disconnected from activity stunts missional fruitfulness.

Surveying the landscape of discipleship plans that are available today, one can see the missing component is "mission." Mission is too often seen as an add-on for those Christians

called “missionaries” who are of a higher calling. Or mission is reserved for the extraordinary Christians. When Christians receive their “calling” to reach the nations overseas, then training in God’s mission takes place. Two popular organizations that provide discipleship plans, Navigators and LifeWay Christian Resources, both neglect to disciple in mission. The Navigators’ “Discipleship Wheel,”<sup>4</sup> has four spokes and none of them emphasize mission. The closest spoke on their discipleship wheel is “witnessing,” but that is reduced to training with a gospel presentation. Another prominent discipleship plan that is fairly comprehensive is LifeWay’s discipleship tool.<sup>5</sup> It, too, does not include mission. Instead it has a section devoted to “Sharing Christ,” which has a drop-down option that does include a study on mission, but it focuses on the New Testament mission of Jesus. It is not rooted in a comprehensive holistic missiology. These discipleship plans are solid and have been used powerfully in many people’s lives. This writer advocates incorporating the mission of God discipleship as a primer for all other plans, not neglecting those resources that are already available.

Even when current discipleship plans try to equip for mission, it is usually in the area of evangelism which gets downsized to a memorized gospel presentation and corresponding delivery tactics. This happens in this order because Christians are not being trained as missionaries who can translate the gospel into the culture in which they live. Caleb Crider stated this missiological understanding when he said, “Contextualization is the translation of the gospel from one culture to another. More than just converting the good news into an appropriate

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<sup>4</sup> Dawson, Trotman, “The Wheel Illustration,” The Navigators, <https://www.navigators.org/resource/the-wheel-illustration> (accessed July 17, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Michael, Kelly. “Creating A Discipleship Pathway,” LifeWay, <https://www.lifeway.com/en/special-emphasis/balanced-discipleship> (accessed July 18, 2020).

language for our audience, mission requires that we interpret the message of the kingdom into other cultures through word and deed.”<sup>6</sup> A reductionist view of the gospel fits for most general discipleship plans but not in missional discipleship. Christians, by and large, are not being trained as missionaries because the church has failed to connect “mission” to the very identity of the church which would lead to equipping all believers in their missional efforts.

When discipleship efforts attempt to move into mission, they tend to focus on activity alone. This bypasses a basic understanding of God’s mission and the believer’s role in it; It inadequately rushes to the “what” of mission activity to a select few and circumvents the “why” of mission intended to be embraced by all of the church. The “why” of mission is the engine for all mission activity. Today’s landscape is littered with beat-up cars on the mission highway because the engines were never put in. While unpacking the mission of God, this project answers the “why” of mission in a way that all Christians can understand and embrace.

This lack of connecting the “why” to the “what” is reflected in the increasing content of many discipleship tools, plans and focuses of church leaders who want to activate their churches into greater missional activity but only focus on mission activity in a vacuum. This work advocates that current discipleship models need to begin with God’s mission and the believers’ role in it in order to train and equip for a missional life.

It is the belief of this writer that discipleship starts with God’s mission and His people’s role in it. With His mission as the foundation, many of the current discipleship models can build upon this base. Mission must start first and cast a long shadow on all that comes after it. It should

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<sup>6</sup> Caleb Crider, et al. *Tradecraft: for the Church on Mission*. (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2013), 148.

be the engine for current discipleship models, not an afterthought, but the igniter. As an igniter, God's mission will influence all that comes after it and current models can then continue much of the good discipleship work that churches and organization have already created.

Starting with mission means starting with God, who is by nature a missional God. David Bosch said, "...mission is not primarily an activity of the church but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God."<sup>7</sup> Christians must start there and derive their missional understanding and practice from the very nature and mission of God. Christians are a "sent" people by nature and by design, and the greatest help for further and fuller mission activity is to root the Christian in the mission identity of God Himself. God is a sending God and His people are a sent people. In explaining Karl Hartenstein's teaching, Christopher Wright moves beyond God being a sending God only in the sense of the Father sending the Son, and their sending of the Holy Spirit to also include, by extension, humanity being a sent people. "All human mission, in this perspective, is seen as a participation in and extension of this divine sending."<sup>8</sup> Since the core identity of a Christian is being a "sent one," entire lives can be leveraged to fully engage in God's mission in meaningful ways wherever Christians have been "sent," which is wherever they are.

Connected and flowing out of a Christian's identity as a "sent one," comes the activity of a "sent one." Every believer has a place in God's mission and God wants every believer to understand what he or she has been "sent" to do. Discipleship must also explore and equip in how God has uniquely created each one of us to find our place in His mission.

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<sup>7</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 389–390.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 63.

This project weaves together two threads that have been disconnected for far too long and thus stunting the missional fruitfulness of the Christian and the church: A practical understanding of the mission of God leading to the conclusion that every Christian is a sent one, and the believer's connection to that mission in a holistic fashion. When those two threads are connected, a resurgence of authentic missional activity will take place.

This project first seeks to bring clarity for the Christian on the mission of God and the Christian's place in that mission. Discipleship will flow out of that increased clarity and with that as the foundation, Christians can be discipled appropriately into God's mission. Mission becomes the context for discipleship.

The second aspect to fruitful missional activity is equipping believers to find their place in God's mission by taking into account their personality, spiritual gifting, and unique life story to propel them into fruitful mission. Flowing out of a clearer understanding of God's mission is the believer's practical role in that mission. When Christians are firmly rooted in God's mission, they will see how all of their life can be leveraged to fully engage in that mission. By adopting this missional discipleship plan, one can expect to gain an understanding of God's mission and his or her unique place in it.

### **Statement of Limitations**

This project does not seek to enter or solve the missiological debate of what or who constitutes a "missionary" in an exhaustive manner. Rather, it seeks as much as possible, to define and use the phrase "sent one" to describe all Christians. Whereas the writer strongly agrees that when describing and defining God's mission one will see the clear calling for all

Christians to engage in that mission as “sent ones,” the application of the term “missionary” is outside the scope of this work because it takes into account a larger missiological discussion. This is regretful but necessary. Though God will be described as a “missionary God,” because of the overwhelming consensus of such an understanding, the Christian will still be described as a “sent one.” And while the term “sent one” is not without controversy and diverse understandings, it is more acceptable in the parameters of a DMin project to discuss all Christians as “sent ones,” than it is for them to be designated “missionaries.” Therefore, this work will progress with the use of “sent one.”

The biblical rationale comes primarily from a number of passages: John 17:18, “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world,”<sup>9</sup> and John 20:21, “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I also send you.’”<sup>10</sup> In the most immediate context, the “you,” refers to the disciples, but by implication it now refers to all disciples that would follow. The term “sent one,” comes from the Greek word, *apostello*, meaning “to send forth on a certain mission such as to preach, speak, bless, rule, redeem, propitiate, and save.”<sup>11</sup> It is a term that assumes implicitly and explicitly that one is sent on purpose from a sender. The missionary God sends His sent people into His mission. This is the heart of Matthew 28:19-20, “Go, therefore. and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe

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<sup>9</sup> John 17:18 (HSCB).

<sup>10</sup> John 20:21 (HSCB).

<sup>11</sup> Spiros Zodhiates and James Strong. *The Complete Word Study New Testament: King James Version*. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), 891.

everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”<sup>12</sup> In order to go, on purpose, on mission, one has to be sent, therefore making those who go, sent ones. Apart from “cherry-picking” those passages, the major thrust of God is to send, making those He sends, sent ones.

The extent of research is limited to one church. This does not mean that the sample is necessarily small, but rather it is confined to the church that the writer planted. Movement Church in Richmond, Virginia, was planted and disciplined with the understanding that all Christians are “sent ones,” and as a result have been trained and sent out as such. This material is the culmination of a decade of teaching as the church was established on this missiological foundation. The discipleship content has been refined over the years, but has always been part of the DNA of Movement Church. An overview of this material has been, and continues to be taught, at the membership level, in small groups. Moreover, the content has been consistently incorporated in the church’s overall messaging and teaching.

The research was based on a segment of the population that came from a church background. The rationale was to consider what churches are incorporating in their discipleship plans in order to see where and how mission was being used in discipleship. This was considered by asking two different questions: One concerned how well the individual Christian understood the mission of God, and the second question queried how the churches equipped for mission. The results showed a need for a curriculum on God’s mission.

In addition, the writer’s church was taken into consideration. Since the writer planted this particular church, it was used as an example of how mission could be used for discipleship and

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 29:19-20 (HSCB).



how this material could be implemented. The church's story reveals the evolution of this material and its application.

The writer's desire is to see many churches embrace this missiological understanding which will lead to missional living. Any church could benefit from using this material. Existing churches could easily implement this training in a church-wide format, small-group format, or a missional leadership development track. New churches could use this to implement healthy missional DNA as well as a healthy missional discipleship in the early stages of their church plant.

### **The Theoretical Basis for the Project**

The project connects to three current streams of best practices within church life. There is a discipleship connection in two of those areas. First, in the sense of the inward life working outwardly, and secondly, an attempt to equip for mission which has been a missing element from current discipleship models in the church today. And lastly, there is a theological connection to the current missiological conversation within the church.

This work is akin to Dallas Willard's focus on the inside-out aspect of spiritual formation in the sense that an inward understanding of God's mission impacts outward living. He correctly identifies the significance of the "inside" work when it comes to becoming more Christlike. "But what our life amounts to, at least for those who reach full age, is largely, if not entirely, a matter of what we become within. This 'within' is the arena of spiritual formation and, later,

transformation.”<sup>13</sup> In a similar fashion, this work will awaken Christians to their inner mission identity which will, in turn, connect the dots to their activity in transformative ways. Without this, the Christian is merely learning the “how-tos” without the connection to the inner life of purpose and meaning. Willard would go on to say, “...it is who we are in our thoughts, feelings, dispositions, and choices— in the inner life — that counts. Profound transformation there is the only thing that can definitively conquer outward evil.”<sup>14</sup> In the same vein, understanding missional identity and the individual’s unique formation from within has the power to bring that level of transformation to our activity. Identity-based mission and self-awareness are two components missing in many discipleship plans but can be intentionally added with this discipleship primer.

Current discipleship work focuses Christians on their main activity being accomplished and lived out within the church. That discipleship focus, however, has been found wanting because it has failed to connect the disciple to the outside culture in a meaningful way. Timothy Keller rightly points out the disconnect in critiquing the “pietistic,” model which pulled people out of culture instead of sending them into it on purpose for the mission of Jesus. “The pietistic stance is also naive about culture’s role in the process of discipleship. The reality is that if the church does not think much about culture—about what parts are good, bad, or indifferent according to the Bible—its members will begin to uncritically imbibe the values of the

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<sup>13</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 16.

<sup>14</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*, 24.

culture.”<sup>15</sup> Missional discipleship has cultural engagement thoroughly embedded in its application. Christians being trained as “professional missionaries” for overseas service are equipped for this engagement; Therefore, all Christians need to be considered as sent ones, so they can receive similar outward training and equipping.

To say that the “Missional Movement,” is a recent phenomenon would ignore the great missionary thinking of church history. With that said, a shift in the Western church in the late twentieth century into the early twenty-first century happened as leaders began to connect the missionary activity of the church to the missionary identity of the church. That is a leading tenet of the Missional Movement. The Missional Movement, has swept through the American church to the point that it is no longer the “new” thing to embrace as an outlook and understanding of the church. This work falls under that umbrella as a practical application of the theological resurgence that God’s church is missional. Alan Hirsch, a missional leader, defines a missional church as: “...a community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world. In other words, the church’s true and authentic organizing principle is mission. When the church is in mission, it is the true church. The church itself is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible. The mission of God flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus.”<sup>16</sup> The connection to this work is that discipleship must connect believers with the world around them, which discipling with the

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<sup>15</sup> Timothy Keller, *Center Church, Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 185-186.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), 82.

mission of God does. This work is an outworking of that understanding of the nature of the church.

### **Statement of Methodology**

This project will walk through a process that will equip believers in the mission of God and help them find their place in that mission. The process is suitable for small groups and/or churches at large. It involves a memorable and engaging pictorial journey which unpacks the mission of God and leads to an understanding of each believer's place in God's mission. Unlike other missional training that starts with the New Testament, this starts with Genesis 1:1 and walks through the arc of the story of God. When the believer grasps an understanding of the mission of God, the second tool will walk the believer through a journey to understand his or her personal place in God's mission. This process takes into account the believer's personality, spiritual gifting, and the opportunities placed in the individual's life.

There are two "tools" that will be explained with instructions on how to implement them. The first is a fill-in-the-blank diagram that explains the mission of God in a clear, understandable and relatable manner. The second tool is a process that flows out of the first and makes the mission of God personally applicable and actionable. It asks and answers the question, "What are you sent to do?" These two tools will equip leaders who want to understand God's mission for themselves as well as wanting to lead a small group, or add the material to an existing discipleship plan that will accomplish the goals of rooting mission in identity and helping people discover what they have been sent to do.

The first tool is a comprehensive overview of the story of God explaining His mission and His people's role in His mission. When completed, the participant should have a clear understanding of God's overarching mission, His people's unique role in that mission, and be equipped to share this with others in a creative and transferable way.

The second tool takes the participant on a journey to gain a better understanding of his or her personality, spiritual gifts, and personal story. The goal is to point believers in a direction that brings alignment with their unique makeup and their role in God's mission.

*Chapter Two: A Personal Journey* introduces the reader to the subject and the overarching vision for the DMin project. A brief history of the church that birthed this material will show that the teaching is rooted and anchored in the local church and has a proven track record. By telling this story, one will see that this missional DNA has impacted that church to its very core, which has implications on everything it does moving forward.

*Chapter Three: The Mission of God* will be a thorough yet accessible description of the "mission of God." The teaching walks through the metanarrative of God's word, based on the definition of His mission being: God's working in all creation, for His own glory, by spreading His image throughout the earth. It will show that God's mission continues to be what God's mission was from the very beginning; In other words, His mission spelled out in Genesis 1:28 is the same mission Jesus gave in Matthew 28:19-20. The material corresponds with a pictorial representation of the mission of God for an engaging learning experience. This will create a more memorable, reproducible format. The four recurring principles that the participant will be confronted with are: God has a mission, His mission has a people, His people have a place, and His people have a purpose.

*Chapter Four: Discovering What You Have Been Sent to Do* moves to a more individualized aspect of the mission of God. Once one sees and understands the mission of God, the emphasis shifts to discovering one's specific place in the mission of God. This second tool guides the Christian in discovering what he or she has been sent to do. This flows out of the big picture of the mission of God. There are three primary considerations for discovering what one has been sent to do: Personality, Spiritual Gifting, and Formative Life Moments. The tool includes a specific personality test and follow-up discussion. The teaching will delve into how God uses specific personalities. The spiritual gifts test is the next segment and includes related discussion with a simple biblical overview of spiritual gifting. The third component is a process that looks at one's life experiences to see how God has shaped the believer through formative memories, past failures, and successes. The Lord does not waste His people's past; Instead, He redeems life experiences and uses them for present and future opportunities. Too many people have been taught that God wants people to forget their past instead of leveraging it for His glory. When those three components (Personality, Spiritual Gifting, and Formative Life Moments) are brought together, the participant will create a six-month plan moving forward into deeper and more meaningful missional living.

*Chapter Five: Conclusion* will summarize the conclusions of the project as well as offer possible applications for this material. The summary will offer encouragement to implement this material into the church's discipleship program. By using this material at the onset of a discipleship program the disciple will be equipped with God's mission, in His mission and for His mission.

## The Review of the Literature

### Books

Arguably the *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* was Dallas Willard's most influential work. His basic thesis was that the kingdom of God is readily available now through the Savior to anyone who wants to apprentice themselves to Jesus. He believed the Sermon on the Mount to be the kingdom's curriculum leading to kingdom living in someone's current life and current place in life. His teaching takes discipleship out of the "programmed" world and into the real world where real people live and interact. The most significant contribution is that every aspect of life can experience the breakthrough of the kingdom. That is perhaps the greatest strength of his work and also why his work is lacking in regards to the area of mission. He was for discipleship what so many are for mission in that discipleship and mission ought to be seen holistically involving all of life. God's mission, joining it in every aspect of life, is nowhere to be found in his work. It would not have taken much to tie holistic discipleship to holistic mission. *The Divine Conspiracy's* premise that the kingdom is available even though it is often missed would have fit perfectly with a missional weaving into the teaching.

The authors and contributors of *Tradecraft: For the Church on Mission* have compiled a book intended for Christians on mission to be equipped with the necessary missionary tools to engage their context with the good news of Jesus. In essence, they have taken proven skills of traditional "missionaries" and applied them to the contexts in which Christians find themselves. Their focus is on what traditional missiologists refer to as the "home" context,

as opposed to the “field.” The contribution of *Tradecraft* to this work is not as much the content, but rather the assumption the authors make about Christians. “Mission is not about location, it is about identity.”<sup>17</sup> The assumption that this is built upon is that all Christians have in them the identity of being a “sent one,” or a “missionary.” Until Christians see themselves as missionaries, and not just Christians who do mission work, they will not fully embrace their God-given purpose in life. *Tradecraft* seeks to equip Christians to live on mission with the assumption that at the Christian’s core is the identity of missionary. The project at hand seeks to make the case that Christians are sent ones; It precedes *Tradecraft*’s assumption by making the case for their assumption. *Tradecraft* is a perfect companion for what to do after one understands his or her identity as a sent one.

The major contribution of *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, is the biblical hermeneutic of mission that Christopher Wright both advocates and exemplifies. The teaching that God has a mission, His mission has a people, and His people have a place within that mission comes from Wright’s work. He works through the narrative of Scripture and shows how all of it points to mission. Many “mission” books only focus on “mission” passages within the Bible. The strength of Wright is that he consistently carries the missional hermeneutic throughout his understanding of the entire Bible.

The contribution to the writer’s project mainly comes from Wright’s chapter on “Mission and God’s Image.” His treatment of God’s image and its connection to mission is paramount in understanding humanity’s missional identity. That identity backs all the way up to the very image

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<sup>17</sup> Caleb Crider, et al. *Tradecraft: for the Church on Mission*. (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2013), 24.



in which God created humanity. A missional God created a missional people. This contribution supports the writer's foundational understanding that God's people are a sent people because they are created in the image of a Sending God.

The contributors to *Introduction to Global Missions* reveal their missiological assumptions at the beginning by defining key terms. On one hand this clarifies where they stand with these key definitions as they spell out how they are using certain terms. On the other hand, the term "mission" seems to be reserved for work done "over there," wherever "over there" is, as long as it isn't "here." Such a stance could have a limiting effect on living as a missionary wherever God sends a Christian, regardless of how far or near that might be. The work does connect the missionary task to discipleship. This is helpful in clarifying the overall task of the missionary. However, the connection of the missionary focus to being "on the mission field" may have a limiting effect on the missional responsibility of disciples of Christ, especially as the field is further defined as "over there." The work gives an overview of God's mission throughout the Bible in a way that rightly connects mission to the whole, and not just parts, of the biblical narrative. This will be both drawn from in this work, as well as confronted.

The authors of *Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, have compiled a variety of potential careers centering around particular personality models. The foundation of the personality models in the book is based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality paradigm. The concept is fairly simple. Through MBTI testing, one can discover one's personality type and then find particular careers that tend to fit that personality type. This is the fifth edition which does a thorough job of analyzing the personality test results as it discusses various professions. The contribution to the

current project is to be used as a resource to help Christians discover what they have been sent to do.

Part of the process of discovering one's "sentness," is to take a personality test. It is one of the three areas the project walks participants through to help discover what they have been "sent" to do. The authors recommend the 16 Personalities test, which has as its foundation the Myers-Briggs paradigm. The connection with *Do What You Are* is important to the conversation, because God's "sentness" breaks through the sacred/secular divide that exists. Pastors should be discussing professions and God's mission as part of the same conversation. Helping people grasp God's mission and the implications on every part of their lives, including their jobs, is vital to discipling people into mission. *Do What You Are* will be a piece of that puzzle.

*Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* is a great example of incorporating missional thinking into a basic discipleship framework. The framework of author Timothy Keller's work is worth noting; He moves from the core of theology to the practice of methodology. This inside out movement is a model for discipleship worth emulating. Not only does Keller move from the inside out, he moves from a place of identity to the place of practice. He unpacks the nature of the gospel first, before moving to a church's engagement with the city. This roots the activity in the city with the church's identification with the gospel.

The second contribution of *Center Church* and its application to the current project is Keller's contention that the church ought to engage with the culture of the city in which it exists. In doing so, he advocates that all the individuals in the church ought to be engaged in this missional focus of the church. This is not just for planters, pastors, or professionals, but for all

Christians to engage in—just as God’s mission is not just for professional missionaries, but for all of the church.

*The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* is a book written by longtime missional leader Alan Hirsch. In it he connects discipleship and mission in a way that supports the thesis of this project. It is Hirsch’s conviction that discipleship divorced from mission has led to the great divide in the Western Evangelical church. This divide is the major distinction between professional missionary work and the missional work of every Christian. He describes the importance of discipleship by saying “...without meaningful discipleship there can be no real movement and therefore no significant impact for the gospel....”<sup>18</sup> He goes on to describe the connection to missional DNA (mDNA). The right discipleship leads to mDNA within a church, and the right discipleship is defined as discipleship that disciples with mission at the core.

In “Sending Language and the Missionary Nature of the Church,” author Brad Brisco traces the theme and language of “sending” throughout the Bible. The foundation of this thread is the mission of God. Because there is a mission of God, there is a theme of sending throughout the Scriptures. Mission is not something the New Testament created and that the church merely engages in. Rather, it is the whole of God’s activity that He invites His people into.

The story of creation is rooted in “sending” terminology even though this is oftentimes missed because of the emphasis on other themes. Flowing out of creation into the stories that follow in Genesis and the entirety of the Pentateuch, there is a consistent emphasis on “sending.” The Historical Books capture this theme with little “tells” throughout the storytelling by

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<sup>18</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 106.

highlighting God sending His prophets or His people. In the Poetic Books, it is God who “sends”: people, relief, and calamity. The Prophetic Books have some of the clearest sending, when it comes to His prophets being sent on specific missions with specific messages. The New Testament seems to be the most obvious place for sending terminology, and Brisco thoroughly highlights what is obvious, as well as what is often missed, even in the New Testament. This work will be used to bolster evidence of the missional hermeneutic throughout the Bible, proving the point that God is a missional God, which means understanding His mission and our place in it is vitally important to the Christian life.

The article, “Discovering God's Purpose for Your Life,” from the C.S. Lewis Institute seeks to help its readers discover God’s purpose for their lives. Thomas Tarrants correctly starts with identifying the purpose or mission of God. He moves beyond just saying that God has a purpose to highlighting God’s mission in the book of Genesis. He quotes Genesis 1:27-28 as he ties God’s purpose into spreading His image throughout the earth. “...God’s ultimate purpose — to recreate this failed world and to bring about a new heaven and new earth. He is redeeming a people for Himself, with whom He will dwell and with whom He will share His own glory.”<sup>19</sup> This is a positive step in discovering God’s purpose for an individual’s life because many times the Christian is told that God has a purpose, but that purpose is not spelled out.

Where this work comes up short is in the practical outworking of discovering God’s purpose for the individual Christian. Basically, the instruction is to pray and read the Bible. While there is much to discover by doing that, a more detailed process needs to be spelled out for

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas A. Tarrant, III, “Discovering God’s Purpose for Your Life. Knowing & Doing,” C.S. Lewis Institute, 2018, [www.cslewisinstitute.org](http://www.cslewisinstitute.org), (accessed July 12, 2020).

Christians to take into account how God has wired them and how He desires to use all of who they are for His mission in particular ways. This writer's work looks at personalities, spiritual gifting, and life experiences to help determine God's purpose for Christians' lives.

*Life on Mission: Joining the Everyday Mission of God*, by Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe is helpful in many ways. First, it rightly asserts that all Christians are missionaries; the exact term they use is "everyday missionaries." This puts the mission of God in the forefront of all Christians, not just those who go to faraway places. Secondly, it challenges Christians to consider how they are leveraging their whole lives for the mission of God. Thirdly, the book connects individual Christians to the importance of the community on mission, called the church.

Willis and Coe also lay out a clear path of the "what" of mission. They say that Christians who engage in God's mission should seek ways to "Identify people who need the gospel."<sup>20</sup> Then the call is to "Invest your life in others as you share the gospel."<sup>21</sup> Through that investment they say Christians should "Invite people into disciple making relationships."<sup>22</sup> Finally, they finish their charge to Christians on mission by telling them to "Increase disciple-making by sending people out."<sup>23</sup> So their "what" of mission is to identify, invest, invite, and increase. While those are helpful steps, this work does not delve into the make-up of the individual

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<sup>20</sup> Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe, *Life on Mission: Joining the Everyday Mission of God* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 106.

<sup>21</sup> Willis and Coe, *Life on Mission*, 118.

<sup>22</sup> Willis and Coe, *Life on Mission*, 128.

<sup>23</sup> Willis and Coe, *Life on Mission*, 140.

missionary to discover how God has designed him or her, which will impact how he or she will go about doing the “what” of God’s mission.

Justin Buzzard, in *The Big Story: How the Bible Makes Sense out of Life*, seeks to connect people’s stories to the big story of God. It is not a “mission” book in the traditional sense, which proves to be helpful in many ways but also lacking when it comes to contributing to this work. Buzzard’s thesis is that God’s story makes up five chapters: God, Creation, Rebellion, Rescue, and Home. He tells the metanarrative of God’s word with those chapter titles and weaves into those chapters each individual’s life story. In other words, he suggests that each person’s story has a God that he or she worships, a creation story, a rebellion story, and so forth.

The contribution to this writer’s work is Buzzard’s chapter on understanding one’s life story. There is an action step of drawing out one’s life story in order to discover how that story fits into God’s story. The helpful aspect of this is to get Christians to consider their life story to see how it has both led them to embrace God’s mission, as well as to direct their future choices and decisions in God’s mission.

Gary McIntosh wrote, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church*. One would think a book discussing church growth and being a faithful church would include a robust discussion of God’s mission and how His people, the church, find their place in it. But that essential aspect is missing in *Biblical Church Growth*. McIntosh does highlight the central aspect of discipleship, however. He says, “Simply stated, life-giving churches make disciples by finding the lost, folding them into the body, and building them up in the faith. They balance their disciple-making process around the three elements of evangelism,

assimilation, and maturation.”<sup>24</sup> However, God’s mission is not explained or taught with information on how to get involved in His mission. Too often church growth books, like this one, leave God’s mission out and mission books leave mission to the missionaries.

*A Leader's Life Purpose Workbook: Calling and Destiny Discovery Tools for Christian Life Coaching*, by Tony Stoltzfus is perhaps one of the most helpful handbooks on how to practically discover your purpose in life and then how to live out that purpose. It accomplishes its stated desire to help Christians discover their calling, which he defines as “an external commission from God for the sake of others.”<sup>25</sup> He makes a Christ-centered argument for discovering one’s purpose in life. The only thing that is lacking is a more robust discussion and teaching on the mission of God. There is little said about that which elevates the purpose in life to the Christ-centered purpose that He desires.

*Living your Strengths*, is a book authored by three experts in the field of leadership. The foundation of the book is based on the “Clifton Strengths Finder.” That assessment is designed to help identify strengths within an individual. The strengths are categorized in groupings in a similar format of a personality test and results. The authors of *Living your Strengths* have filtered the “Clifton Strengths Finder” through a Christian worldview. In doing so they have essentially helped Christians discover their God-given strengths, talents, and abilities, as well as helping Christians to live those strengths out in meaningful ways. While this book is helpful in

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<sup>24</sup> Gary McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 62.

<sup>25</sup> Tony Stoltzfus, *A Leader's Life Purpose Workbook: Calling and Destiny Discovery Tools for Christian Life Coaching* (Virginia Beach, VA: Coach22, 2009), 7.

determining certain strengths that otherwise might remain hidden, there is not a missiological underpinning connecting people's strengths to God's mission.

David Hirschman wrote his doctoral thesis on the topic of "Missional Focus, Form and Function are Redefining American Christianity." In it he studied and reported on a great number of missional leaders. His findings suggest that discipleship connected to mission in a meaningful way leads to greater mission activity. "Discipleship and community are a significant emphasis in many of the current published works, and for the author of these works, these two topics are what they suggest should be the focus, and form the practice and function for the twenty-first century US churches."<sup>26</sup> His research concludes what this writer is advocating as well, which is a missional approach to discipleship and an intentional process to discover one's place in that mission. This will help the church in fulfilling the mission God gave.

## Scripture

### FOUNDATIONS FOR GOD BEING A SENDING GOD AND HIS PEOPLE BEING A SENT PEOPLE

The totality of Scripture reveals God as a "sending" God. "The Hebrew verb 'to send,' *shelach* is found nearly 800 times [in the Bible]. While its usage is most often found in a variety of non-theological phrases, it is used more than 200 times with God as the subject of the verb. In

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<sup>26</sup> David Hirschman, "Missional Focus, Form and Function are Redefining American Christianity, (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, South Africa, April 2017) 30.



other words, it is God who commissions His people and it is God who sends.”<sup>27</sup> This is seen first in the mode of creation. He sends His creative word out creating all that is. The phrase, “Then God said...” appears in Genesis 1, eight times.<sup>28</sup> As God was speaking creation into existence, He was sending out His word. Words are incarnate thoughts that would otherwise remain hidden from the outside world unless they are sent out by the sender, i.e. the speaker. It is subtle, but God is laying a foundation of sending even in the creation story.

Another foundational “sending” passage is Genesis 12. In God’s calling of Abraham, it includes a sending out on mission message for God’s purposes. The very first command to Abraham was for him to “Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”<sup>29</sup> The God who is calling out His newly formed people is immediately doing so with a missional call to be sent out from the land of his upbringing into a new land. This calling implies that God has a mission or a purpose that Abraham, and by implication the people of God, are being sent into.

As God’s people settled into their new land, God would send His prophets to them with a message. Passages such as Malachi 3:1, “See, I am going to send my messenger...” are numerous throughout the Old Testament. These sending passages reveal that the prophets had a specific mission which they had been sent out to accomplish. This also reveals that God was the One who had the big mission in mind as He sent His spokesmen out. Scripture proves this over

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<sup>27</sup> Brad Brisoc, “A God Who Sends,” Facts and Trends, September 26, 2013, <https://factsandtrends.net/2013/09/26/a-god-who-sends/> (accessed June 15, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> Genesis 1:3,6,11,14,20,24,26 (HCSB).

<sup>29</sup> Genesis 12:1 (HSCB).

and over as God communicated a specific message and sent out specific prophets to places and people.

Another such passage that highlights the sending nature of God making those He sent out His “sent ones,” is Isaiah’s calling. Isaiah 6 records this commissioning into God’s mission: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: ‘Who should I send? Who will go for Us?’ I said: ‘Here I am. Send me<sup>30</sup> This both reveals God as the Sending God and His people, i.e. Isaiah, as one of His sent people. This calling into God’s mission had at its heart both a core identity and, flowing from that, an activity. Isaiah’s identity was a sent one, which informed his activity.

The Old Testament also reveals that God’s sent ones were not just specific prophets, but were His people as a whole. The people of God have been—and remain to be—a sent people. Isaiah 49, along with many other passages, speaks about the people as a whole being sent out for a specific purpose. “It is not enough for you [Israel] to be My Servant raising up the tribes of Jacob and restoring the protected ones of Israel. I will also make you a light for the nations, to be My salvation to the ends of the earth.”<sup>31</sup> God’s people were called out ones and sent ones to relate to God as no other nation did and to represent Him as no other nation did. The ultimate purpose would be that other nations would see Israel’s God and come to know Him.

As the story continued to unfold into the New Testament, there is a distinguishing title given to describe Jesus, the Sent One. Jesus emphasized that He was the One *sent* by God 23 times in the gospels. One such passage is John 13:20, “I assure you: Whoever receives anyone I

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<sup>30</sup> Isaiah 6:8 (HSCB).

<sup>31</sup> Isaiah 49:6 cf 42:6, 52:10, 60:3 (HSCB).

send receives Me, and the one who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”<sup>32</sup> This passage demonstrates two important truths: the first is that Jesus is sent by God, and the second is that He joins God the Father in sending out. This will be discussed further by other passages. Over and over, Jesus is pointing people to the One who sent Him. As the Sent One, Jesus enjoins Himself in the overarching mission of God.

The Holy Spirit is also involved in the great sending nature of the Triune God. John 14:26, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name—will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.”<sup>33</sup> The significance of this passage is that it reveals the fullness of God involved in the act of sending. The Father sent the Spirit in the name of Jesus. Every act of God sending has embedded within it the great mission He has for His glory among the nations.

Jesus stated on two different occasions that His disciples, and by implication all would-be disciples, are “sent ones.” On the night in which Jesus was betrayed, He prayed to the Father in John 17:18, “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”<sup>34</sup> After His resurrection, He said the same thing while talking to His disciples: “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’”<sup>35</sup> This word “sent,” has as its root the word *apostello*, from which the word “apostle” is derived. The word apostle, is used in three different ways in the New Testament. There is the office of an apostle which was limited to those

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<sup>32</sup> John 13:20 cf Matthew 10:40, Mark 9:37, Luke 9:48, 10:16, John 5:23,24,30,37; 6:39,7:16,18,28, 33; 8:16,18, 26, 29; 9:4; 12:25,45,49; 14:25; 15:21; 16:5 (HSCB).

<sup>33</sup> John 14:26 (HCSB).

<sup>34</sup> John 17:18 (HCSB).

<sup>35</sup> John 20:21 (HCSB).

who had an encounter with the resurrected Christ. Secondly, there is the spiritual gifting of an apostle as in 1 Corinthians 12:28, referring to one who is sent to establish the work of Christ in areas and among people where there is little to no witness. This gifting as is discussed further in the research is often used for those starting new ministries. This more general usage is what informs this research and helps lay the foundation for this work. It is used in a much more general sense of someone purposefully being sent out on mission. It is this usage that informs the church that all Christians have been sent out by Jesus Himself, making all Christians “sent ones.” The third usage is what Jesus meant in John 17 and 20, inviting all disciples into His mission.

The sending nature of the church is further solidified in all of the Great Commission passages that call disciples of Christ to always be about “going” to the nations. Matthew 28:19-20, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”<sup>36</sup> While the “going” is not the main verbal command of the passage, it is implied that there will be going as Christians obey this command of Jesus. The reason is that Jesus sends His church out to the nations in order to make disciples. The other gospel Great Commission passages are John 20:21-23, which has already been reviewed; Luke 24:46-48, which has an explicit sending out message; and Mark 16:15-16, which although is in a disputed passage, uses explicit sending language wrapped around the purpose of Jesus’s disciples.

Connected to the gospel Great Commission passages is Luke’s second commission statement, found in Acts 1:8. There the words of Jesus are recorded as: “But you will receive

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<sup>36</sup> Matthew 28:19-20 (HSCB).

power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”<sup>37</sup> Once again the clear implication is that Jesus’s followers will not stay in Jerusalem but rather be sent out to the nations. Though many people apply this passage geographically where they are—their own “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth” —it is best to see the direct application is that Jesus sends His disciples everywhere. In sending His disciples everywhere, He also sends them out with a specific mission, which is to be His witnesses. It is clear, as with other mission passages, that the Christian’s activity is rooted in his or her identity. Christians are witnesses and therefore that impacts how they live as witnesses.

#### FOUNDATIONS FOR GOD’S MISSION

The mission of God does not appear first in the New Testament with the Great Commission. A proper understanding of the creation story in Genesis 1 and 2 reveals the mission of God within the first few pages of Scripture. Genesis 1 includes two foundational passages that literally spell out the mission of God. The first passage is Genesis 1:26-27 in which God said, “‘Let Us make man in Our *image* [emphasis added], according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.’ So God created man in His own *image*; He created him in the *image* of God; He created them male and female.”<sup>38</sup> This passage begins to build the great mission God has for His crowning creation, humanity. It reveals the very essence of humanity and the one feature that separates humans from all other creation, God’s image. In the following research, the image of

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<sup>37</sup> Acts 1:8 (HSCB).

<sup>38</sup> Genesis 1:26-27 (HSCB).

God is further explained, but the significance here is that humanity has been separated from all other creation by being created in God's image.

God clearly articulates His mission immediately following the unveiling of God's image in humanity and His commissioning is wrapped up in His blessing. "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.'"<sup>39</sup> God's mission flows out of His blessing. His mission for humanity is to be fruitful and multiply the image of God inside of them. God's desire was to look down in the expansive garden and see His image reflected back to Him. The research will go on to fully show this mission as described in Genesis is "God's working in all of creation, for His own glory, by spreading His image throughout the earth." The significance is that God's mission is unveiled in the first chapter of Genesis, not the last chapter of Matthew.

The mission of God hit an obstacle in Genesis 3 with Adam and Eve's encounter with the ancient enemy, the serpent. Immediately following Adam and Eve's rebellion of eating the forbidden fruit, the first couple experienced the effects of sin. When Adam and Eve sinned, the image of God inside of them was distorted. The impact of a distorted image of God inside of them separated their relationships with God, which had both relational and missional impact. Relationally they were separated and missionally they were misaligned. Instead of multiplying image-bearing people, perfectly relating to God and representing Him, now they gave birth to other distorted image-bearing people. But in spite of this, God's mission would not be thwarted and He instituted a rescue mission.

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<sup>39</sup> Genesis 1:28 (HSCB).

God's interaction with Abraham revealed this rescue plan would involve recreating a people who would relate to Him and represent Him. His calling of Abraham reveals this global plan. As God called Abraham He said, "I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you."<sup>40</sup> Though sin entered the story, God's mission remained the same: His glory, in all creation, spreading His image throughout the earth. His people were called to relate to Him and represent Him on earth. This mission would set God's people apart from all others.

This global renown theme as seen through His people continues in Isaiah 42:6: "I, Yahweh, have called You for a righteous purpose, and I will hold You by Your hand. I will keep You and appoint You to be a covenant for the people and a light to the nations."<sup>41</sup> Here Isaiah is highlighting two important truths about God's people. First is that they are in a special relationship with God shown by His holding of their "hand." Secondly, this reveals their representative nature by being a "light to the nations."

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<sup>40</sup> Genesis 12:2-3 (HSCB).

<sup>41</sup> Isaiah 42:6 (HSCB).

## **CHAPTER TWO, A PERSONAL JOURNEY**

### **THE STORY OF MOVEMENT CHURCH**

Movement Church in Richmond, Virginia, is the church that has been built on the teaching described in this project. The material in this project has been formed throughout the years of the church plant but the main components have been around from the beginning. The concept of the mission of God and connecting people to it has at the heart of the story of Movement. Since the concept of this material and the story of the church are so interconnected, the church is the scope of research and the application of the process.

In a season of complete surrender and abandonment to the Lord's direction and mission, the vision of Movement Church was birthed and the journey to plant a church began. The vision was to plant a church that served as a catalyst to plant many more. The vision was never about just one church but one church that joined God in His mission to send out many to plant other churches. In order for this vision to become a reality it was clear that the discipleship had to connect people to the mission of God and be unleashed in that mission which would grow a church as well as send others out. In other words this church needed to produce "sent-ones," and not just a gathering with as many people as possible calling it church.

The church planting materials at the time seemed to prepare more for worship service and the coming together than it did discipling for mission and sending out. The statement, "We are church planters not worship service planters," became a mantra in the early days. This impacted the strategic early on. The church plant did the opposite of current church planting materials which had a strategic plan for getting to Sunday morning first and then working from there into



small group and discipleship. This church focused first on the community aspect and discipleship aspect then grew into the Sunday morning experience. As a matter of fact the church existed in the form of small groups for almost a year before it began to meet on Sunday mornings.

Even with a focused vision towards discipleship and mission the pull to focus solely or disproportionately on the worship gathering was so strong that it began to take priority. The planter began to be emotionally and spiritually tied to the numbers that were present on any given Sunday. Those numbers were not great therefore the emotional and spiritual state of the planter suffered. More importantly this veering off of vision stunted the growth and discipleship of the fledging church plant.

At one of the lowest points of the church plant there were around 30 people gathering during the Sunday worship service. Each week the numbers of the gathering had to be submitted to the denomination which meant the planter had to keep track of them. One member was tasked with counting which was easy to do with such low numbers. The member would give the planter the numbers each week. If the numbers were good then it was a good worship service if they were low then it was not a good worship service. Since numbers were down in that season it was a particularly low time for the planter until things changed.

The numbers did not change but the planter was convicted about moving away from the original vision and making the vision about numbers. The shift was dramatic. The planter no longer wanted to receive the numbers report and made a commitment to keep the vision about making disciples and living on mission. There was a resurgence back to focusing on discipling for mission. From then on the church has had a strong, clear and compelling vision of making disciples and sending them into the mission of God. There have been seasons of veering off and

some that have been more laser focused but the foundation of the church has been built on the mission of God.

Structurally the change was felt in how the planter approached Sunday gatherings. They were not designed to bring in the masses, because there were none, but to equip the saints to live like “sent ones,” where they lived, worked and played. This shift meant that the church now had 30 Christians living on mission instead of the 2 elders only doing all the outreach and missional living.

Discipleship took on a missional lens and discipling for mission extended the small church’s reach into the community. Each small group adopted a particular focus to live their “sent-ness,” within the city. This was intended to build into the normal rhythms of missional living into the discipleship plan.

The existing church was “grandfathered,” into this new change but the front door to the church had mission as the welcome mat. Anyone wanting to join the church had to go through the new members class called Partner Class. Instead of using membership the church used “partnership,” because of the connotations derived by such a term. That decision was based on mission as well. The term membership brought baggage of consumerism and a country club mentality. Partnership denoted joining hand in hand together on a particular mission. So the church considers the congregation to be partners together in the mission of God.

In Partner Class the Mission of God was the starting point and served as the foundation of entry into the church. Everyone who joined was taught the Mission of God and how that informed the church’s every decision. The Mission of God presentation came complete with a pictorial note taking sheet which allowed for deeper integration. The connection to the vision of

the church was intricately tied to the Mission of God. It is always explained how mission impacts everything that the church seeks to do.

As time passed and the Partner Class took further shape another tool was added to the Mission of God presentation. Flowing out of the Mission of God was the “Discovering what You have been sent to do,” tool. It is a discipleship tool intended to take the Mission of God and make it personal. That tool encourages the disciple to consider their personality, spiritual gifting, and life formative events to help direct them to engage in more meaningful ways with the church and by extension to the mission of God. Every person joining the church is disciplined with these two tools.

What this accomplished was shared missional terminology and a foundation to build on. Everyone coming into the church was taught the Mission of God and Discovering what you have been sent to do tool. That latter tool helped Partners decide where to serve in the church based on their gifting, personality and life formation up that point in their lives.

With the front door of the church covered in a solid missiological discipleship the church continued that culture by inserting mission into everything it did and said. The Kid’s ministry is broken into classes that are geographically named in order to introduce kids and their parents to the global nature of God.

Once a month there is an interview of a partner to highlight their vocation as mission. It is called, “This Time Tomorrow.”<sup>42</sup> The idea came from the Church of England. The premise is that whatever a church member/partner is doing this time tomorrow is holy, sacred and missional if

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<sup>42</sup> Dave Benson, “This Time Tomorrow,” <https://licc.org.uk/resources/this-time-tomorrow/> (accessed June 3, 2020).

intention to live on mission is connected with everyday life. Whatever the vocation is from stay-at-home caretakers to school teachers, to car mechanics, the vocation is highlighted and prayed for.

The Sunday morning liturgy itself is infused the mission of God in a number of ways. First the music that is selected has a gospel teaching focus. In other words the songs that are sung help equip the church in understanding and applying the gospel more and more. Secondly the sermon's are meant to engage the congregation where they are with current realities and tether them to the Word that always seeks to equip to send out. Finally the church is never simply dismissed to end the service rather the church is commissioned into God's mission through a "sending out," ritual. This is intended to remind the congregation that they do not simply leave the church building rather they are sent out.

In addition to the Sunday gathering each small group holds each other accountable to live out the mission of God. This happens both organically and structurally. Every person who is in a group is regularly asked about their life on mission. Some groups are formed around a particular shared mission where the accountability is even higher.

There are also special times in which the church holds "Equipping Classes," where a class in mission is always part of the curriculum. This is an ideal time for the "Mission of God," discipleship presentation and the "Discovering what you are sent to do," tool is taught and practiced. Since the Partner Class has a variety of purpose and focus these classes have served to be great opportunities to thoroughly cover the topics.

As Partners in the church discern a calling into further intentional ministry and mission there are specific mission cohorts. These groups are intended to disciple people through their

calling into specific ministry roles. The aim of these cohorts are for those sensing a calling into further ministry whether that is “full-time,” or not. Being paid for ministry does not constitute a deeper calling into ministry. This is where the church’s church planters come from.

All of this journey has led to the point where the church intentionally disciples for mission with mission. The missional process outlined in this work is directly connected to the journey that has come before and will prayerfully lead into further and more clarified missional direction in the future. The current church has been the incubator of this material as well as the research base.

Planting Movement Church for the sake of God’s mission has led the researcher to conclude that all churches can benefit missionally by discipling its people in God’s mission. Disciples of Jesus need to be trained in God’s mission and not just how to be a church goer. This conviction has led to the creation of this research and training tools. The Church does not need more people trained in how to be “greeters,” or to work in the sound booth, instead Christians need to be disciplined in the mission of God and need to discover their place in God’s mission. Christians are made for mission.

## **CHAPTER THREE, THE MISSION OF GOD**

### **THE NEED FOR THE MISSION OF GOD**

Understanding the mission of God is essential and needs to be foundational in any discipleship. When the mission of God is connected to discipleship, the disciple will be rooted in God's overarching purpose for His creation. The disciple will see that he is not the end in and of himself, rather he is connected to a larger purpose in life. When the disciple does not understand the mission of God, he will not be equipped to root the activity of a disciple's life to more than just a list of dos and don'ts.

The vast majority of people surveyed correctly acknowledged that the mission of God is for everyone, not just professional missionaries or clergy. In a positive finding, 97% of participants in the writer's research answered that the mission of God was for everyone. This means that the discipleship within the church is at least correctly teaching that God's mission is for everyone, and there is, not a great divide among clergy and laity.

In another piece of good news, when surveyed, an overwhelming, 88.89% of respondents said that the mission of God could be articulated succinctly. However, when asked to define the mission of God, the answers were widely diverse and not uniform. There were some repeated generalized components: evangelism, making disciples, doing justice, and spreading God's love. Even the repeated themes were not all uniformly repeated. This unveils a central problem: the mission of God is not collectively understood. Christians can not orient their lives around a concept that they can not articulate.

# THE MISSION OF GOD DIAGRAM AND BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

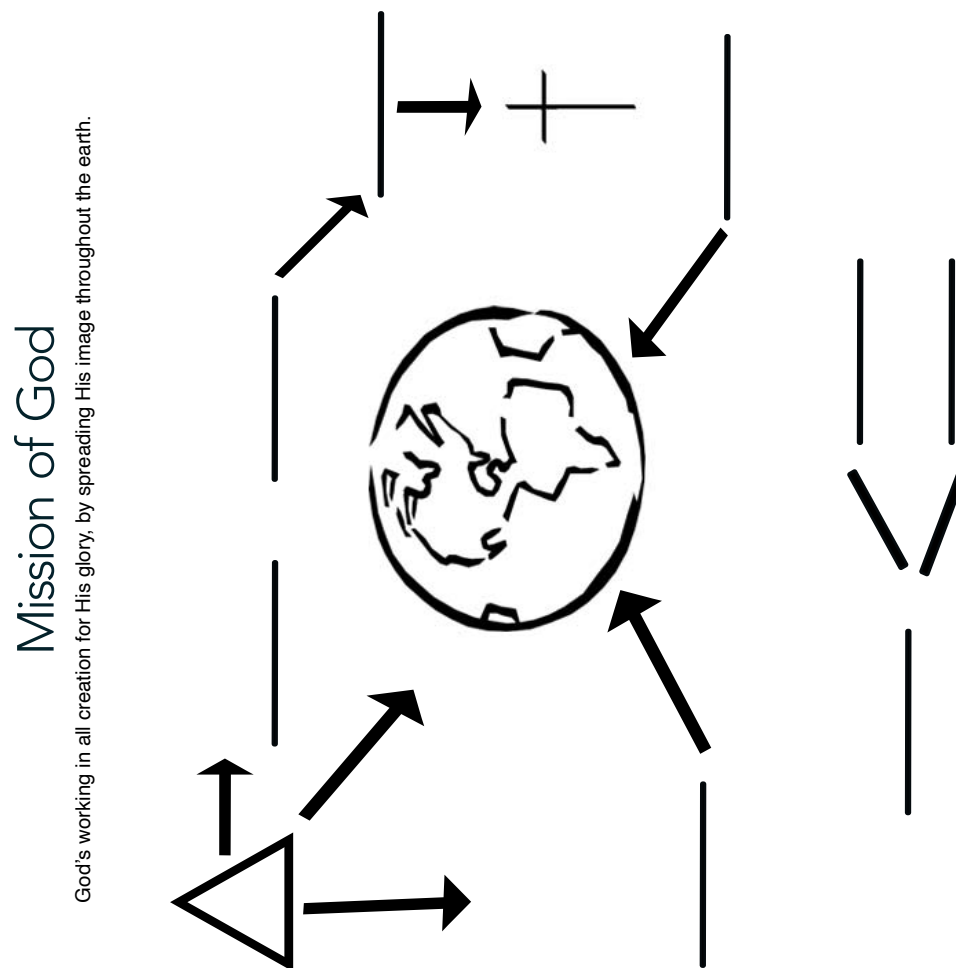


Figure #1, The Mission of God Diagram

The Mission of God Diagram, will aid in the explanation of the mission of God. The content builds off of a simple explanation of the mission of God: “God’s working in all of creation for His own glory by spreading His image throughout the earth.” Each section of the mission of God has its own pictorial representation to engage the disciple in a multi-sensory experience.

Figures (2-11) will break the Mission of God Diagram down into smaller components as the teaching unfolds. This will allow the participant to see which aspects of the diagram to fill in and or to draw in as the explanation is taught.

A basic understanding of the overarching mission of God roots the believer’s sent identity and sent activity within the overall purposes of God as revealed within the meta-narrative of the Bible. When His mission is understood, it gives the framework needed for believers to understand their place within said mission. Thankfully, God has not hidden His mission from His people but has clearly revealed it in scripture. His mission is revealed at the beginning and confirmed along the way.

One needs to look no further than the first few pages of the story to see God’s mission unveiled for all to see. According to Andreas Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, “The first indications of God’s plan for the world appear in the creation account of Genesis 1.”<sup>43</sup> As God’s plan unfolds, His purpose is made clear. This is important because “mission,” or His “purpose” is not a component introduced later into the story but serves as the framework from the dawn of

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<sup>43</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: a Biblical Theology of Mission*. (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos, 2005) 26–26.



creation. It is an incorrect reading of the Bible to see God's mission appear only in the New Testament. As explained by Christopher Wright in *"Biblical Theology For Life,"*

The first mention of human beings in the Bible states two fundamental things about us, two things that are put so closely together that they are clearly connected: (1) God made us in his image (both male and female), and (2) God intended us to exercise dominion within creation. It is not that having dominion is what being made in God's image enables and entitles us to do. *We humans have a mission on earth because God had a purpose in putting us on it.*<sup>44</sup>

Wright is correct in recognizing that God's mission appears within the first few pages of scripture because the concept of mission did not originate in the New Testament. God is a missionary God, as Wright brings out in the body of his works, and his mission begins in the Creation story.

It all starts with God; the first phrase of the Bible is, "In the beginning, God..."<sup>45</sup> God is represented in the diagram with a triangle which is historically representative of the Trinitarian God. Everything starts with God and flows out of Him. The Bible affirms God's eternity in many places and one such specific reference is Psalm 90:2, "Before the mountains were born, before You gave birth to the earth and the world, from eternity to eternity, You are God."<sup>46</sup> This aspect of God is vital because it accurately places God outside of time, and shows He enters in time for His own good and glorious purposes.

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<sup>44</sup> Christopher Wright, *Biblical Theology For Life, The Mission Of God's People, A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 50.

<sup>45</sup> Genesis 1:1 (HCSB).

<sup>46</sup> Psalm 90:2. (HCSB).

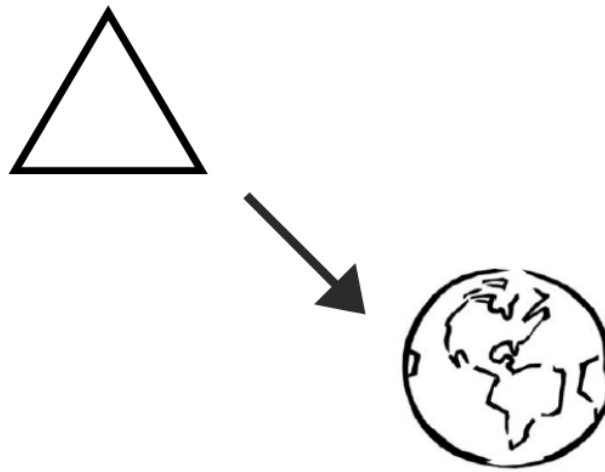


Figure #2, God created the heavens and the earth

In the beginning God did something. He created the heavens and the earth and all they contain. The Apostle Paul articulate it aptly: “For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him.”<sup>47</sup> This is represented with an arrow pointing towards the picture of the earth. God as Creator has the authority to define and declare his mission. His creation will come to understand its purpose in life only in discovering His overarching purposes.

The creation story illustrates, among other things, that God is a sending God and His people are His sent people. Long before Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, so I also send

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<sup>47</sup> Colossians 1:16. (HCSB).

you,<sup>48</sup>” God had been laying a foundation of sending. From the beginning God discloses Himself as a sending God. Divine speaking was the very mode of creation used which reveals that God sends His word into His world. God’s mode of creation was, “Then God said...”<sup>49</sup> God created the world through the mode of sending His word out into the world.

A word is an incarnate thought that would otherwise remain hidden. Once it is sent into the world through speech it reveals the hidden interior of the sender. God’s divine speech that He sent into the world in the Creation story reveals His intentions which would otherwise be impossible to ascertain. This mode of creation is both the first glance into His nature and the first of many “sending” moments.

God created everything that has been created and as the story unfolds, the Bible says that it is all for God’s glory. “The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky proclaims the work of His hands.”<sup>50</sup> All that was done in creation is for God’s glory. In that sense, the mission of everything is to bring God glory; but, within the whole of creation, a special creation emerges with a distinct purpose.

It has already been discussed and pictorially represented that God created the earth. The arrow pointing down from the triangle represents God creating mankind in a special and unique way. The creation record sets the creation of man distinctly from all other creation: “Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his

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<sup>48</sup> John 20:21 (HCSB).

<sup>49</sup> Genesis 1:3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29, 2:3 (HCSB).

<sup>50</sup> Psalm 19:1 (HSCB).

nostrils, and the man became a living being.”<sup>51</sup> This is further represented by adding two stick figures to represent Adam and Eve.

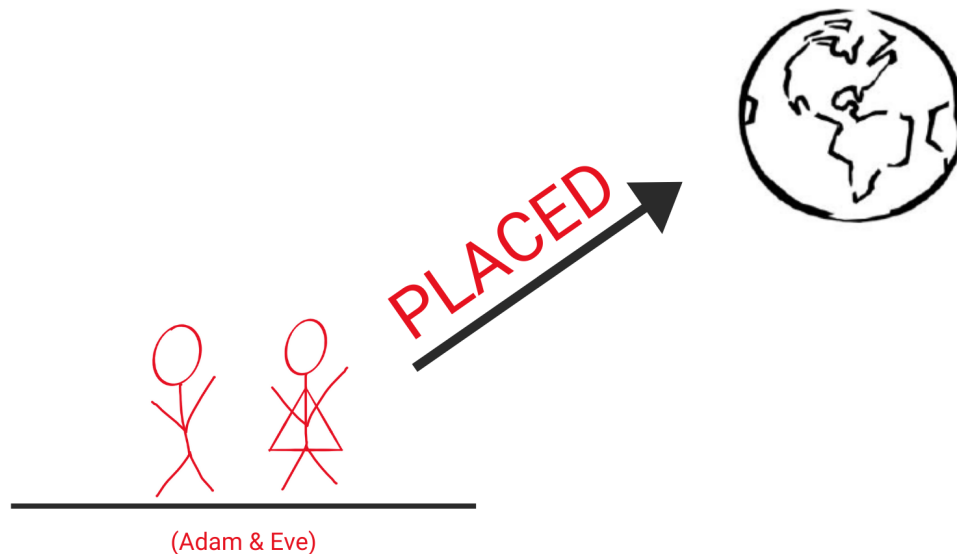


Figure #3, Creation of Adam and Eve

God spoke creation into existence. There is a rhythm that emerges; God spoke and things that were not yet in existence came into existence. That rhythm is interrupted and halts at God’s special creation of man. The reader is introduced to the divine plural when highlighting God’s creation of man. What was a rhythm of, “Then God said...” changed to, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image...’”<sup>52</sup> Sailhammer notes the significance of the creation of man: “But the author’s purpose seems to be not merely to mark human beings as different from the rest of the creatures but also to show that they are like God...Human beings are creatures, but they are

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<sup>51</sup> Genesis 2:7 (HCSB).

<sup>52</sup> Genesis 1:26 (HCSB).

special creatures, made in the image and likeness of God.”<sup>53</sup> Their distinction will be more than the mode by which they were created but also by being created in God’s image. Thirdly, the mission for which they were created will make them distinct.

Instead of God speaking, He bent low, gathered dirt from the ground, shaped man, and breathed life into him. The uniqueness of man cannot be overstated and is distinct from every other creation. Scripture clearly illustrates humanity is a special aspect of creation through the unique process by which he was created and the mission given to him.

Genesis reveals the unique creation of man: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”<sup>54</sup> What sets humanity apart from every other creation is being created in God’s image. Being created in the image of God allowed humanity to *relate* to God and to *represent* Him like no other creation had the capacity to do. This ability to relate and represent set them apart from every other created being. There is a relational and missional component of being created in God’s image. The image of God set them apart and empowered them to live out the mission they would be given.

At the bottom of the presentation page there are blanks to fill in which allows for the explanation of mankind being created in the image of God, the feature of Adam and Eve that separates them from all other creation. “Image” is written in the blank. Flowing out of the word “image” are the words “relate,” and “represent,” which solidify an understanding of how being created in God’s image sets man apart from the rest of creation.

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<sup>53</sup> John Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative, A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) 95.

<sup>54</sup> Genesis 1:27 (HCSB).

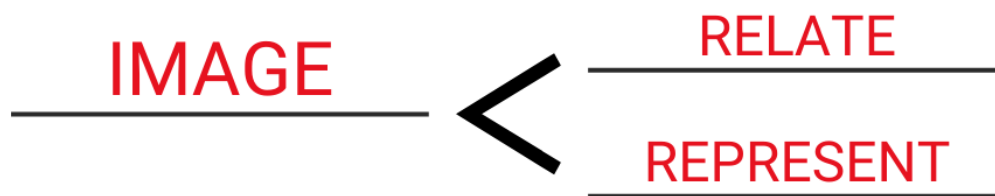


Figure #4, Man created in God's image

Humanity was created for the express purpose to relate to God in a way that was distinct from the rest of God's creation. The ability to relate to God is linked directly to the image of God. As Walter Elwell et al. explains in the *Baker Encyclopedia*: "Likeness to God, the most basic affirmation to be made concerning that nature of man from a Christian perspective. Man is unique among the creatures in that he is like God and therefore able to have communion and fellowship with God."<sup>55</sup> This relational component to the image of God stands out and is distinct from all other created beings. Being created this way and in God's image shows there is a clear connection to relating to God

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<sup>55</sup> Walter Elwell, et al., eds., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House, 1988)

A significant aspect of relating to God based His image is that humanity was created for relationship with God. As the story of creation unfolds it appears that God would “walk” with Adam and Eve in the garden. Kenneth Matthews addresses this concept in his commentary on Genesis: “The anthropomorphic description of God walking in the garden suggests the enjoyment of fellowship between him and our first parents.”<sup>56</sup> This is significant because it shows our relationship is intricately tied to being created in the image of God and what Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden.

The second aspect that summarizes the significance for being created in the image of God, especially in connection to the mission of God, is humanity’s ability to represent Him on earth like no other creation could. Genesis 1:28 not only says that Adam and Eve were meant to be fruitful and multiply, but they were also to rule over the world God had created. There is a mimicking of God’s dominion that Adam and Eve were created to fulfill. Even this representative aspect had a relational overtone as Helmut Thielicke writes in *Foundations*: “The divine likeness is thus a relational entity because it is manifested man’s ruling position vis-a-vis the rest of creation, or better, because it consists in this manifestation, in this exercise of dominion and lordship.”<sup>57</sup> The creation story illustrates that man was meant to rule in the way God ruled as His representative on earth.

This aspect of the image of God speaks to the functional purpose of man than it does the pure relational component. As a co-regent of God, mankind is meant to care for and cultivate the

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<sup>56</sup> Kenneth Matthews, *The New American Commentary*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishing) 239.

<sup>57</sup> Helmut Thielicke, *Foundations*, Vol. 1 of *Theological Ethics*, ed. William H. Lazareth (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-image-of-god#fn9>, 157.

garden God put them in. When mankind is relationally connected to God, they will represent Him as they should fulfilling the mission of God.

In connection with being created in the image of God, humanity was given a clear mission for their existence. God did not create humanity in His image and let them loose to figure things out on their own. He created and then explicitly gave them instructions for life in His new world: “God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heaven and over every living thing that moves on the earth.””<sup>58</sup> God’s mission given to His new creation was essentially to be fruitful and multiply and be stewards of the rest of creation. It is God’s gift of grace to humanity to know their purpose in life from the beginning.

God’s command was for God’s image-bearers to be fruitful and multiply. The idea was that God would look down at earth and see His image reflected back to Himself. God’s good world filled with image-bearing people, all perfectly relating to Him and accurately representing Him, is the purpose He had for the garden and is the purpose He has for His world.

This vision of God is to see His image throughout the earth. This will bring Him the glory He deserves. If all humanity related to Him perfectly and represented Him accurately, that would be humanity’s greatest good and bring Him the most glory. In John Piper’s treatise on Christian hedonism, *Desiring God*, he speaks about God’s glory being intricately tied to humanity’s good. He further illuminates the reformed phrase, “God’s glory is our good.” Piper succinctly explains, “Our interest and His glory are one.”<sup>59</sup> The intent of God is for His earth to be populated with

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<sup>58</sup> Genesis 1:28 (HCSB).

<sup>59</sup> Piper, John. *Desiring God, Meditation of a Christian Hedonist*. (Sisters, OR. Multnomah Publishers. 2003)160.



goodness, peace, and purpose, all of which and more is lived out when humanity lives out their mission to spread God's mission throughout the earth. One just has to imagine what life would be like if everyone reacted to God perfectly and represented Him accurately; that existence is the intent of God.

Humanity was created to spread the image of God throughout the earth which ultimately brings God glory. Adam and Eve were "placed" in the garden. They were not created and told to figure their purpose, nor were they created and told to figure their place out. That word "place" is an intentional placement or sending. Genesis 2:8 states, "The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there He placed the man He had formed."<sup>60</sup> The word indicates intentionality over randomness. According to the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible it means to "put, place, set, assign, etc..." There was nothing random about where God placed Adam.

Along with the specificity as to Adam and Eve's place in God's mission, the garden also signifies curation. The garden was designed for maximum human flourishing which included reflecting God's image throughout the earth, i.e. the very thing humanity was created to do. God not only gave humanity purpose, He gave them a place to live that purpose out.

From Genesis chapters one and two it is clear that God created everything with purpose and divine intention. He created humanity distinct from every other creation in that humanity was created to relate and represent Him in ways that no other creation could. God created and formed a garden where He sent His people to live out His mission.

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<sup>60</sup> Genesis 2:8 (HSCB).

Within the first couple pages of the story of God, His mission is clearly laid out. The mission of God is His working in all of creation, for His own glory by spreading His image throughout the earth. His mission does not first appear in the New Testament or even with Abraham but is there at the beginning. That mission has four important implications.

The first implication is that God has a mission. It was with intention and purpose that He created everything. God did not create all that is and then decided to come up with a mission for His creation. The creation and the assignment of the mission were simultaneous.

The second implication is that God's mission has a people. The first people on mission were Adam and Eve. They were sent out into God's creation to live out the mission for which He created them. As the story unfolds it is clear that God's mission always has a people. Understanding this foundational truth about God's people further supports the truth that humanity is built, created, and designed with God's mission in mind. Humanity's purpose in life is found within God's mission.

The third implication is that, God's people always have a place. For Adam and Eve their place was the Garden where God placed them. They did not have to roam around aimlessly seeking where to live out the mission God had for them; they were intentionally placed. Place was a sacred thing because it was the place prepared and curated specifically for them and mission.

The fourth implication is that God's people have a purpose. That purpose or mission is infused in all they do. It impacts how they treat one another and the world around them. It is not something that comes and goes fleetingly, it is their life. This permeated missional living was intended by God, and as the story unfolds, will be redeemed one day. They were created in God's

image to relate and represent Him. In doing that they would be fulfilling their ultimate purpose within God's mission which is His working in all of creation for His own glory by spreading His image throughout the earth. That purpose was divinely given to His people was a tremendous gift of grace.

The catastrophe that exists in the world and in the Biblical story post chapter two of Genesis has an explanation; A catastrophic event took place that impacted humanity's relationship with God and their mission. One needs only to look around and see there is a difference between the garden existence and the current reality. One quick look at the latest news reveals that humanity no longer relates to God perfectly or represents Him accurately.

The explanation for all the devastation, hurt, pain, evil and distortion in the world is because of what happened in chapter three of Genesis. Though God had created a perfect home for Adam and Eve, complete with meaning and purpose, the enemy slithered in. Satan clothed as a serpent had a devastating conversation with the first couple that ended catastrophically. Genesis 3:1-6 records the devilish questioning of God's word, His goodness and His intentions for mankind.

The serpent questioned the word of God, the goodness of God, and His intentions towards the first couple and their design. Instead of trusting God and His word, Eve bought into the lie that God was not trustworthy, that He was holding out on them, and that they needed to carve out their own purpose and mission. This is acutely seen in the serpent's promise that by eating the forbidden fruit they will be "like God." The absurdity is evident as, they were already created in God's image, but here the lie was that they could be "like God," independent of God. John Sailhamer points out in *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, "That which the serpent promised

did, in fact, come about: the man and woman became like God as soon as they ate of the fruit. The irony lies in the fact that they were already like God because they had been created in his image (1:26).”<sup>61</sup> The greatest threat to the mission of God is the lie that purpose and meaning can be discovered apart from and independent of the Creator. This did not work out well for our first parents nor has it worked out well for anyone who has repeated the rebellion. The tragedy of the fall is both that it happened and also that it continues to happen each and every time humanity chooses the lies of the enemy instead of embracing God and His Word. Living on mission is a life that trusts the word of God, His goodness, and His good intentions for His creation.

Tragically, Eve took and ate the forbidden fruit and gave some to her husband who was right there with her, presumably standing silently and idly during the catastrophic conversation. Immediately in their rebellion, a seismic rift took place impacting everything but was first seen and felt in their relationship with each other and with God: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.”<sup>62</sup> This passage is significant because they are sensing shame and in response are creating separation from each other in the form of clothes. Sailhamer points out the newly discovered judgement, “...they came to know that they were naked in the sense of being under God’s judgment...”<sup>63</sup> This judgement would alter everything.

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<sup>61</sup> John Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative, A Biblical-Theological Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) 104.

<sup>62</sup> Genesis 3:7 (HSCB).

<sup>63</sup> John Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative, A Biblical-Theological Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) 104.

The next immediate implication was the separation and shame they experienced in their relationship with God. For the first time they “hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”<sup>64</sup> Before this mission derailing conversation, the couple was said to be “naked and unashamed.” Literally there was nothing in between them and God or between themselves. This innocent freedom produced no shame. Their sinful decision changed all of that. Hiding their shame and creating distance was completely foreign to them but highlights the significance of their sin and the deadly results.

The image of God they were created in was devastatingly impacted in their willfully rebellious decision to sin against God. In discussing Adam’s lineage in Genesis 5:3, Matthews points out, “...as God bequeathed his image to humanity, Adam has endowed his image to Seth, including human sinfulness and its consequences.”<sup>65</sup> After the rebellion, humanity would continue to multiply but now they would be multiplying a marred image that brought about separation and judgement. This would impact humanity’s ability to relate to God and represent Him.

The first couple were immediately made aware of their nakedness. With this newly found awareness brought immediate shame seen in their recoiling away from each other and from their Creator. This is observed when they run to the trees to make clothes for themselves. Not only did they separate themselves from each other with clothes, but next they began attempting to “hide,” from God. The irony is that the fruit was supposed to make them smarter! The reason the first couple felt separation between themselves and God is because of the damage done to the image

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<sup>64</sup> Genesis 3:8 (HCSB).

<sup>65</sup> Kenneth Matthews, *The New American Commentary*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishing) 310.

of God inside of them. They lost their ability to “relate” to Him as they did before. Along with the image of God allowing them to relate to God like no other creation did, they were also enabled to represent Him like no other creation could, but that was impacted as well.

From then on instead of spreading image-bearing people who are perfectly relating to God and accurately representing Him, they would be spreading marred-image bearing people who would be disconnected from God and His mission. This would prove to have costly effects short-term and long-term. A quick glance at current news shows how costly their previous sin and consequences of spreading marred, image-bearing people turned out to be. When people do not represent God with their lives, it causes deep hurt, division and, pain. Jesus predicted the results of multiplying a marred image of God would be unrest and cosmic revolt:

“You are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, because these things must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these events are the beginning of birth pains.”<sup>66</sup>

The culmination of all global turmoil stems from Adam and Eve’s garden decision.

This is catastrophically represented on the visual aid by drawing a dividing line through the two lines that connected “image” with “relate” and “represent.” Next the word “marred” is written in front of the word “image,” signifying that the image of God in which humanity was created in has been altered. From this point onward something would have to be done to restore and redeem that image if the mission of God is to prevail.

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<sup>66</sup> Matthew 24:6-8 (HCSB).

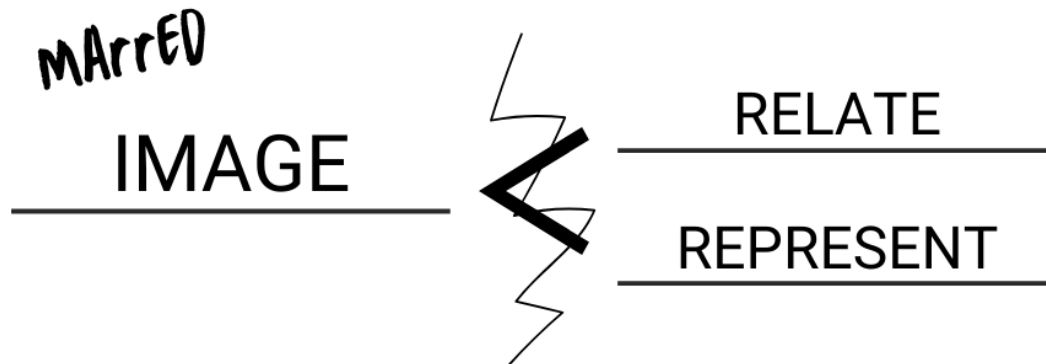


Figure #5, The Fall and marred Image of God implications

The short-term consequence was banishment from the good garden God had created and formed for them. The image was marred but not destroyed. Even in judgement God promised that He would send One who would come from the seed of the woman to fix what the first couple tried to destroy. It would be the first hint of a redemption plan, according to Sailhammer, “A plot is established that will take the author far beyond this or that snake and his seed. It is what the snake and his seed represent that lies at the center of the author’s focus. With that one lies the enmity that must be crushed.”<sup>67</sup> With redemption in mind, it is important to point out that God’s mission, though impacted, would not ultimately be thwarted.

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<sup>67</sup> John Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative, A Biblical-Theological Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) 107.

As the story cascades outside of the Garden, things continue to get worse for the marred, image-bearing people. Though God's mission came under attack in the garden and looked like it might come to an end outside of the Garden, God was setting the scene for what came next. Before moving on it is important to highlight four observations about God's mission as it is found in Genesis 1-3.

- God has a mission. The mission of God is His working in all of creation for His own glory by spreading His image throughout the earth.
- His mission has a people. Originally it was Adam and Eve and consequently their offspring who would find their purpose in life in living out God's mission.
- His people have a place. Originally this place was where God put Adam and Eve, the garden.
- His people have a purpose. They do not need to roam aimlessly around seeking a philosophical breakthrough to find meaning in life. It was given in the beginning and living it out brings ultimate satisfaction, and, as Adam and Eve found out, not living it out brings devastation.

As one works through teaching, phase one is completed and the introduction to phase two starts by emphasizing God's mission could not and would not be stopped. His mission could not be thwarted so He found a new man to recreate a new people. As one considers the meta-narrative of God's story it allows for some fast forwarding through some of the history which is why phase two starts with Abraham. It skips over other key stories and figures, not because they are unimportant, but in tracing the mission something interesting and pivotal happens with Abraham.



The picture of the Mission of God signifies this change by an arrow pointing towards a fill in the blank to which the answer is Abraham. God is recreating a people through Abraham and his descendants. This leads the disciple to Genesis 12.

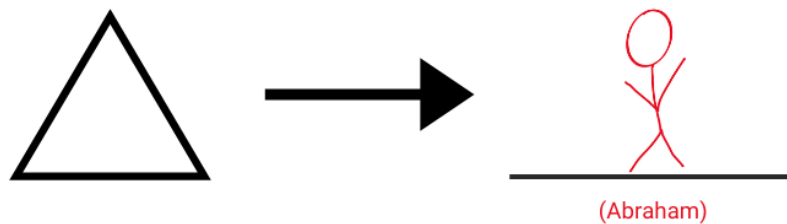


Figure #6, God choosing Abraham

God came to a man named Abraham and told Him, “Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”<sup>68</sup> God’s mission is moving forward with a new people He is creating from the offspring of Abraham. This new people will be given a mission because God always has a mission and His mission always has a people.

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<sup>68</sup> Genesis 12:1-3 (HCSB).

Abraham's son received the blessing that was passed from his father Abraham. The promise would define Isaac's life because it put him in a special relationship with God. The mission of God always does that; it defines and adds direction to one's life.

This promise of worldwide blessing from Abraham's family to the nations of the Earth passes from Isaac to Jacob. It technically was not supposed to go that way since Jacob was the second born, but in God's story the obvious rarely happens. Jacob ended up stealing the birthright from his brother Esau because Esau chose a bowl of soup over the blessing and in doing so despised the blessing.

Years later Jacob set his sight on the birthright. He tricked his father Isaac into giving him the birthright by making his ailing father think he was Esau. The redeeming factor in this was that Isaac valued the birthright so much that he was willing to go after it.

This put the blessing that started with Abraham passing on to Isaac and now passing on to Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons. By now the family had grown to a large tribe. Even though the family was large, Jacob had a favorite son, Joseph. Joseph's brothers resented the fact that their father favored him, and so they decided to sell him to slavery in Egypt. That is how Joseph made his way to Egypt.

While in Egypt Joseph finally found himself second in command over the entire nation. There are a lot of stories that lead up to this but as it pertains to the mission of God and the meta-narrative of Scripture, it is enough to show how God's people found themselves in Egypt. With Joseph second in command, he was put in charge over the distribution of food. Jacob's family, Joseph's brothers, were in desperate need of food so they were sent to Egypt to buy food. While

they were there, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and invited the entire family to come live with him in Egypt.

This was to the great delight of his father Jacob. Pharaoh gave this family some land and they began to flourish. Jacob's family multiplied; which was all part of God's plan to recreate a people for Himself. The problem was that a new Pharaoh came into power and did not like the fact that there was a growing nation right beside Egypt. He decided to enslave them before they could overtake Egypt.

This "newly" formed people multiplied and through the sovereign hand of the Lord ended up in Egypt. In Egypt they became enslaved for 400 years and cried out to the Lord. The Lord called a man named Moses to Himself and sent him to Pharaoh to deliver His people: "The Israelites' cry for help has come to Me, and I have also seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. Therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead My people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."<sup>69</sup> The word "sending" is a word to describe a dispatch sent out, a messenger and one who is sent with the purpose of the sender.<sup>70</sup> Throughout the story of God there is a consistent theme of God as sender and His people as sent ones. It is an action of God that is prevalent throughout and it is an identity of His people throughout.

In dramatic fashion God used Moses to break the hold Pharaoh had on God's people leading to their release. The Lord delivered them out of Egypt and led them to their new home. They took the long route into the Promised Land due to their sinful rebellion but eventually they

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<sup>69</sup> "Exodus 3:9-10." The Holy Bible: Christian Standard Bible, Holman Bible Publishers, 2017.

<sup>70</sup> Swanson, James. *A Dictionary of Biblical Language s w/ Semantic Domains: Hebrew (OT)*, Digital, Faithlife, 1997.

were led into their new land. Just as the Lord intentionally placed the man in the Garden, He intentionally led His people to their new home.

Two items need to be filled in on the worksheet: First, from Abraham came the Israelites. This is represented in drawing at least twelve stick figures to represent that God’s people were numerous. Secondly, an arrow pointing to a specific area called the Promised Land is drawn. This word, “led” is akin to the intentionality of the Garden word “placed.” The word “lead” used in Exodus 13:21 means to conduct, lead or guide, “The Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to lead them...”<sup>71</sup> The Promised Land was not a random place, but rather a curated place to live on mission just as Adam and Eve were given the Garden and placed there.

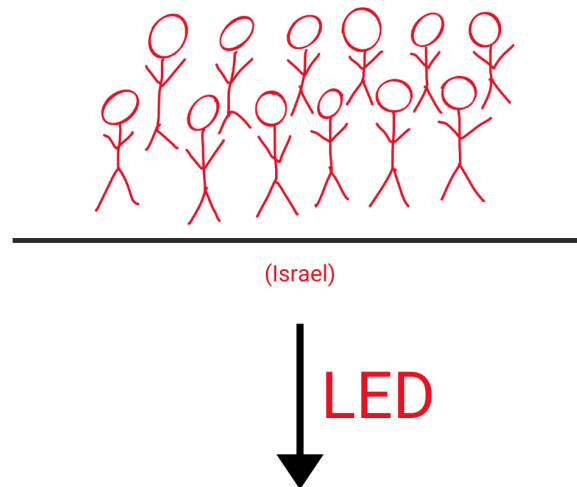


Figure #7, God creating Isreal

<sup>71</sup> Exodus 3:21 (HCSB).

Their new home just happened to be the center of the world at that time according to Andrew Hill and John Walton in *A Survey of the Old Testament*: “Palestine is often referred to as the geographical and theological center of the ancient world. It was located at the crossroads of the important trade routes of antiquity, the land between the continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe.”<sup>72</sup> God strategically sent them to a land that would garner the attention of the world. The mission of God is His working in all of creation for His own glory by spreading His image throughout the world. God wanted His world to be filled with image bearing people. His image is borne by people relating to Him and representing Him.

When God brought the people out of Egypt, on their way to the Promised Land God made a covenant with them and gave them His word in the form of Ten Commandments. This brought them into a special relationship with them. He related to them uniquely as His son. In Exodus 4:22-23 God told Moses to say, “This is what Yahweh says: Israel is My firstborn son. I told you: Let My son go that he may worship Me, but you refused to let him go. Now I will kill your firstborn son!”<sup>73</sup> As a son they related to God like no other nation.

In addition to being in a special relationship with them, He also called them to represent Him to the world. God was making them into His people so that the world might see His image reflected. God called Israel His son, which had a missional intent: “For you are a holy people belonging to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be His own possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth. The Lord was devoted to you and chose you, not because you were more numerous than all peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But

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<sup>72</sup> Andrew Hill, and John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, Second edition, (Grand Rapids: MI, Zondervan Publishing House, 2000) 34.

<sup>73</sup> Exodus 4:22-23 (HCSB).

because the Lord loves you and kept the oath He swore to your fathers, He brought you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from the place of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”<sup>74</sup> This redemption was more than just a special relationship but meant to be a reflection of who God their Father was. The book of Isaiah records four times that God’s people were meant to be a light to the nations: “I, Yahweh, have called you for a righteous purpose, and I will hold you by your hand. I will keep you and appoint you to be a covenant for the people, and a light to the nations.”<sup>75</sup> As a son who relates to God differently than another nation, Israel had a responsibility to represent God accurately to the nations around.

God’s mission now is what His mission was then; the only thing that has changed is the people and the place. God always wants to show the world what He is like and He uses His people for that mission. The problem for Israel was the same for Adam and Eve, and they failed to do it. The Old Testament ends with the glory of God leaving Jerusalem and the people being carried away to foreign nations in exile, the very nations they were supposed to be representing God and spreading His image.

The one thing Israel did not fail to do, primarily because the promise was based on the Lord not the people, was to bring forth the One spoken of in the Garden (Genesis 3:16) through the seed of the woman, through the line of Judah, a descendant of David: Jesus.

Before moving to phase three of the pictorial representation of the mission of God there are four important truths to highlight in the form of review:

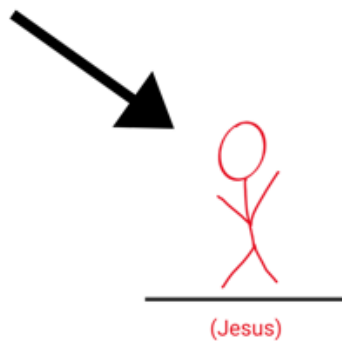
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<sup>74</sup> Deuteronomy 7:6-8 (HCSB).

<sup>75</sup> Isaiah 42:6 (HCSB).

- God has a mission. The mission of God is His working in all of creation for His own glory by spreading His image throughout the earth.
- His mission has a people. Originally it was Adam but they failed. God chose to recreate a people for Himself through Abraham and his descendants. He brought them out of slavery and entered into a special relationship with Him that had a special mission attached, to relate and represent Him.
- His people have a place. Originally this place was where God put Adam and Eve, the garden. As God brought His people out of Egypt He led them intentionally and purposefully to the land of Canaan, the Promised Land.
- His people have a purpose. They do not need to roam aimlessly around seeking a philosophical breakthrough to find meaning in life. It was given in the beginning and living it out brings ultimate satisfaction and as Adam and Eve found out, not living it out brings devastation. That mission was given to Israel however they failed to live it out and instead lived in the shadow of their first parents.

This is represented in the picture by an arrow coming from Israel and pointing to an empty blank that will be filled with Jesus. This moves the journey into phase three, the person and work of Jesus.



Figure#8, God sending Jesus

Upon arrival Jesus began to say and do things that equated Himself with God. Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.”<sup>76</sup> He also did things like forgive sins that equated Him with God. This language and activity increased so much that the religious leaders claimed He was blaspheming. Jesus knew exactly what He was doing by equating Himself to the Father. He related perfectly and represented accurately who God was to the world.

The writers of the New Testament picked up on this and observed, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of His nature...”<sup>77</sup> The word used for Jesus directly connects Him to the Father’s likeness in ways that no other man could claim. “Whatever the divine essence is, Jesus is said to be its perfect expression. The writer of Hebrews thus sets

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<sup>76</sup> John 10:30 (HCSB).

<sup>77</sup> Hebrews 1:3 (HCSB).



forth a high Christology affirming the deity of Jesus Christ.”<sup>78</sup> Paul would write in Colossians that Jesus was the “image of the invisible God.”<sup>79</sup> The significant of this can not be overstated, Jesus did what no one before Him did or could do.

Jesus succeeded in every way where Adam and Isreal failed. One of those ways was by being the perfect image of God to the world. In doing so He perfectly related to the Father and accurately represented Him. When the world saw Jesus they saw what God was like.

Even though Jesus was the perfect image of God, because He is God and perfectly related to the Father, He was sent to die on the cross. It was on the cross that the sin of the world was placed on Jesus even though He had done no wrong. Adam’s sin, Isreal’s sin, and the sin of the world was placed on Christ. Through His death and resurrection, He reconciles us to the Father.

This is the heart of the Gospel. Christ was sent to live the life that humanity could not live and to die the death that humanity deserved to die. The deserved punishment was the result of rebelling against God. In that rebellion humanity had marred the image of God inside of them, making it impossible to relate to God as they once had or represent Him as though were able to do in the Garden. All of the punishment for that rebellion was placed on Christ. In dying on the cross, Jesus redeemed all His people from the penalty of sin and the fall out of sin. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse.”<sup>80</sup> In rising again He was declared the Son of God in power: “...who has been declared to be the powerful Son of God by the

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<sup>78</sup> Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Electronic ed. (Chattanooga TN: AMG Publishers, 2000)

<sup>79</sup> Colossians 1:15 (HCSB).

<sup>80</sup> Galatians 3:13 (HCSB).

resurrection from the dead according to the Spirit of holiness.”<sup>81</sup> In doing so was able to claim complete and utter victory over sin and death. When one puts his hope and trust in that work of Jesus he is saved. In being saved Christians have their marred image redeemed, thus opening a relational and missional component.

This is represented on the picture with the focus being on the cross.

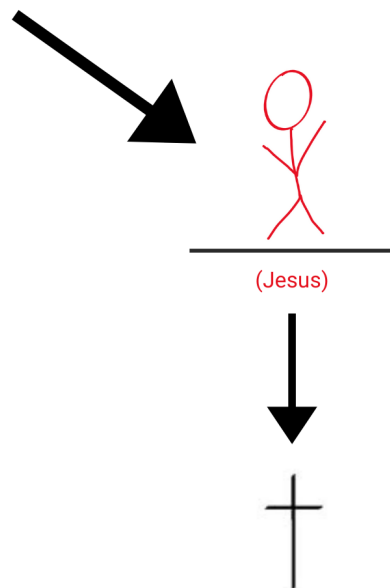


Figure #9, Jesus's work on the cross

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<sup>81</sup> Romans 1:4 (HCSB).

The Gospel implication has a direct impact on the marred image of God in humanity. When someone comes to faith in Jesus their marred image that separated them from God is redeemed, and with a redeemed image the relationship is restored and their ability to represent Him is made possible. Growth in the Gospel is put in terms of growing in the image of Christ. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, “We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.”<sup>82</sup> When someone puts their hope in Jesus their image is redeemed, opening the door to a restored relationship and the mission to spread God’s image throughout the earth.

In the garden the relationship and mission was lost, but in Christ both are redeemed. Far too many people stop at the restored relationship with God gained in Christ, but the gospel does not stop there; it also redeems God’s original mission and purpose in life. When you stop at the relationship, you end up teaching that Jesus saves but not understanding what He saved for. The Gospel is reduced down to forgiveness of sin, which is glorious in and of itself, but the good news of Jesus is even more. In Christ we get back all that was lost in the garden. In the garden Adam and Eve lost their relationship with God and their ability to represent Him accurately. In Christ the Christian receives a redeemed image, establishing the ability to relate and represent God. Through the Gospel one is saved from sin to freedom in Christ and called to live on mission for Him.

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<sup>82</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18 (HCSB).

All of this gospel implication is represented by either erasing the crooked dividing line separating “image” with “relate” and “represent,” or by making bold the two lines connecting “image” with “relate” and “represent.”

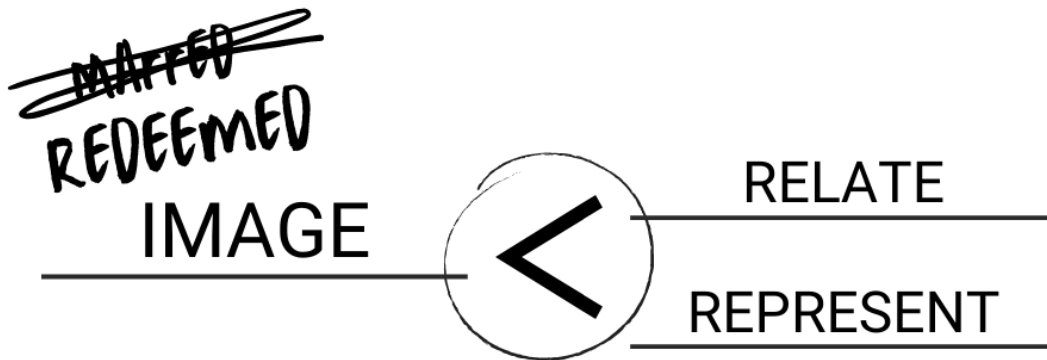


Figure #10, The Gospel Redeemed the Image of God in humanity

It is vital to go back to the earthly ministry of Jesus and consider what He did upfront. This is perhaps the most important aspect of the pictorial representation of this teaching on the Mission of God. It pulls together phase one and phase two showing the role of Christians in the world today.

Upon initiating His earthly ministry at His baptism, He proceeded to gather disciples together. A disciple is an apprentice of the one they follow with the ultimate goal of becoming like their teacher. In other words, a disciple is called to live out the image of their leader. This is

exactly what Jesus had in mind in forming His disciples. It would happen in Antioch that His followers/disciples would first be called Christians, meaning little Christs.

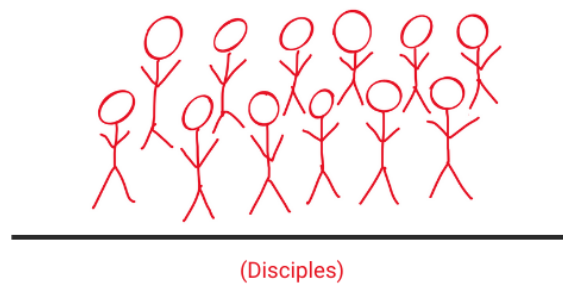


Figure #11, Jesus gathered disciples

The significance of this can not be overstated. God's mission always has a people! In phase one God's people were Adam and Eve. In phase two the Israelites were the people of God's mission. The disciples, both the twelve and the larger group, were the people of God's mission in the New Testament. The first thing Jesus did was gather a people around Himself. He then spent the next three years pouring into them and preparing them not just to be forgiven for their sin, but to be sent out on mission.

Before Jesus went to the cross, on the night in which He was betrayed He prayed, “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”<sup>83</sup> Days later, before His return to His Father, completing His work on earth, He gathered His image bearing disciples and said, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”<sup>84</sup> That word used was the word “apostle.” It means to send forth on a certain mission.<sup>85</sup> These disciples were being sent out to the world to share this good news thus redeeming the image of God in others who would do the same. The end goal would be for God to look down on His earth and see His image reflected back to Himself.

In what is commonly referred to as the Great Commission, Jesus, after His resurrection called His disciples together and said, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to oversee everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”<sup>86</sup> The call or commission to make disciples is to tell people who do not look like Jesus (because of a marred image of God inside of them) how they can have their image redeemed, thus making them look more and more like Jesus. As disciples look more like the One they follow, they will do what He sent them to do.

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<sup>83</sup> John 17:18 (HCSB).

<sup>84</sup> John 20:21 (HCSB).

<sup>85</sup> Spiros Zodhiates “The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament.” Electronic ed. (Chattanooga TN: AMG Publishers, 2000)

<sup>86</sup> Matthew 28:19-20 (HCSB).

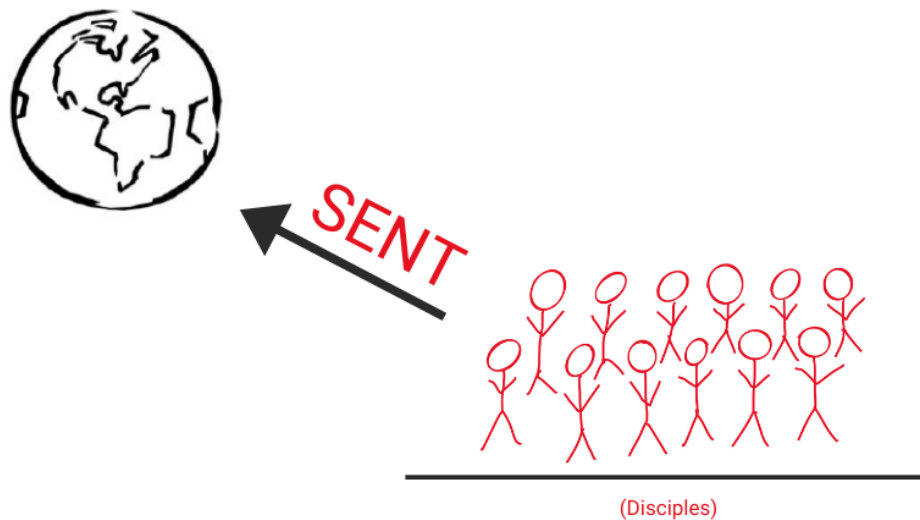


Figure #12, Jesus sent His disciples to the nations

God has a mission and His mission has a people. God's people also have a purpose. Being forgiven of sin is not the final destination of a Christian; it is a means to a fuller mission. It is the onramp into a life of mission. It is what brings people back into a right relationship with God, and a right relationship has an outward missional thrust, not just a new positional reality.

This call harkens back to the original mission given to Adam and Eve and to Israel. They were meant to spread the image of God throughout the world. They failed that mission by rebelling against God. Jesus succeeded where Adam and Isreal failed by perfectly relating to God and accurately representing Him on earth. This is where His disciples would have also failed if the success of the mission had not been guaranteed by the victory Jesus secured through the

resurrection. The difference between God's people today and Adam and Eve or Israel is not that humanity is better, it is that Christ has secured the way.

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE MISSION OF GOD

Adam and Eve were called to multiply His image throughout the earth. They were given a mission and a place to do it. Israel was called to show the world what God was like and they were given a home to do so. Jesus gathered His people, His disciples, and sent them into all the world to show the world what God is like. Instead of a particular place this mission would be lived out among the nations.

Ever since Christ was resurrected the people of God no longer have a designated place to live out mission in the same way Adam and Eve and Israel had. Now the "place" is the world into which Christians have been sent. It is no longer a geopolitical place but all the nations.

There are some who would argue, if mission is everything and everywhere then it is nothing and nowhere. The intent would be to focus the word "mission," to specific people, in specific places, doing specific activities. This writer sees mission more in the lens of Christopher Wright's perspective in *Biblical Theology For Life*: "It would seem more biblical to say 'If everything is mission...everything is mission.' Clearly, not everything is cross-cultural evangelistic mission, but everything a Christian and a Christian church is, says and does should be missional in its conscious participation in the mission of God in God's world."<sup>87</sup> This elevates

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<sup>87</sup> Christopher Wright, *Biblical Theology For Life, The Mission Of God's People, A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 26.



the geography of every Christian to mission status. With a redeemed image inside of them, every believer has been restored relationally and sent out missionally to engage in God's mission.

Christians no longer "go" anywhere but are sent everywhere.

Gone are the days of aimless living. This one truth fundamentally changes one's view of life. No one simply goes anywhere anymore in the sense of haphazard going. Now it is intentionally going everywhere God sends His people. For instance; Christians no longer go to the grocery store — they are sent there. They no longer go to little league — they are sent there. They no longer go to school — they are sent there on purpose on mission for Jesus. All Christian's lives are elevated into the realm of mission. Spurgeon is often quoted for saying "All Christians are either a missionary or an imposter." It is not that some Christians are sent and some are not. All are sent, some embrace that mantle and mission while others do not.

All Christians have purpose added to their lives when they embrace Jesus. The mission is what the mission was: to spread God's image throughout the earth. Christians purpose in life is to live for God's glory by reacting to Him and representing Him in everything they do, say and think.

This shifts the traditional understanding of church from being a place the people go, to a people that are equipped and sent out for mission. This sets up serving the church being missional in the sense that everything the church is and does joins God's mission. The local church is a gathering of those whose images of God in them have been redeemed and restored in order to be sent out to spread God's image wherever they are. Church, as a gathering of God's missional people, must be marked by a "gathering and scattering," a concept coined by Hugh Halter and Matt May in their book *The Gathered and Scattered Church*.

This important and life changing truth that God's people are sent ones, who are sent into His mission to the nations, is represented by drawing many arrows stemming from God's people to the nations. This reinforces that all Christians are sent ones. It also serves as a powerful truth that each and every Christians being taught the mission of God needs to completely rethink how they do life in light of His mission.

### Implications

The mission is what the mission was: God has been working in all of creation by spreading His image throughout the earth to the end that His image is being reflected back to Him. It is why Adam was created and it was what Adam failed in. Even in Adam's failure, God instituted a rescue mission plan not completely distinct from His original mission. God's son Israel's mission was to show the world what God was like and in doing so connected with the mission given to Adam. Israel failed but brought forth Christ who did not fail. Christ guarantees that His church will not fail where Adam or Israel did. The mission remained consistent from creation to now.

As the teaching comes full circle it is important to highlight four consistent truths that run through the mission of God teaching.

- God always has a mission. His mission is essentially the same as it was today as it was when it was given to Adam and Eve. The mission is what the mission was.
- God's mission always has a people. In the garden Adam and Eve were God's people called to live out His mission. Outside of the Garden God re-created a people through Abraham's lineage called Israel. They were God's chosen people called to live out His mission. Jesus

immediately gathered people called disciples who would be charged with His mission. God's mission always has a people.

- God's people always have a place. Whether it was the Garden that God placed them in, the Promised Land that they were led to or the nations that the church is sent to, God's people always have a place. Today, where you are is your place to live out God's mission.
- As for the believer, the meta-narrative instills and roots the believer's identity in "sent-ness." God has always been sent His people into His mission. Adam and Eve were "put/placed," in a specific place to live out His mission. Israel was "led" to the Promised Land. Christians are "sent" to the nations. Instead of being sent to a specific place, Christians are sent everywhere they go. It is who they are in Christ. The narrative speaks less about the activity of God's sent ones and more about their identity.
- God's people always have a purpose. Humanity's purpose is always found within God's mission. His people are called to relate to Him and represent Him. This is done as God's people spread His image throughout the earth.

The succinct definition of the Mission of God with its corresponding diagram helps the participant to understand God's mission. Nearly all of the participants in the survey 88%, claimed that the mission of God could be succinctly articulated and yet when prompted to define the Mission of God the answers were varied as the number of participants. This simply reveals that Christians believe they know the mission of God and yet when asked they have a hard time succinctly and consistently defining it. If the mission of God can not be defined across the board simply and succinctly, there is not much reason to believe that it will be embraced across the board.

## **CHAPTER FOUR DISCOVERING WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN SENT TO DO**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE PROCESS**

The “mission of God” definition and correlating diagram lay the foundation for those four core truths: God has a mission; His mission has a people; His people have a place, and His people have a purpose. It is that last core truth that the next stage of discipleship moves into. The mission of God lays down a general foundation for missional living. It teaches that every Christian is a sent one. The teaching calls each individual to discover what he or she has been sent to do.

Too many discipleship plans focus solely on being a good Christian without equipping for mission. This tool leads a disciple through the process of discovering what they have been sent to do. It centers around three key indicators: Personality; Spiritual Gifting; and Life Formation moments. When taken into consideration, these indicators help point a disciple in the specific direction of his or her calling.

This process is not a specific science. The disciple is encouraged to experiment and debrief experiences to help determine what he has been sent to do. Through different tasks, and experiences the Spirit will help hone the believer into a greater sense of clarity. This discovery is not just for the believer, but for the greater mission of God. This means that no experimentation will be wasted!

It is vital that this entire process be done in community. As has already been discussed, the church is on mission together in community. It is within this missional community that discovery of “sent-ness” happens best.

This is the front page of the diagram that will be worked through with three distinct areas of examination.

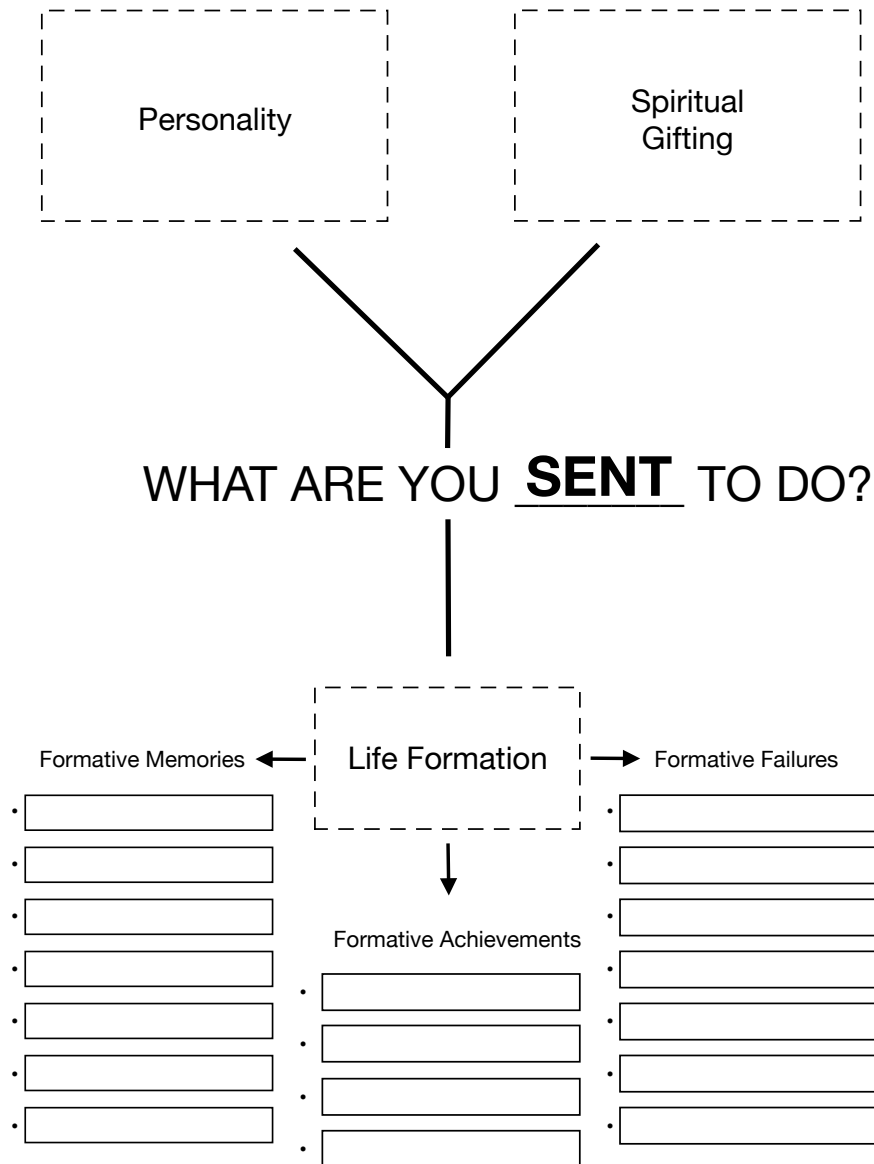


Figure #13, Front Sheet of “What You Have Been Sent To Do”

## PERSONALITY

The process starts with considering one's personality because it is more accessible for a disciple than Spiritual gifts or an evaluation of one's life experiences. Personality, according to the American Psychological Association, refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving.<sup>88</sup> There is extensive research both in volume and over time in this area. For this project, the goal is for Christians to discover their personality types, dive deeper into the explanation of that type, and begin to see how God may use that type in His mission.

Every human being has a unique personality, and Christians bring there diverse personalities into the unique mission God has for them. God desires to use all of what makes up a human for His glory. "For it was You who created my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I will praise You because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, and I know this very well. My bones were not hidden from You when I was made in secret, when I was formed in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all me when I was formless; all my days were written in Your book and planned before a single one of them began."<sup>89</sup> This passage speaks about the "inward parts," and the knowledge God has of people before they are "formed." This is significant because it suggests that humans are made up of more than just flesh and bone, and that the inward parts are more than just organs

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<sup>88</sup> "Personality Types" 16 Personalities, <https://www.apa.org/topics/personality>

<sup>89</sup> Psalm 139:13-16 (HCSB).

but also contain the “formless,” aspects. Though not specified here it certainly encapsulates the concept of personality within humanity.

As with every aspect of humanity, rebellion and sin have impacted the whole person thoroughly. Paradoxically, the redemption of Jesus found in the Gospel also impacts the whole person thoroughly. With this reality there is an admission that there are shadows that Christians walk in which is why walking in the light is so crucial to living on mission.

There are a couple of reasons why understanding one’s personality is so important to living on mission with God. Personality becomes the filter in which life is seen, experienced and processed. A greater understanding of one’s personality helps the disciple to discern the best individual way of living out God’s mission in his life. The writer discovered that only half of respondents have had specific training on their personality from their church. If living out of one's personality is essential to living on mission, then greater emphasis should be made to help individuals understand their personalities because only half of church-going Christians are getting trained in their personality.

There are many ways to determine one’s personality and personality tests are a dime a dozen. Perhaps some are better than others, but more than one could be used. The point is not to promote one over another. Rather, the point is to better understand one’s self. There are several resources that are readily available are, such as 16 Personalities, DISC, and Enneagram. While the student’s project is based on one, there are multiple tests and evaluations that could be used to gain a greater understanding of one’s personality. Even with that understanding, the group ought to be consistent in using the same test and paradigm for everyone in the group for the sake of consistency.

This project uses 16 Personalities. The student found the test accessible, informative and well researched. The test is online, free and only takes fifteen minutes to take. The results come in immediately after taking the test. Each applicant receives a thorough report. By providing a free and accessible personality tool, 16 Personalities hopes to serve a larger number of applicants to study and use the results for greater research. “Thanks to this accessibility, our assessment has already been taken nearly 100 million times, a humbling yet motivating milestone in our effort to reach the world.”<sup>90</sup> By administering the test for free, 16 Personalities is able to collect more data than other tests that charge a fee. This collection of data helps to refine their research and make the results that much more reliable.

16 Personalities is rooted in two different philosophies. One is based on the original work of Carl Gustav Jung, a 20th century Swiss psychologist. He coined the distinguishing markers of “Introversion and Extroversion.”<sup>91</sup> He hypothesized that every person falls on the spectrum of either introversion (experiencing the world internally), or extroversion (experiencing the world outwardly). In addition to Introversion or Extroversion he developed the cognitive forms of “Judging and Perceiving,”<sup>92</sup> which is expressed as a spectrum of the personality. On one side, Judging, tends to manifest as planners, well organized and rule following versus, Perceivers, who are more spontaneous, flexible and open-minded.

The second philosophy that 16 Personalities is built upon is the Myers-Briggs theory. Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers further developed Jung’s research.

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<sup>90</sup> “Core Theory,” 16 Personalities, <https://www.16personalities.com/articles/our-theory>

<sup>91</sup> “Core Theory,” 16 Personalities, <https://www.16personalities.com/articles/our-theory>

<sup>92</sup> “Core Theory,” 16 Personalities, <https://www.16personalities.com/articles/our-theory>



They created the four letter acronym that is so popular today. Their program uses 4 corresponding letters to describe personalities, Introversion/Extroversion, Observation/Intuition, Judging/Perceiving, Feeling/Thinking.

The results are based on the spectrum of this chart.

| Traits, I/E, S/N, T/F, J/P, T/A   |  |
|---|--|
| Introversion (I), energy is gained by living in the interior world                | Extroversion (E), energy is gained by interacting with the exterior world                |
| Observant (S) focuses on processing information practically and pragmatically     | Intuitive (N) have more of an open mind, a higher sense of curiosity and open-mindedness |
| Thinking (T) tend to make decisions based more on objectivity and logic           | Feeling (F) these individuals tend to be more emotional and in tune with emotions        |
| Judging (J) are decisive, predictable and structured                              | Prospecting (P) are more flexible, prefer to keep options open and improvise             |
| Assertive (A) individuals are self-assured, resistant to stress and even-tempered | Turbulent (T) tend to be more self-conscious, stress more to succeed                     |

Figure #14, Table of Personality Traits

Introversion and Extraversion refer to the preferred way of interacting with the world and the direction of the energy used for that interaction. “Each of us has a natural preference for either the outer or inner world, although by necessity we all function in both. Functioning in our preferred world energizes us; functioning in the opposite world is more difficult and can be tiring.”<sup>93</sup> Introverts simply interact internally rather than processing the world around them externally like Extraverts.

Sensing (MBTI) or Observant (16 Personalities) both mean the same thing. For this project, the student will use the 16 personality terminology. It refers to the type of information

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<sup>93</sup> Paul Tieger, Barbara Barron, and Kelly Tieger, *Do What You Are, Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, (New York: NY, Little, Brown and Company. Fifth edition, 2014) 14.

that is obviously noticed by the individual. Observant types see what is, whereas Intuitive types see what could be. Observants, "...concentrate on what can be seen, heard, felt, smelled, or tasted. They trust whatever can be measured or documented and focus on what is real and concrete."<sup>94</sup> Intuitive's on the other hand, focus more on, "...meanings, relationships, and possibilities based on facts than in the facts themselves...Intuitive's—naturally read between the lines and look for meaning in all things."<sup>95</sup> These two indicators reveal how different personalities see the world around them.

The Thinking and Feeling spectrum measures how different personalities arrive at decisions and conclusions. "Thinkers prefer decisions that make sense logically. They pride themselves on their ability to be objective and analytical in the decision-making process."<sup>96</sup> Feelers prefer to make decisions on a different set of priorities than pure logic. "Feelers make decisions based on how much they care or what they feel is right."<sup>97</sup> This aspect of personality sheds light onto the preferred way of utilizing priorities when making conclusions.

The fourth aspect of personality that the MBTI and subsequent 16 Personalities test draws out is Judging and Perceiving. This measures how personalities desire to live life on the spectrum of having a well thought out plan to execute or to be spontaneous and have multiple

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<sup>94</sup> Paul Tieger, Barbara Barron, and Kelly Tieger, *Do What You Are, Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, 18.

<sup>95</sup> Paul Tieger, Barbara Barron, and Kelly Tieger, *Do What You Are, Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, 18.

<sup>96</sup> Paul Tieger, Barbara Barron, and Kelly Tieger, *Do What You Are, Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, 21.

<sup>97</sup> Paul Tieger, Barbara Barron, and Kelly Tieger, *Do What You Are, Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, 21.

options. “Judgers, tend to live in an orderly way and are happiest when their lives are structured and matters are settled.”<sup>98</sup> They prefer closure rather than open-endedness. “Perceivers like to live in a spontaneous way and are happiest when their lives are flexible.”<sup>99</sup> This personality type enjoys having multiple options in the moment versus someone who makes plans in concrete.

16 Personality takes this model based on MTBI and adds one distinguishing marker A or T. A stands for “Assertive” and T stands for “Turbulent.” This aspect of personality speaks to one’s confidence in her own abilities and decisions. “Assertive individuals are self-assured, even-tempered, and resistant to stress...According to Assertive personality types, what’s done is done.”<sup>100</sup> They are more consistent and more assured of their abilities to handle whatever life throws at them. “Turbulent individuals are success-driven, perfectionistic, and eager to improve. They are always trying to counterbalance their self-doubts by achieving more.”<sup>101</sup> While Turbulents are less stable they are oftentimes more driven in life. This aspect of Assertive or Turbulent helps one understand how they interact with the world around them and their own decisions in life. It is not a moral grade, but an amoral indicator distinguishing marker that like the rest of the personality simply helps understand your individual make up. This is a helpful

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<sup>98</sup> Paul Tieger, Barbara Barron, and Kelly Tieger, *Do What You Are, Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, 25.

<sup>99</sup> Paul Tieger, Barbara Barron, and Kelly Tieger, *Do What You Are, Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, 25.

<sup>100</sup> Identity: Assertive vs. Turbulent, 16 Personalities, <https://www.16personalities.com/articles/identity-assertive-vs-turbulent>

<sup>101</sup> Identity: Assertive vs. Turbulent, 16 Personalities, <https://www.16personalities.com/articles/identity-assertive-vs-turbulent>

addition to the MTBI as it helps understand the level of confidence one has moving forward in life.

There are 16 personality types. This is more nuanced than the smaller subunits of some personality tests like DISC that only give four. Sixteen is still somewhat limiting which is why one has to understand that there are many variations even within the generalized 16 personalities. The point is not to identify with a particular personality on a test result, but to understand one's own makeup. God uses all of the person in mission which means He uses each disciple's personality to accomplish His mission in variety of ways.

A basic understanding of each of the 16 personalities is helpful in leading a group through the process of discovering what one been sent to do. Below is a description of each grouping within the 16 personalities. Their specific names and lettering will be provided.

An Architect is an I,N,T,J and can be either A or T. They are one of the rarest personality profiles. They are constantly processing the world around them in a curious manner. They enjoy knowing how much they know! They use their insights and logic to make decisions and innovate. Since they use their own logic and insight they tend to be very comfortable on their own.

The Logician personality is made up of I,N,T,P and can be either A or T. They are nearly as rare as Architects and share similarities. As the name indicates, Logicians operate and see the world through their logic. They are able to spot trends, patterns and discrepancies. They are not as in touch with their emotions since emotions are inherently not built on a solid foundation of reason. Sometimes they are held back by their inner fear of failure resulting from their fear that they may have missed a key step in their internal processing.

Commanders are E,N,T,J and can be either A or T. Their internal processors are much like the rationalization of Architects and the logic of Logician's but the difference is their extroversion. This makes them good leaders in their dealings with people. Many people think of them as "larger than life" figures because they are often found out front leading the charge. They enjoy the challenges of leading and starting new things for the sake of the challenge.

Debaters are E,N,T,P and can be either A or T. A debater, like the name suggests, enjoys deconstructing arguments and rebuilding them to make them better. They enjoy sparring with ideas for the sake of sparring. They are never at a loss for ideas because they are able to think through plenty of them. However, when it comes to implementing their ideas, the debaters do not follow through. When not in check, they will offend people in their debates because they are insensitive to the emotions of others.

Advocates are I,N,F,J and can be either A or T. They approach life with great thoughtfulness and imagination. Being introverted, this depth is internal and not always obvious. They have strong opinions and thoughts, but do not always make them known. They connect well with others on a one-to-one or small group situation. They are behind many of the great thought movements of the day, but they may not be the vocal ones out front.

Mediators are I,N,F,P and can be either A or T. This personality sees the world through an idealistic lens. Though they internally process, they are great connectors with people. These are the types of people who, when they open up, have so much to offer the world around them. They mean well and have, for the most part, good intentions. Interestingly enough they are often times better equipped to learn other languages because of their gift of communication.

The Protagonist personality is made up of E,N,F,J and can be either A or T. These people love people and are led by their strong ideas and values. They make good leaders since they are passionate about their ideas and values and have the ability to connect with people. If something needs to be said a protagonist does not mind standing up and speaking out.

Campaigners are E,N,F,P and can be either A or T. They have infectious personalities and people are drawn to them. They are able to take big ideas and direct their energy towards them. Oftentimes the term, “free spirits,” are used to describe them because they tend to live in the moment, whatever moment that tends to be. They believe they can change the world and they seek to enlist those around them to make the world a better place.

Logisticians are I,S,T, J and can be either A or T. This personality differs from the previous Logician. They are careful and methodical about life. Their type is one of the more abundant personality types. Instead of making assumptions they seek to analyze and process through observable facts.

Defenders are I,S,F,J and can be either A or T. These personalities tend to be warm, personable and unassuming. Their personality type is typified by a combination of analytical skills and high social IQ's. This makes them thoughtful in their interpersonal relationships. When it comes to output in life they are dedicated and conscientious in what they do.

Executive types are E,S,T,J and can be either A or T. This personality type brings order to chaos and can offer clear direction amid confusion. They order their lives around tradition, structure, and clear lines of authority. With their Extroversion they relate well to people and have the ability to bring people together. Their internal sense of right and wrong is black and white with little variation.

Consul's are E,S,F,J and can be either A or T. These personalities are akin to Executives in their leadership and people skills, but the key difference is their internal right and wrong is more influenced by relationships and fluidity of emotions than Executives, who are less feeling oriented. Consul's are social creatures who take into account the variety of cultural experiences around them and how those experiences shape the world in front of them. There are some personality types that are good with relationships as a skill and some that are good because of their genuine love of relationships. Consuls genuinely love relationships.

Virtuoso types are I,S,T,P and can be either A or T. As introverts they are inclined towards an individualist outlook and are driven by that internal fortitude, and not as much by the relationships on the outside. They have a natural curiosity about the way the world works and enjoy discovery. Virtuoso types enjoy troubleshooting problems, figuring out how things work, how to make them better, making them better and then moving on to the next project. They are mechanical in the way they process the world around them.

Adventurers are I,S,F,P and can be either A or T. Like Virtuosos, they like to consider new things, but not just to figure them out but for the experience. They are openminded and ready for the path less traveled and the potential it brings. They are artistic in nature. The way things are has a way of boxing them in and making them feel claustrophobic. They would rather follow their passions than traditions, preferring the road less traveled.

Entrepreneur's are E,S,T,P, and can be either A or T. Like Adventurers they are ready for the unknown but unlike Adventurers it is not just for the sake of the thrill or adventure, but for the well conceived result. Action over talk peaks the interest of the Entrepreneur. There are other personalities who like to think about new things. However, this type makes concrete plans to

bring the new idea to fruition. They have the ability to draw people to themselves because their lives are attractive to many others. They always seem to be living on the edge.

Entertainer's are E,S,F,P and can be either A or T. This is perhaps the most fun personality type to be around. Like their name suggests that have a flair for enjoying life, the feelings to connect with those around them and the ability to keep their options open because one never knows when the next party will start! They are keenly aware of their surroundings and are able to make changes on the fly in order to create a more engaging atmosphere for themselves and those around them. They are more interested in the now than they are in the future.<sup>102</sup>

An understanding of one's personality will help bring a greater understanding of a disciple's overall make-up. God made all of the person and wants to use all of the person. In other words, the Christian brings all of who they are, personality included, to the mission of God. Knowing more about yourself will help direct your interests, employment and service to the church.

Theologians use the phrase, "Total Depravity," to describe the all of what makes a human, including the influence of sin on all aspects of our lives. "It is not just that some parts of us are sinful and others are pure. Rather, every part of our being is affected by sin—our intellects, our emotions and desires, our hearts, our goals and motives, and even our physical bodies."<sup>103</sup> This means that our personalities have been impacted by sin. There are positives and negatives, light and shadows in all personalities. Growing in Christ is sanctification and

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<sup>102</sup> Personality Types, 16 Personalities, <https://www.16personalities.com/personality-types>

<sup>103</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Leicester: England, Inter-Varsity Press, 1994) 497.



personalities are part of sanctification. This is brought up because as it pertains to mission, personalities are not neutral but in need of sanctification like the rest of the person. Consideration needs to be applied to the weaknesses of each personality as well as its strengths.

The positive aspects of the human personality as well as the neutral ones are underplayed and under deployed. John Ortberg points out that God does not change one's personality in order to use them. He causes flourishing of the personality that He has already given them. "God wants to redeem you, not exchange you."<sup>104</sup> He goes on to teach that people should not look for their personalities to change but for God to use them within the personality He gave them.

When God redeems a person, He redeems all of the person. In the Mission of God teaching it was learned that two aspects of being created in the Image of God were distorted by sin, but redeemed by Jesus. The ability to bring all of the Christian's personality into the their relationship with God is discussed more often than that Christian bringing all of their personality to bear on their ability to represent God.

While 16 Personalities is still somewhat limiting, it does show a broader representation of personality types than other services. In any event the point is not to identify with a particular personality on a test result, but to understand one's own makeup. God uses all of the person in mission which means he uses disciple's personalities to accomplish His mission in variety of ways.

The original disciples were given the same mission in the sense of God's mission being what God's mission had always been. They all went about it in different ways not just because of

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<sup>104</sup> John Ortberg. *The Me I Want to Be, Becoming God's Best Version Of You*. (Grand Rapids: MI, Zondervan, 2010) 16.

their different gifting (as further discussed herein) but because of their differing personalities. For example, Peter was most likely a Protagonist, E,N,F,J. Obviously this is speculative but the point is that Jesus gave all of them the same mission, but it manifested differently in part because of their differing personalities. Peter was impetuous, in the moment and made decisions based on feelings. This trait may have promoted Peter to make the great confession of who Jesus is, speaking up first when asked, "...Who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!" And Jesus responded, Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven."<sup>105</sup> Though the Father revealed it, there was something about Peter's personality that caused him to be the one to stand up and speak out when no one else did. On the flip side of this trait is the classic denial story where he let his feelings and desire to please others part of his personality lead to denying even knowing Jesus. Personality can be used redemptively or sinfully.

Other examples illustrate how personality plays out in mission. Paul was most likely a Logisticians I,S,T,J. Barnabas on the other hand was most likely a Campaigner E,N,F,P. This type values relationships and the harmony found within interpersonal relationships. When John Mark deserted the mission the Apostle Paul virtually excluded him from any future endeavors because it did not make sense to bring someone who might do that again. Barnabas on the other hand was quicker to give John Mark a second chance. Obviously there is more at play but at some level this was a personality clash that impacted mission. God in His sovereignty used this "split," to multiply the missional efforts. In the end, we know that Paul did welcome John Mark back into his good graces. Personalities matter and have great impact within various mission teams.

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<sup>105</sup> Matthew 16:15-17 (HCSB).

After the test results have been reviewed, the participant must highlight those statements that stand out as most meaningful to them. There will be some descriptions that do not neatly fit, and those should be noted and discussed with those closest to them before they are dismissed. The community around the disciple is vital to this process as a whole but definitely within the conversation about personalities because humans are prone to have blindspots.

A small group conversation needs to have each participant talk through their personality description. They need to articulate the ways in life they see their personalities being evident. This will help them understand their personality and bring others into the discussion. Sonltzfus, a Christian Coach who helps people discover their calling points out the significance of bringing community into this process. “The people who know you well almost surely have valuable insights to offer about how you operate in your type.”<sup>106</sup> This process must be steeped in community in order to catch blindspots and confirmation where needed.

The authors of “Do What You Are,” provide a helpful assessment questionnaire to help people process their personality results. They do not approach the assessment from a Christian perspective or a missional perspective since they are solely concerned with helping people find professional direction. They seek to align people’s personalities with the best suited profession. With that objective, they provide a way to take a deeper dive into one’s test results. Below is an adaptation of their “Ten Steps to Creating a Personal Career Plan.”<sup>107</sup>

#### Step 1: Your Unique Personality Strengths and Weaknesses

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<sup>106</sup> Tony Stoltzfus, *A leader’s life purpose, Calling And Destiny Discovery Tools For Christians Life Coaching*. (Virginia Beach, VA, Coach22. 2009) 53.

<sup>107</sup> Paul Tieger, Barbara Barron, and Kelly Tieger, *Do What You Are, Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, 358-363.

- List key words or phrases from the test results that are MOST true and provide examples that demonstrate these qualities

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

- List key words or phrases from the test restyles that are NOT true

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

- List the 2-3 STRENGTHS that most resonate with you from the test results

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

- List the 2-3 WEAKNESSES that most resonate with you from the test results

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Example:

- List the most meaningful statements found in the “Workplace Habits,” section of the 16

Personalities results and interact with them as it pertains to how your personality prefers to get things done.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Interaction:

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Interaction:

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Interaction:

- List the most meaningful statements found in the “Career Paths,” section of the 16

Personalities results and interact with them as it pertains to the meaningful activities your personality prefers to engage with.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Interaction:

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Interaction:

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Interaction:

Before moving on the next phase the disciple ought to be able to describe his or her personality profile in an individualized manner. They ought to have a deeper understanding of strengths and weakness as it pertains to their personality. Even though they may not be specific with the specific work God is calling them into they should know what brings them energy based on their results, where their sweet spot of operation and how they interact with the world around them. They should have a better understanding of their internal wiring and God-given personality and a desire to bring all of that to bear on the mission God has for them.

### **SPIRITUAL GIFTING**

As the journey towards greater missional understanding of God and one's life continues the next pice of the puzzle is "spiritual gifting." If Personality is what is naturally given to every person, spiritual gifting is what is given supernaturally to every single Christian. This means that when one lives on mission they bring all their personality to bear on that mission as well as all the supernatural gifting is to be brought to bear on God's mission.

The conversation about spiritual gifts has had a recent resurgence. This has happened during the 20th century mainly due to the Pentecostal movement. The Evangelical conversation about spiritual gifts revolved around Cessationism and Continuationism. Cessationaists, for the most part, believe that the more demonstrative gifts of the Spirit ceased after the Apostles.

Continuationsists, for the most part, believe all the gifts are still in full operation. Interestingly enough, most of the gifts at the heart of this debate seem to be manifested within the Sunday church service. Perhaps it is time now for the connection to be made to spiritual gifts and the mission of God!

Peter offers the church of all ages a great place to start when it comes to spiritual gifts. The following passage is not often referred to in the “spiritual gifts,” conversation because it is not among the classic list of gifts passages but it provides a foundation for understanding and identifying spiritual gifts. The passage is found in 1 Peter 4:10. Peter is writing to Christians dispersed all around Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1). The phrase, “temporary residents dispersed...” is a description of God’s people being sent to the nations. This fits within the Mission of God teaching that the Sending God has deliberately sent His people everywhere they are for the purpose of advancing His mission. While some think this phrase refers to only Jewish Christians living outside of Jerusalem, they are missing the larger description of all of God’s people not having their home on earth but being dispersed to the nations for the sake of God’s mission. “Goppelt rightly observes that God’s election is what account for their being exiles (temporary residents dispersed).”<sup>108</sup> Meaning, God’s gospel, bringing in the lost, saving them and sending them out to the nations makes all Christians exiles or temporary residents dispersed where God’s Spirit has sent them. This is why this passage is so fundamental to the discussion of spiritual gifts

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<sup>108</sup> L. Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 64, 66. See his detailed discussion, including the self-perception of the Qumran community, on pp. 68–70. S. R. Bechtler confirms the idea that the readers are strangers because they are chosen by God (*Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter*, SBLDS 162 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998], 137). Schreiner, T. R. (2003). *1,2 Peter, Jude* (Vol. 37). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

and mission. Peter was writing to Christians who understood this world is not their home. Instead it is only the place they have been sent to temporarily live on mission.

To those “sent” people, dispersed because of mission not persecution, Peter would say in chapter 4:10, “Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God.” There are three important truths to be taught about this verse. First, gifts of the Spirit are based on God’s grace. Second, each believer has received at least one gift. Lastly, gifts are meant for others. When this passage is understood it leads to a solid foundation to discover one’s own spiritual gifts.

The word Peter uses for “gift” is grace. “The word “gift” (charisma) implies that the gifts believers have are the result of God’s grace and the word “received” confirms this judgement... Believers cannot boast about the gift they have, for others they contradict its gracious character, thinking that somehow they merit its bestowal.”<sup>109</sup> Gifts as grace help set the context and posture for spiritual gifting. “Gifted,” people are not special in and of themselves rather they are gifted by God’s grace. His grace is unmerited, unearned favor. So the posture of understanding and utilizing Spiritual gifts is one of humility and gratitude.

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that spiritual gifts are meant to edify the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 14 he says this about spiritual gifts: “So also you—since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church.”<sup>110</sup> The connection needs to be made that an edified body of Christ is a strong missional force for the world. In other words, the body of

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<sup>109</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, General editor E. Ray Clendenen, *The New American Commentary, Volume 37 1,2, Peter, Jude*, (Nashville: TV, Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2003) 213-214.

<sup>110</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:12 (HCSB).



Christ utilizing the spiritual gifts appropriately is not just an internal aspect of the church, but an external, outward aspect of the church. Paul goes on to make this point when talking about speaking in tongues. He argues that if speaking in tongues is not followed by interpretation, how will the outsider (i.e., the non-Christian) understand what is going on? “Otherwise, if you praise with the spirit, how will the outsider say ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks since he does not know what you are saying?”<sup>111</sup> Paul follows that question with another admonition to conduct the use of spiritual gifts for the sake of non-Christians, “If, therefore, the whole church assembles together and all are speaking in other tongues and people who are outsiders or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all are prophesying and some unbeliever or outsider comes in, he is convicted by all and is called to account by all. The secrets of his heart will be revealed, and as a result he will fall facedown and worship God, proclaiming, “God is really among you.”<sup>112</sup> The point is that gifts are meant to edify the church and an edified church is a missional force.

The point about gifts being meant to edify the church is important because in the missional conversation everything is about the church’s outward posture. In that missional context what is valued most are outward gifts but as one will see that when all the gifts are being utilized some are more outward and some are more inward. The directional energy does not make them missional or not because whatever builds up the body of Christ can, and should be, seen in the context of mission. For the Christian with the gift of serving, even internally serving the church, can be used by God for accomplishing His mission. There are not internal and

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<sup>111</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:16 (HCSB).

<sup>112</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 (HCSB).

external gifts. There are only gifts for the body of Christ to be the body of Christ. “Gifts have a singular purpose. They enable us to participate in the advancement of God’s kingdom to the ends of the earth in preparation for the return of the King.”<sup>113</sup> Just as Christ was sent into the world on mission so His church, the body of Christ, is sent into the world on mission. A gifted body of Christ is one on mission. Hemphill explains that all spiritual gifts are connected to God’s overarching mission. “Spiritual gifts are the individualized expression of God’s grace enabling you to participate in taking the good news of the King to the ends of the earth.”<sup>114</sup> All gifts are ultimately to be used for God’s glory which is central to His mission.

It makes sense that each member of the body of Christ has been given a gift since a gifted body is one on mission. Peter points this out in the phrase, “based on the gift each one has received...” “It is also implied that each believer has received at least one spiritual gift, for Peter addressed his words to “each one.”<sup>115</sup> When discovering spiritual gifts there is often times too much of a focus on the “big” ones or the more demonstrative ones. This is a mistake because it undervalues all the others and limits people’s understanding about gifting. When it is correctly taught that each Christian has been gifted, then each Christian can journey towards discovery and implementation of the gift(s) God has graced him with to be used for His mission.

Just like each person has been created with a unique personality, each gift is employed through the unique God-given personality. An ENTP personality with the gift of serving will

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<sup>113</sup> Ken, Hemphill *You Are Gifted, Your Spiritual Gifts and the Kingdom of God*, (Nashville: TN, B&H Publishing Group, 2009) 1.

<sup>114</sup> Ken Hemphill, *You Are Gifted, Your Spiritual Gifts and the Kingdom of God*, 177.

<sup>115</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, General editor E. Ray Clendenen, *The New American Commentary, Volume 37 1,2, Peter, Jude*, (Nashville: TV, Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2003) 214.

serve differently than an ISFJ. So not only do all Christians have a gift, they also have a unique means of emptying that gift for God's glory and the edification of His church. That is why the "What You Have Been Sent To Do" tool takes into account personality and spiritual gifting. That is just like God to let His multi-colored grace be put on display through His wildly diverse and colorful gifted church.

Lastly, this passage teaches that gifts are meant to be used for others. The fact that gifts are directly connected to God's grace should wipe away any hint of pride. However if there were any pride lingering (but unjustified), this understanding that gifts are meant for others will settle it. Peter says, "use it (gift(s)) to serve others." Gifts are about others not about oneself. "The gifts are the consequences of God's grace. As such, they indicate nothing about the believer's spirituality, but they point to God's gracious intention to equip His body for service."<sup>116</sup> This is why discovery of gifts is so important. Others need the gift God has given each Christian. The world needs the gifted Church so show them the good news of Jesus. Gifts are outward in the sense that they are not to be used for oneself but always have another as the focus.

As God's church helps His people to discover their gifts, they will be a "good steward of God's grace." For Peter this was ultimately about God's glory. He understood that God's mission, however he might have worded it, was ultimately about God working for His own glory. Walking His people through a journey of discovering what they have been sent to do is a vital aspect of living on mission because it brings God glory when His people identify, understand and employ their gifts. The writer found encouraging results from the research that church-going Christians have been trained to recognize and use their spiritual gifts at a high percentage, 72%.

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<sup>116</sup> Ken Hemphill, *You Are Gifted, Your Spiritual Gifts and the Kingdom of God*, 175.

The more God's people come to understand their role in His mission, the more intense training and discipleship in areas like spiritual gifts will become more important.

A brief consideration of the various lists of spiritual gift passages needs to be considered so that when the spiritual gift testing is complete, there is a general understanding of those gifts listed in the Bible. However, the gifts listed in the Bible are not a comprehensive list of spiritual gifts. Rather they are the specific ones mentioned by specific authors of the New Testament for specific purposes. “Although some popular writers have argued that Paul’s lists of nine gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 is a complete lists of ‘gifts of the Spirit,’ we have good reason to think otherwise. Paul uses similar language in other passages with differing lists. A comparison of Paul’s various gift lists (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:28; 12:29-30; 13:1-2, 8-9; 14:26; Eph. 4:11; see also 1 Peter 4:10-11) demonstrates that his lists are ad hoc—that is, he is making them up “on the spot”—and vary considerably.”<sup>117</sup> A familiarity with the passages that list spiritual gifts is still profitable.

Wayne Grudem compiled a list of passages along with their corresponding gifts in his “Systematic Theology.”<sup>118</sup> This chart represents that compilation. The asterisk gifts symbolize a gift that has already been named in a previous verse making it a repeated gift. Grudem counts twenty-two gifts mentioned in the New Testament. In answering the question as to how many gifts there are in the New Testament, he said it depends on how one characterizes the gifts and how specific the gift’s characterization. He does not go as far as the assumption in this paper that

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<sup>117</sup> Craig Keener, *Gift Giver, The Holy Spirit for Today*, (Grand Rapids: MI, Baker Academic, 2001) 114.

<sup>118</sup> Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology*, (Leicester: England. Inter-Varsity Press, 1994) 1019-1020.

there are more gifts of the Spirit than the ones specifically mentioned in the Bible, but he does make the point that the specifics of that conversation miss the point. “The point of all this is simply to say that God gives the church an amazing variety of spiritual gifts, and they are all tokens of his varied grace.”<sup>119</sup> His list of gifts is as follows:

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has placed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, next miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, managing, various kinds of languages.

- apostle
- prophet
- teacher
- miracles
- kinds of healings
- helps
- administration
- tongues

1 Corinthians 12:8-10, A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial: to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, to another, a message of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another, faith by the same Spirit to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another, the performing of miracles, to another, prophecy, to another,

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<sup>119</sup> Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology*, (Leicester: England. Inter-Varsity Press, 1994) 1022.

distinguishing between spirits, to another, different kinds of languages, to another, interpretation of languages.

- word of wisdom
- word of knowledge
- faith
- \*gifts of healing
- \*miracles
- \*prophecy
- distinguishing between spirits
- \*tongues
- interpretation of tongues

Ephesians 4:11, And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers

- \*apostle
- \*prophet
- evangelist
- pastor-teacher

Romans 12:6-8, According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the standard of one's faith; if service, in service; if teaching, in teaching; if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness

- \*prophecy

- serving
- \*teaching
- encouraging
- contributing
- leadership
- mercy

1 Corinthians 7:7, I wish that all people were just like me. But each has his own gift from God, one person in this way and another in that way.

- marriage
- celibacy

As helpful as lists are grouping the gifts around general functionality can be helpful to see the gifts in relationship to other gifts. Jeff Carver, a pastor, entrepreneur and creator of "[spiritualgiftstest.com](http://spiritualgiftstest.com)," has compiled a wide variety of helpful teachings on Spiritual Gifts. Apart from the testing he created, and used his grouping of the gifts has been found to be helpful and informative. Since there are many gifts listed in the New Testament, and since there are even more gifts not listed in the New Testament, a grouping of "types," of gifts can help comprehend the various gifts. This grouping breaks gifts into four different categories. When one gets their report from his inventory test the gifts are color-coded to connect with one of these four groupings.

- Serving Gifts: Serving Gifts are characterized by their role in the church to manage, serve and build up the body of Christ in practical and loving ways.

- Foundation Gifts: The Foundation Gifts are those which were fundamentals to the establishment of the church. Those with Foundation Gifts are needed for planting new churches and ministries today.

- Revelatory Gifts: Revelatory Gifts are those in which the Lord imparts or reveals information to be used to guide, warn, correct and encourage the church while bringing glory to Himself.

- Manifestation Gifts: Also known as Miraculous Gifts, Manifestation Gifts are overtly supernatural and display the power and presence of the Lord among His people. They serve as evidence of the authority of God over all things.<sup>120</sup>

When taking this particular gift inventory, one is able to see the broader grouping, and, in turn, further understand and apply particular gifts. With so much teaching and variety of perspectives on spiritual gifts, the simpler one can make it the better. The point is not to become an expert on spiritual gifts, but to use the gifting that God has given you for His mission and purpose. The point of this project is not to provide an exhaustive understanding of gifts, but to orient people in the direction of their “sentness.”

Once a foundational understanding of Spiritual Gifts is established, the process continues towards helping Christians discover their gifting. It is not surprising that the writer’s research found that 73% of participants in the research survey said that they have received training, by their church, on spiritual gifts. It is the most widely taught aspect of this whole project. The uniqueness of this project is that it places the discovery of gifting within the mission of God. The

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<sup>120</sup> Jeff Carver, “Spiritual Gifts Test” <https://spiritualgiftstest.com/gifts-table/> (accessed June 6, 2020).



discovery process consistently finds these four components as fundamental in the discovery process: Prayer, Word, Community, Putting Gifts into Action.

Knowing one's spiritual gift is not the point of the discovery. Greater knowledge of one's spiritual gifting should lead to greater impact for the mission of God. God's mission has a people and His people have been given everything they need to accomplish said mission including the presence, power and gifts of the Spirit. As God's people have been sent into the mission, which happens to be wherever they are, they are sent with gifts. A church on mission is a church gifted for mission.

Given the central role spiritual gifting has in furthering God's plan, the church has a huge responsibility to help people discover their gifting and to exercise within their gifting. Far too often this discovery process is hampered because it is an individual pursuit and/or because the church fails to see all Christians as sent ones deserving of a full missionary discipleship. Discovering one's gifting cannot happen in an individualized vacuum disconnected from the church. Solo discovery and pursuit of spiritual gifting is incomplete at best, and dangerous at worst. Since churches have failed to connect spiritual gifting to the mission of God, spiritual gifting has become a pursuit based on personal interest and detached from a missionary mindset. When churches align all of their pursuits under the mission of God, the discovery of spiritual gifting will be a more corporate exercise.

Thus far, the process of "Discovering What You Have Been Sent To Do," has led to a deeper understanding of one's personality and spiritual gifting. The process is incomplete and still has one important component with multiple parts. Since personality and spiritual gifting do not occur in a vacuum, but unfold over a lifetime, that "lifetime," needs to be examined for the

fingerprints of God. An understanding at where God has led someone, how He has led someone and what He had led them through is the next step along the journey.

## **LIFE FORMATION**

The third part of “Discovering What You Have Been Sent to Do,” tool considers one’s Life Journey. This is broken down into three parts, Formative Memories and Formative Achievements and Formative Failures. Each participant is asked to engage in introspection and identify two to three life-shaping moments. These formative moments or seasons will be discussed in community in order to discern how they are brought to bear on that person engaging in the mission of God.

Everyone’s life is shaped by the experiences of the past. Justin Buzzard speaks about the importance of knowing one’s individual story and how it intersects with what he calls the Big Story. That is the story of the Gospel. He suggests that everyone’s life story mimics the gospel narrative by having a Creation, Rebellion and Rescue chapter. His contribution is two-fold. First, he has brought attention to the importance of knowing one’s own story. Second his simple life graph helps individuals contextualize their lives in the broader Gospel story.<sup>121</sup> He suggests the reader to draw out their life story and graph ten significant moment’s. From there he asks, investigative questions about the life story exercise. Looking for patterns, seeing who or what shaped one’s story and to reflect on how that fits within God’s big story.

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<sup>121</sup> Justin Buzzard, *The Big Story, How the Bible Makes Sense Out Of Life*, (Chicago: IL. Moody Publishers, 2013) 21.

When Tony Stoltzfus coaches people into more meaningful purpose, he directs them to think through their past in a similar way. He said, “Since God is actively preparing you for something, your significant experiences are also predictive of your life purpose.”<sup>122</sup> As Christians embark on this process, they wrestle with how their life story has brought them to their current reality, and how it has prepared them for what God has next for them. In order to move into the future in a healthy way, those most meaningful memories and successes can be indicative of what the Lord is doing for future mission. Those life experiences or stories can be immensely painful, joyful or a mix of everything in between. As one considers their life journey they are looking for the meaningful moments to see how they impacted their present and how they inform their future.

The participants will be led to spend time thinking through their life journey. The first aspect of this is to consider the most significant two or three memories from their past. This paints the picture of what shaped their upbringing. People’s top memories are “top,” for a reason and can have lasting impact on future engagements. Take Luke for example. One of his top memories was recalling family trips. He fondly recalled how his parents prioritized family time in order to make those trips happen. When he filled out his Next Steps, family engagement was a big part of how he sensed God leading him to engage further in His mission.<sup>123</sup>

The facilitator needs to be a good listener and train the cohort to do so as well. As the community members hear each participant’s top memories, they are encouraged to ask deeper

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<sup>122</sup> Tony Stoltzfus, *A leader’s life purpose, Calling And Destiny Discovery Tools For Christians Life Coaching*. (Virginia Beach: VA, Coach22. 2009) 93.

<sup>123</sup> Luke Campbell, Interview by author, Phone conversation, Richmond, Virginia, August 15, 2020.

questions to extract further insight as to why a certain memory stood out to them. As incisive questions are asked, the participant can give deeper consideration to that memory to see how the Lord shaped him and how God might want to use that for future engagement.

The second aspect is for the participants to consider their most significant two or three Formative Achievements. This part of the process illuminates those times when the participant felt uniquely equipped for a task. This feeling of being equipped led to a sense of fulfillment and joy which is why it made it in the list of top achievements. The facilitator has the opportunity to explore other reasons those moments so significant. When the group begins to ask questions around these achievements, a fuller picture can be painted as to certain gifts being used, and certain aspects of one's personality working for success, not against it. There is much to celebrate and to learn through these discussions.

Lastly, one's Formative failures needs to be considered. This process is not intended to wallow in pain or dredge up difficult seasons. Instead, the intent is to help participants learn from past failures, and to show that difficult times can be formative experiences not to be wasted. God does not waste His people's pain, neither should they. "Negative Preparation is when failure, suffering or difficulty brings us unexpected gifts that launch us toward our destiny."<sup>124</sup>

If the Biblical character Joseph told his life story it would be full of deep hurt, abandonment, despair but also greatness. There would be horror, tears, laughter and great satisfaction reading the meaningful moments of his life. What would look out of place in the moment, would ultimately carry great meaning as the whole of his life is considered and not just

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<sup>124</sup> Tony Stoltzfus, *A leader's life purpose, Calling And Destiny Discovery Tools For Christians Life Coaching*. (Virginia Beach: VA, Coach22. 2009) 95.

a particular chapter. The places and circumstances God led him through were often times preparing him for his future. Those meaningful times, good and bad, were not wasted but were forming him into the man God wanted him to be in order for him to do all that God wanted him to do.

Perhaps it is presumptuous, but it seems possible to answer two questions on behalf of Jospheh that would have helped bring awareness as to how God had shaped him and prepared him for his work as second in command over all of Egypt. It seems apparent from the Biblical story of Jospheh what his answers would be to the question, “What are your top two or three life shaping formative memories?” No doubt that his earliest life shaping memory would have been his coat of many colors. “Now Israel loved Jospheh more than his other sons because Jospheh was a son born to him in his old age, and he made a robe of many colors for him.”<sup>125</sup> This preferential treatment would set him apart from his other brothers. This was not all good because it created such an intense hatred of Jospheh that his other brothers would plan his demise. In addition to this treatment, perhaps Jospheh would recall his dreams that he seemed all too ready to share with his brothers that he would one day rule over them! As the process would have unearthed this memory, those around him could explore further how that preferential treatment shaped young Jospheh. Good questions about these memories are vital for gaining as much insight as possible into these life-shaping formative memories.

Another memory would no doubt be the experience of being sold into slavery by his brothers. He would most likely be able to recall the conversation around killing him or selling him. The total disregard for his life would be scarring. He knew his brothers did not like him, but

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<sup>125</sup> “Genesis 37:3 (HCSB).

he could not have possibly believed that they would go so far as to forsake his life. Possibly he was trying to reconcile his memory of him ruling over his brothers with this incident of betrayal, and the destruction of his dream of ruling over them. If Josphe were recounting this memory, that line of questioning would have helped him process that trauma and yield further insight into how this shaped him for his future role.

Finally, although his life was full of life-shaping formative memories, the story of his integrity and character would have possibly been explored during this process. He providentially found himself to be in charge of Potiphar's house, who was an officer of Pharaoh. Josphe had risen in the ranks of the house and had found favor with his master. Potiphar put him in charge over all the household. The leadership required for this role most likely challenged Josphe beyond any of time of his life. The administration needed to handle all the affairs of the household were probably both stretching and a challenge for Joseph. As the story is told, he excelled in all things. "From the time that he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house because of Josphe."<sup>126</sup> This observation probably had as much to do with Josphe's rejection of Potiphar's wife's attempts to seduce him as it does his skills in efficient administration of the household. Upon his numerous refusals she trapped him one day and lied about the encounter. One day she solicited him again and upon his refusal she grabbed his garment as he fled the room. When her husband returned home she used his garment as evidence that Josphe had tried to rape her! "When his master heard the story his wife told him—"These are the things your slave did to me"— he was furious and had him thrown into

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<sup>126</sup> Genesis 39:5 (HCSB).

prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. So Jospheh was there in prison."<sup>127</sup> Depending on when Joseph would have been reflecting back on these life shaping formative memories, he could begin to put together the pieces of the puzzle and see how this prepared him for what was next, as he was confined near the king's officials who were also in jail at the time. Again engaging questions about this memory would help pull out of that memory everything that God wanted him to remember and how it was forming him for what was next.

During this process, of learning why he had been "sent," Joseph would also be asked: "What are the major successes in your life and what do you make of them?" This question looks at both memories and successes to see how one's personality and gifting came together in powerful ways. Often times, the way God uses someone in the past is preparing them for how He will use them in the future. Thus, when trying to discover what God has sent you to do, it is vital to know how He has used one in the past.

Jospheh may have started by recalling his days as a shepherd. This role was all encompassing and required great administration, work ethic, perseverance and responsibility. There would have been many things young Jospheh would have had to learn and excel in in order to be a shepherd. These past successes, opportunities and even failures would have been life shaping for him as God prepared him for his divine purposes.

When it came to leadership there are two seasons of life that stood out for Jospheh. The time he spent in Potiphar's house and the time he spent in jail. Although those two events do not naturally portend greatness, they both resulted in growing and sharpening his leadership. The

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<sup>127</sup> Genesis 39:19-20 (HCSB).

Bible recounts something similar for each experience and it was the fact that others around Josph saw his leadership and gave him more responsibility.

The last opportunity that may have stood out to Josph was his refrain from seeking retribution for the wrongs done to him. Whether it was Potiphar's wife, those in jail who "forgot," about him or even his brothers as the story unfolds it is clear that payback was not a value for Joseph. Something about Josph's upbringing, experiences and the Lord's work in him led him to be they type of person who did not seek retribution even though it could have rightly been sought after.

If Josph were answering the question about his "Formative Failures," he might bring up how prideful he seemed when he first received the visions of his leadership. He appeared all too eager to tell his brothers how they would serve him one day. As he processed this season of his life, he might have said how he learned humility and that leadership does not need to be flaunted. This would have come full circle when he was in leadership over his brothers but did not hold their actions against them or gloat over them. That period of his life formed and shaped him to be the leader God had made him to be.

Taking all of this into consideration, one can see how the he was created, formed and prepared for the task of his life. God literally used Josph to save His people from certain extinction. The famine would have no doubt destroyed the people of God, but Josph's gifting and life experience set him up to lead the nation of Egypt to store food in such a way that not only Egypt survived but more importantly the family of God survived. Everything that Joseph had been through, learned and supernaturally gifted with came to bear on this task.



This is a powerful example of how the process of “Discovering What You Have Been Sent To Do,” could be applied to one’s own life in regard to what is next. Joseph was not given the option of what to do next, He was involuntarily placed in that role without his own choosing. While non-volitional hardship is not an essential feature of all formative experiences, Joseph’s example shows the importance of being able to process what the Lord has brought one through in their life and their gifting and personality. In turn, this self-realization will help direct Christians towards greater involvement in the mission of God.

As one participant, Zach, contemplated his life journey there was one story that seemed to shape everything else that would come. It flowed out of a Formative Failure. As a senior in high school he was taking important tests. He was introduced to a means of cheating on the test and unfortunately he succumbed to temptation and cheated. Immediately following this, he felt guilty and embarked on a confession tour that included his administration, his caretakers and the college he had been accepted to in order to let the admissions office know of his lapse in character. He says that this singular event shaped him in powerful ways. His story of how he leads his family and his business have been strengthened by that incident. That Formative Failure has been redeemed and used to influence his life. It is no wonder that his Next Steps will continue to be shaped by this story.<sup>128</sup>

## **PUTTING IT TOGETHER**

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<sup>128</sup> Zachary Cochran, Interview by author, Phone conversation, Richmond, Virginia, August 10, 2020.

The final step in the process is to put all the pieces of the puzzle together and create a six month plan of greater involvement in the mission of God for one's life. At this point, a quick review of the take-aways from the Mission of God Diagram are helpful. The mission of God is His working in all of creation for His own glory by spreading His image throughout the earth. From the beginning of the Bible it is clear that God has a mission. As the story unfolds it is evident that His mission has a people. This means that the people of God will always find their most meaningful activity rooted in God's mission. People are created for mission. Not only does God's mission have a people, His people have a place. They have been "sent," somewhere. For Adam and Eve it was being "placed," in the Garden. For the Israelites it was being "led," to the Promised Land and for the Church it is being "sent," to the nations. Lastly God's people have a purpose. There is a mission and purpose for all of God's people which is why the second phase of the process is so important.

"Discovering What You Have Been Sent To Do," is about taking into consideration how God has wired the individual by looking at one's personality. Everyone has a personality and when someone becomes a Christian they are also gifted by the Spirit for the purpose of God. Considering one's spiritual gifting is vital to understanding and discovering what one has been sent to do in life. Not only has God given a personality and gifts to believers, but each person also has their own formative life story that is meant to be brought to bear on God's mission. The process about "Discovering What You Have Been Sent To Do," is all about finding one's unique values and skill set in order to leverage them for God's mission.

The final part of the process may be the most important because it takes what has been learned and the insight that has been gleaned from the process and turns it into action. Apart from

this last step, disciples would have only been taught about God's mission without ever being trained in engaging it. Not only does Jesus teach his disciples to learn and do their due diligence before a big undertaking, (Luke 24:28) He fully intended His disciples to act! This is said in the context of "taking up one's cross," which has at its core the implication to do something. A practical understanding the mission of God is woefully missing in today's church but to replace it with a practical understanding without intentional action is not the answer.

This process finishes with a six month Game Plan. This plan is informed by the individual's Personality, Gifting, and Life Formation experiences in order to point in the direction of deeper and more meaningful missional engagement. Whereas many Christians have the desire to do "good," or more specifically to engage in God's mission in a deeper way, this process helps them to think holistically about that engagement. God has endowed everyone with unique personalities, and gifts because He wants Christians to deliberately apply them in different ways, but all in furtherance of His mission. In one of the spiritual gift passages, Ephesians 4:11, it says, "And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry to build up the body of Christ."<sup>129</sup> This means that contribution to the larger church comes specifically through the specific gifts given. In other words, the work of an evangelist is different than the work of a pastor. If those two people went through this process and discovered their gifting their six-month plan would be different based on their different gifting. The process helps to bring a more focused intentionality to the specific work or type of work God is calling His people to engage in.

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<sup>129</sup> Ephesians 4:11-12 (HCSB).

## WHAT ARE YOU SENT TO DO?

Personality Summary



Spiritual Gifting Summary



Life Formation Highlights



Next Steps...



Figure #15, Second sheet of “What Are You Sent To Do?”

The Next Steps Game plan needs to be “doable.” This is not the time for lofty, generic, or unquantifiable goals rather for clear steps that can be acted upon. In the early 1980’s, George T. Doran coined the SMART acronym.<sup>130</sup> Doran’s acronym is as follows:

**Specific:** The plan will define your steps in a practical way, not a theoretical way. This answers the “What and Why” of the plan.

**Measurable:** This identifies the criteria for milestones along the way. Measurable answers the “How” of the plan.

**Assignable:** Bringing others into the plan is vital. The whole process is done in community and this part is no exception. Assignment answers the “Who” of the plan.

**Realistic:** Since this process is inherently Christ focused and Spirit-filled, the realistic aspect needs to be framed against the backdrop of the power of God. With that said, realistic goals help root the plan in reality, even if it is God’s reality.

**Time-related:** This aspect of goal setting helps create accountability. It answers the question of “When” the goal and steps toward the goal will take place.

This way of thinking and planning helps to drill down into goals, that move beyond theoretical platitudes and into real actionable steps. Too many Christians want to simply “do better,” but never get to the point of making action plans. Applying the “SMART,” concept to one’s six-month Next Steps is a must in order to move beyond information into transformation.

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<sup>130</sup> G. T. Doran, "There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives," *Management Review*, Vol. 70, Issue 11, pp. 35-36.

Not only do the Next Steps need to be specific and actionable they need to be rooted within community and not just thought through individually. The whole process is done in community with others who will bring deeper insight than would be feasible by going at it alone. In community, the participant needs to be encouraged to consider his whole life, including his specific personality, spiritual gifts, in order to discern the Next Steps.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

There is a disconnect between most Christians understanding of the mission of God and clarity about their place in it. This work bridges the gap between a practical understanding of God's mission and a journey towards greater engagement in His mission. God's mission is for all Christians. Discipleship must include teaching and equipping with God's mission and in His mission.

Participants using this discipleship resource will 1) discover God's mission explained in understandable ways and 2) be led into a discovery process of finding their place in His mission. The end result is greater missional engagement. Empowering and equipping God's people to be sent out in His mission where they live, work, and play is the desire of the writer and at least part of the problem of the American church.

Many groups have gone through this material during the life and ministry of Movement Church. Though it is anecdotal evidence, the writer took a group of Christian men through the material in 2020, and the impact is a picture of what could be across the board if more churches disciplined their people with God's mission in mind. This group is an interesting case study because it is made up of men from a variety of churches and denominations, including Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Anglican.

Through the process of explaining the mission of God with the diagram, it resonated with one participant in particular. Mark liked it so much that he put the diagram on his desk to remind him of the importance of God's mission in his everyday life at work. Not only did the teaching

inform him about the meta narrative of scripture and God's mission, but it motivated him to participate in that mission where he worked. Now God has a more informed and inspired sent one in the business mission field.<sup>131</sup>

The second phase of the process, “Discovering What You Have Been Sent To Do,” proved to be entertaining, informative, and life changing. That process starts with a discovery of one’s personality. As participants got to know their own personalities in a more in-depth way, the other participants got to know each other in a deeper way. The *16 Personality* testing and results allowed for conversations about how people’s personality impacted the way they thought and viewed life. Stories about how they interacted with those around them became opportunities to highlight certain aspects of their personality. The side effect was a deepening of community which served to be an important aspect of this process. Ultimately, God’s mission is given to His people not to individuals. As the group went through this missional process, they grew closer to one another. That is an important aspect about mission; it is done in community and includes a deepening of community.

As the process progressed into the section that helps discover spiritual gifting, many in the group came face to face with spiritual gifts for the first time. A fascinating conversation ensued when combining the spiritual gifting discussion with the personality testing. The group was able to affirm one another in how they saw gifting being expressed through individual personalities.

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<sup>131</sup> Mark Watson, Interview by author, Phone conversation, Richmond, Virginia, August 27, 2020.



Perhaps the most meaningful discussion took place around the “Life Formation” section. In this section participants reflect on their lives and think about those moments that stand out. The reasoning behind this section is that God does not waste significant moments in life, whether painful moments or joyous. As each participant shared, there were stories that were recounted that had never be shared with others before. Zach shared a story that he had not shared with anyone before, and it was so clear how it impacted him and how God redeemed that story in order to be used for greater missional engagement. The group was able to affirm him as they filtered one of his “Life Formation” memories through the lens of his personality and spiritual gifting. There was rich discussion about how that particular story and the lesson learned could be used for God's glory.<sup>132</sup>

The most important part of the whole process is the “Next Steps” aspect. It is here that participants take all that they have learned and put it into a missional action plan. Too many Bible studies and Christian conversations end with an increased knowledge but not necessarily an impact on life. This process ensures that life will be impacted as the action plan is completed. Corey said that he had a desire for doing more in mission; however, he felt that it was always generic in the sense that he knew he wanted to do more he just did not know how he could be uniquely used. After going through the process, he said that it made much more sense to consider his personality, gifting, and life experience to be specific in his action plan and to be specific with the uniqueness God had given him. This helped him bring use his personality, gifting, and

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<sup>132</sup> Interview by author, Phone conversation, Richmond, Virginia, August 10, 2020.

life experience to plan his next steps. For him it was not just doing more in mission, it was operating out of his unique “sentness,” in mission.<sup>133</sup>

One surprising fruit of this process was the group’s desire to live out their sentness together by pooling their resources, physically and spiritually, to engage in mission as a group. The commonality of calling surfaced during the process. This one aspect could ignite small groups and churches alike into greater mission as they see the opportunities around them, and bring their uniqueness calling to bear on those opportunities. The group saw their distinctive contributions as well as their common traits and decided to leverage all of that to bring the good news of Jesus to the less fortunate in their city. This would be accomplished through professional job training in order to alleviate poverty in people's lives, and helping them start careers. Since this group was full of professional men they want to use that for God's mission. The different personalities and spiritual gifting created a unique team to engage in mission. This process could help churches or small groups within churches to discover their collective calling in God’s mission.

Whereas the “Next Steps” plan is helpful for thinking about actionable steps, it is incomplete without the accountability that comes along with it. Next steps are only as good as someone is willing to hold them to account. Accountability to do what God has called, equipped, and created is the most important aspect of this process. Too many times Christians are not without good ideas, they are without good accountability structures to ensure those ideas get

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<sup>133</sup> Corey Schroeder, Interview by author, Phone conversation, Richmond, Virginia, August 29, 2020.

implemented. The group has clear lines of accountability for engaging in God's mission in a way that is more aligned with their unique calling.

The answer to the decline of the American church must include closing the gap between Christian's knowledge of God's mission and finding their place in it. Revivals and evangelistic initiatives have their place, but if new believers are brought into the fold without discipling them in mission, the church is stunting their growth and will continue to see their decline within the church.

Every Christian needs to be discipled in God's mission and with this material they can be discipled with the contents of God's mission. His mission has to become the discipleship curriculum for all Christians and not just for those who feel led to go "over there" where ever "over there," is. In other words, God's mission is for all disciples. Jesus commanded His disciples to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."<sup>134</sup> This commission is for all disciples. The implication is that all disciples will be going to the nations until the end of the age. This means they will be living out their sentness, their missionary identity all over the world.

There is a call and desire for God's people to experience revival in today's church. Perhaps, what is needed is a revival of God's mission, His purpose, His intentions, and His known will to be made clear to all disciples. With that knowledge of His mission, His disciples need to understand their role in it and be unleashed to live out their identity as sent ones. The

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<sup>134</sup> "Matthew 28:19-20 (HCSB).

sending God sent His sent people into the world to live out His mission. His mission is succinctly defined as His working in all creation for His own glory by spreading His image throughout the earth. Not only is this clearly understood and demonstrated in His word, He has invited all who are willing to discover their place, purpose, and calling in His mission.

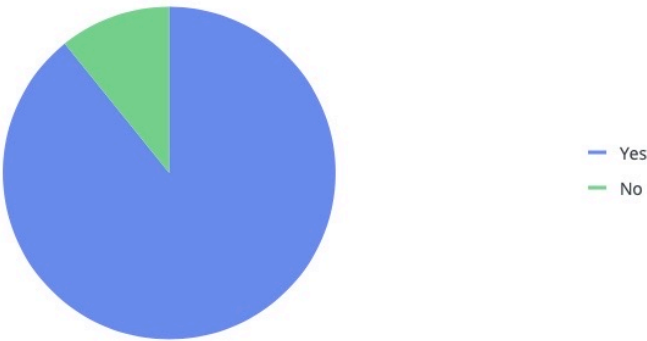
There is much work to be done because there are places in God's creation where His image is not spreading. Thankfully, He has called out His people, filled them with His Spirit, and sent them to the nations with the only message that saves. This mission was not for a select few but the entirety of those who make up His church. The mission is too great for only a select few to embrace it, but, when all of God's people understand His mission and their place in it, then it is a force like none other.

APPENDIX A

Research Questions and Results

Can you articulate the Mission of God in a succinct way?

37 Responses



| ANSWERS | RESPONSES |
|---------|-----------|
| Yes     | 33 (89%)  |
| No      | 4 (11%)   |

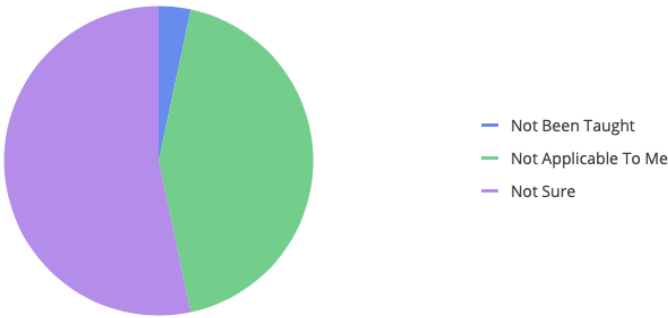
### **If yes, what is it?**

- The mission of God is to bring glory through Himself through His reigning and moving (in love) in the lives of His people.
- I'd say God's mission is to bring glory to Himself by spreading his image -- He did so in creation, which was initially a perfect representation of Him, but after sin marred creation, He sent Christ to redeem it. Now we share in His mission by being and making disciples who spread His image and represent Him in the world.
- To share with those God's put in our lives/path the hope of eternal salvation from our sins that can only come thorough the acceptance of what Christ did on the cross on our behalf.
- To redeem all of creation from sin and evil
- TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO US AND THROUGH OUR CONFESSION OF OUR SINS AND COMMITTING OUR LIVES TO JESUS WE WILL BE ABLE TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BY HIS GRACE AND MERCY.
- John 3:16 for God so loved the world He sent His Only Son that who so ever believes has ever lasting life. Therefore it is our mission to go into the ends of the world and share this gospel, which is the power of God for salvation.
- to bring his children back to him after this life
- To create disciples to teach and spread the word of God.
- To restore mankind as it was when he created us in the beginning. His plan is the Bible and it tells us how he will.
- The redemption of all creation in the Son through the Spirit to the glory of the Father
- Preach the gospel to all people.
- God sent His one and only son, Jesus Christ to the world because man rebelled against God's perfect plan and sinned. Christ gave his life as a perfect sacrifice for sin, rising 3 days later in victory over sin and death such that all who believed in Him and repented would be saved and reconciled to God as co-heirs in heaven.
- To redeem humankind for His glory and our salvation through his son Jesus.
- Taking the Gospel to everyone, we are to be disciples making disciples
- God created us to worship Him. God's mission is to love us, provide justice and rule over heaven and earth. He desires a right relationship.
- On this earth, it would be to redeem/reclaim all creation to Himself through human agents with the ultimate goal of all glory being laid upon God Himself. This is only possible through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- For His church to reach the world with the one true gospel, and that His church would bring glory to Him.
- The Mission of God is the Great Commission. God has given this command to His Children and it is a Command we MUST OBEY! Matthew 28:18-20
- Love
- My interpretation of the mission of god has confused by all the surrounding elements of the world and it's hard to decipher what the real mission of God looks in the current space we find ourselves in.
- Dunno
- the mission of God is to seek and save that which was lost.

- Restore man's relationship with God through salvation
- The mission of God is to bring glory to him self by redeeming and restoring man's relationship with himself. He did this by sending his Son to die for us and now he sends us to proclaim this good news to others. We actively participate in this mission as we are sent as his representatives.
- To Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the Name of the Father , Son, and Holy Spirit and teach them all He has commanded and He will be with us always
- God's mission has been one of rescue and reconciliation since the very beginning of creation when Adam and Eve chose to subvert God's authority and sin against Him. We see through our broken world that Adam and Eve's sin forever marred the relationship between God and mankind, yet God would send his Son, Jesus, to be the atonement for sin and reconcile man's relationship with his Creator as our intermediary. Following Jesus' resurrection, God's mission to redeem the lost is carried out through His disciples, who have surrendered their heart to God and follow the ways of Jesus to share the good news with others that salvation is freely given to everyone who accepts God as Lord of their life.
- To reveal Himself to His creation
- God created the world and mankind to relate to and represent God and it was perfect. Man's sin corrupted/marred that relationship and a perfect sacrifice was required to re-establish that relationship. God chose Abraham and his descendants who would fail and eventually reject the Son of God / Jesus a descendant of Abraham. Jesus disciplined 12 men to spread the good news. When Christ arose on the 3rd day his sacrifice satisfied God's justifiable wrath. Jesus took on the sins of the world and calls everyone who believes this to go out and spread the good news of what Christ did for us on the cross.. I am called to make disciples
- God is in the process of redeeming a fallen world through Jesus and he sends those he redeemed as ministers of reconciliation to others. Life on life, we help others see, hear, and experience God's redemptive work.
- The mission of God is to make believers in Jesus Christ. God wants people to give their lives and heart to Jesus. Follow Jesus and lead others to Jesus
- We were created in the image of God to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth with His glory. Through the authority of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit we are to go make disciples of all nations to bring Glory to God our Creator.
- Experience God's love through a relationship and faith in Jesus.
- The unification of all people together and with him and Christ
- I think... the mission is His glorification.
- To join human souls to himself through salvation through Jesus Christ.

If no, why not?

30 Responses



ANSWERS

RESPONSES

Not Been Taught

1 (3%)

Not Applicable To Me

13 (43%)

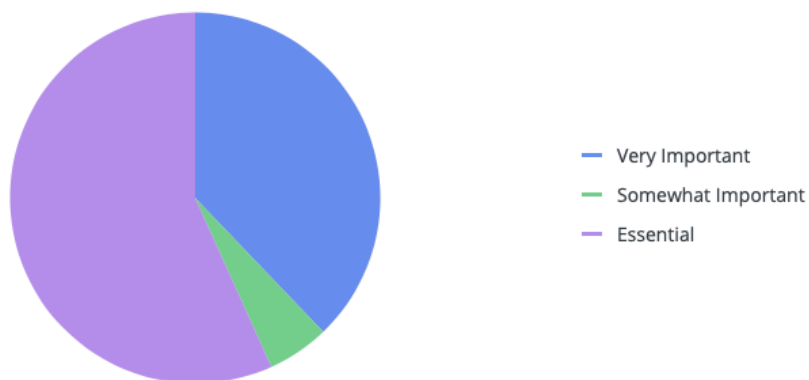
Not Sure

16 (53%)



## How important is it for Christians to understand the Mission of God?

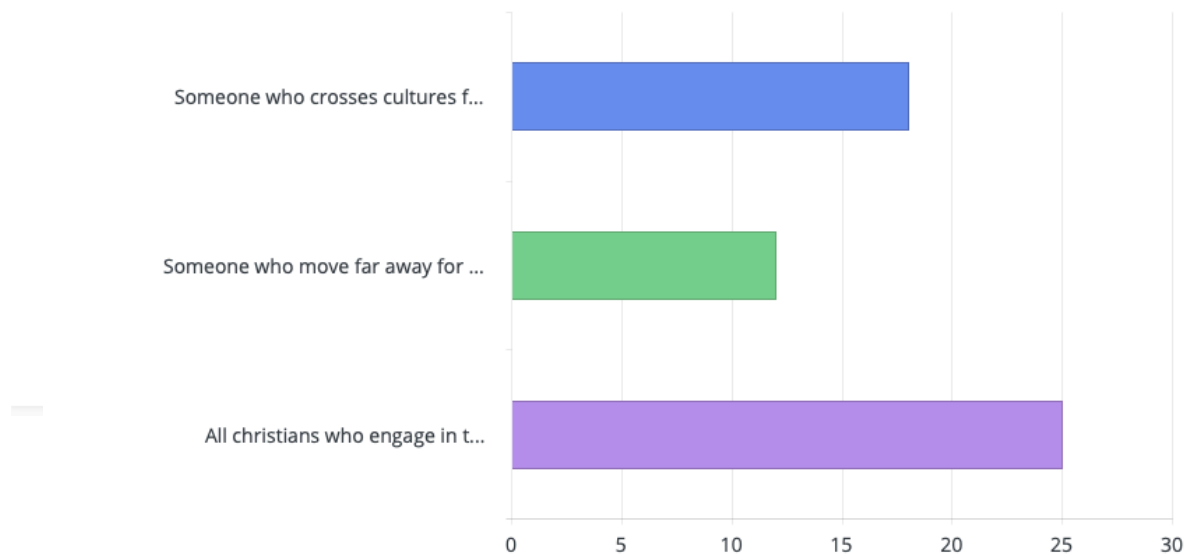
37 Responses



| ANSWERS            | RESPONSES |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Very Important     | 14 (38%)  |
| Somewhat Important | 2 (5%)    |
| Essential          | 21 (57%)  |

## How Do you define a missionary?

30 Responses



### ANSWERS

Someone who crosses cultures for the sake of the gospel.

Someone who move far away for the sake of the gospel.

All christians who engage in the mission of God.

### RESPONSES

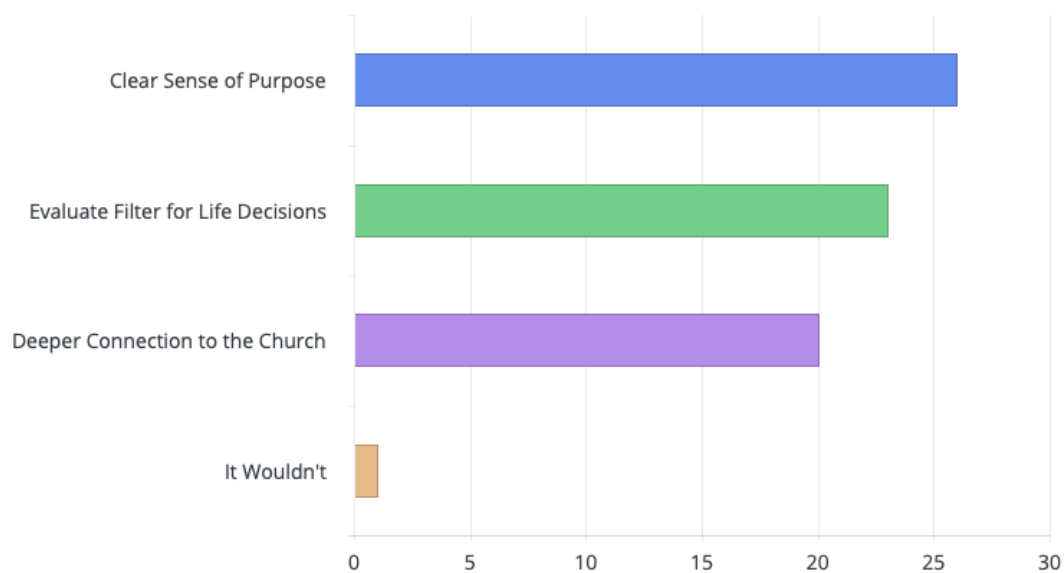
18 (60%)

12 (40%)

25 (83%)

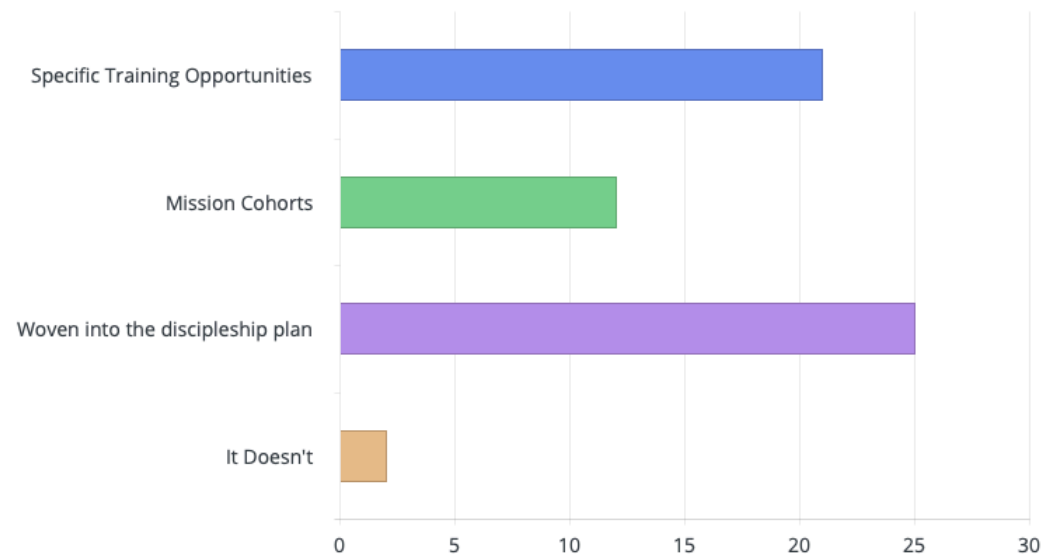
## How would an understanding of the Mission of God help you live life to its fullest?

30 Responses



# How does your church equip its members for mission?

30 Responses



ANSWERS

RESPONSES

Specific Training Opportunities

21 (70%)

Mission Cohorts

12 (40%)

Woven into the discipleship plan

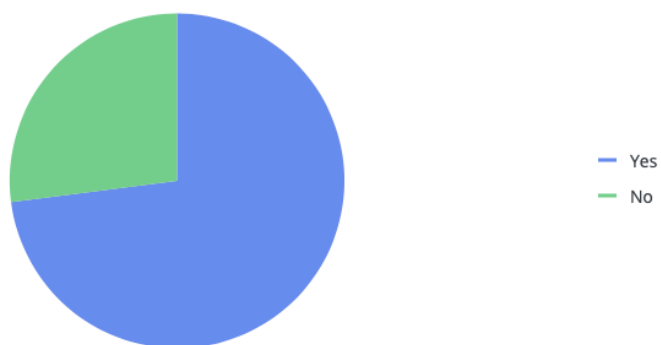
25 (83%)

It Doesn't

2 (7%)

Have you been discipled/taught to recognize your spiritual gifts and see how they fit into the Mission of God?

37 Responses



ANSWERS

RESPONSES

Yes

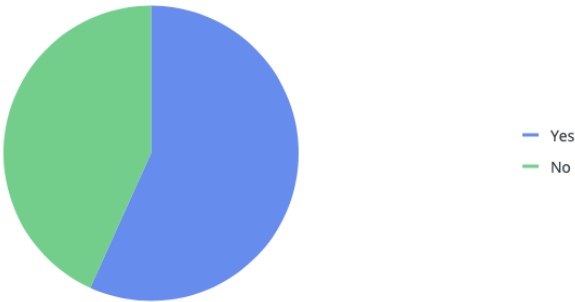
27 (73%)

No

10 (27%)

Has your church trained you to investigate how your personality fits within finding your place in the mission of God?

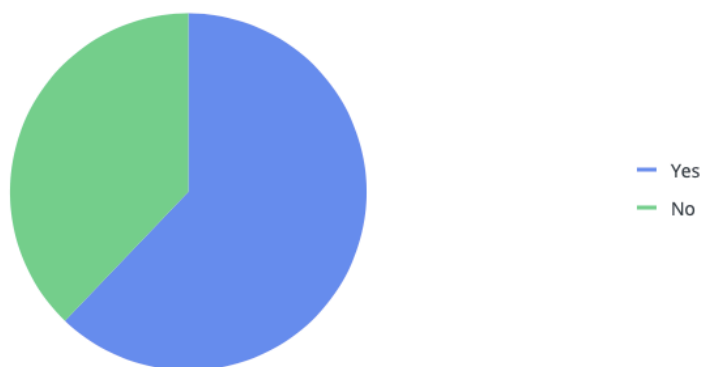
37 Responses



| ANSWERS | RESPONSES |
|---------|-----------|
| Yes     | 21 (57%)  |
| No      | 16 (43%)  |

Has your church helped you process your life story to see how your past opportunities can help you discover your future opportunities with the mission of God?

37 Responses



#### ANSWERS

Yes

No

#### RESPONSES

23 (62%)

14 (38%)

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