

Harvest Christian Fellowship  
March 25, 2012  
Theology @ 9  
"Mission"  
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## Mission

### Christ Sends The Church Into The World

To say that the church has a mission is to say that it has a responsibility and calling to something. What is that something, what is it that it is sent to do? Simply put, the church's mission is to be witness-bearers to its King, Jesus.

#### Carrying on the Apostolic mission

A few weeks back, we had a lesson on Apostles. In that lesson, we examined the identifying marks of an apostle and the subsequent unique role that they had. In short, the call to be witness-bearers was originally given to those men; and has been handed down to the church throughout the ages. Let's take another look at how that progression took place.

\*Just to be on the "up and up", you might notice that this section was "copy/past -ed" from the "Apostles" lesson. That was intentional; not to be lazy, but rather to give us context in this discussion, and to highlight the interconnectedness of all of the lesson topics that we have covered in this Theology@9 time.

While the Great Commission is applied to Christians today, as it rightly should be, it was given first of all to the apostles. Remember what we have already talked about concerning what was unique about the apostles; and tie that into the fact that Christianity – the spreading of its message and the building of the church (those who would accept the message, Acts 2:41) - was in its infancy. Thus...

- In the beginning stages, Christ chose a select few to directly and intimately share His message with
- These then had first-hand, reliable information
- They were the initial agent of spreading the message
- They were the bottom-line earthly authorities and guardians in regard to what was of God or not, and what was true to the message or not

As the recognized witnesses, the apostles spread the message of Christ most directly through public preaching and personal evangelism. But as the message spread and the church kept growing, need arose for the apostles to multiply their influence and witness-bearing:

- They appointed elders in each church
  - *Acts 14:23 – Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

- The elders were to shepherd and oversee the flock/church – through love and ministry, but first of all by preserving the message as it had been given and teaching the people the same
- The elders would then pass on the teaching to other trustworthy men
  - *2 Timothy 1:8-13 and 2:2*
  - “entrusting” and “reliable” imply that these men will also preserve the message as Christ gave it
  - So you see the message and its fruit multiplying – God to Christ, Christ to apostles, apostles to elders, elders to others of strong character, and then the whole of the church equipped to bear witness (*Ephesians 4:11-13*)

The church, then, carries on the work of the apostles in the progression of God’s eternal purpose, bearing witness as the body of Christ – devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching as one of the primary pillars of what it means to be the church.

### **How we (the church) fulfill our mission**

#### Perspective

The mission given to the apostles, and thus now to the church, is not just something that we do. It is not a religious task or obligation that we add to our schedule. While it for sure necessitates specific action, it is more than that – it is a new perspective of life. Witness-bearing is not a part of our life, but it becomes the very essence of life - how we interpret life as a whole. This mindset shapes the pursuits and content of our lives. What we do flows out of who we are.

#### Words

We must actually use words and conversation with others in order to teach them about Christ and help them to understand the message of the Gospel (and all He had to say). While our lives should be consistent with our words, our lives cannot **replace** our words. Put another way, people will not comprehend the specific claims and expectations of the Gospel – and so put their faith in historic and God-revealed truth – simply by observing you live “the Christian life”. They need to be taught about the person and character of God, man’s sin as an offense to that character, man’s separation from God because of sin and his inability to remedy this situation, who Jesus was and how He could remedy the situation between God and man, how to receive the remedy, and where to go from there. Do we really think that our family, friends, and neighbors will grasp this message just through us going to church or not cussing?! No! We must proclaim the Gospel accurately.

I don’t want to insult your intelligence, and there is no formula for speaking the Gospel, but let’s review the foundational elements necessary when we are relating the message to others:

- God – Creator (Superior One – all authority); character (holy – set apart and perfect)
- Man – has not kept and unable to keep God’s perfect standard (sinful); helplessly and hopelessly separated from his creator (headed to judgment)
- Jesus

- Came to earth in form of man, and did what we have to do in order to be right with God – lived a perfect life
- As the perfect human, He became the appropriate, sufficient, and effective sacrifice for us
  - As perfect one, only He able to substitute for our punishment – otherwise would just be receiving punishment due himself
  - His perfection placed on us – God sees us as perfect because the perfection of the perfect one credited to the imperfect
- The transaction (being credited with the righteousness of Christ – salvation)
  - This transaction takes place by faith/repentance only
  - This transaction ultimately to display the glory of God

This explaining and clarifying of the message of Christ is to be done to our own families, our community, and throughout the earth. Also, it is to be done corporately – through the preaching and worship of the gathered church; and individually – through personal evangelism.

### Our Lives

We just concluded that our lifestyle on its own is not enough to effectively bear witness to Christ and fulfill our mission, but it is a necessary part of the equation. Two aspects of our lives carry particular weight:

- Holiness
  - *1 Peter 1:14-16 – As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*
  - *1 Peter 2:11-12 – Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.*
  - Our righteousness points to Christ, and provides credibility for our words
- Love; Acts of Mercy/Compassion
  - *Matthew 5:13-16 – You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*
  - *Luke 6:35-36 – But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

- *James 2:18b-19 – Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.*
- Our acts of mercy display our faith, are a natural product of our faith, and emulate the compassion shown by Jesus to all people throughout the Gospels; thus they are a tool of witness-bearing.
- The meeting of physical needs, however, is not the goal in and of itself; this ministry is to be a sign of and to the Gospel. Social ministry is good, but cannot ultimately benefit a person without being tied to the Gospel.
- Freedom House is a great example of proper “social ministry”
- These good works are to be done corporately and individually, and directed both to those within the body and those outside of the body

### **Some additional points**

There are a couple of other roles of the church that are worth mentioning here; though they don't precisely fit into “mission” in the sense of “being sent out”, they most assuredly do in the sense of being purposes of the church.

### The nurture of believers

So far, most of what we have looked at is geared toward making converts; but the church's responsibility does not end with someone being saved – it continues in the call to make disciples. (*Matthew 28:18-20*)

The nurture of believers is care-filled training, nourishment, and protection geared toward the believers' following of Christ in maturity and abundance. It includes:

- Teaching of the word to build up knowledge leading to faith
- Meeting of physical and material needs – reflecting Christ's compassion and care
- Encouragement – adding to the believers' resolve to follow Christ
  - Accountability
  - Comfort and Peace

Through this community love and edification, witness is born to the observing world.

*John 13:34-35 – A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

### Worship of The One True God

According to information given in a previous Theology@9 lesson, worship is the due response of rational creatures to the self-revelation of their Creator; and the activity of glorifying God in His presence with our voices and hearts. We, the church, worship (exalt as supreme) the God of Scripture based on the covenant relationship whereby God has bound Himself to those whom He has saved and claimed.

When it is all said and done, we exist and were redeemed to worship God, “for the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:12). That is the over-arching witness. Indeed, we can worship individually; and we can worship through the activities and purposes we have been discussing. However, the formal, intentional gathering of the body for worship carries powerful testimony and should not be neglected.

### **Final thoughts**

We should take notice of the interplay of the different ways to bear-witness. We are worshipping when we obediently take the Gospel to hearers, live righteously, participate in ministry, and nurture one another. And, we are giving testimony about God through our formal worship. Each are a part of the church’s mission, which is ordained by God and carried out in and to the world – all to bring glory to God in every corner of creation.

Sources consulted:

Concise Theology by J.I. Packer

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem

“Theology@9” handout – “Worship”