

EVANGELISM & MISSIONS: THE SHARED VALUE OF CHURCH PLANTING, OUTREACH, & GLOBAL MISSIONS

DAVE TAYLOR

The book of Revelation calls out in a loud voice:

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God”(Rev. 19:6-9).

One day, all of creation will explode with a mighty shout. A great multitude will call out in one immense voice, “*Hallelujah! For the Lord God Almighty reigns.*” Finally, the redeemed will all be in one place, of one mind, and calling out with one voice before the audience of One.

After millennia, the thundering throng will emphatically rejoice that the wait is over. Man is now with God, and God is forever with man. And what better way to inaugurate the new age than to have a party. Not just a party

for the ages, but one that surpasses all others from any age.

The Bride is ready, and the Lamb has come, for the great drama of redemption will have come to a definitive end. The story of redemption will be complete, and the story of glorification will just be beginning. A story of no more tears, no more sadness, no more pain, but instead unbridled joy upon joy!

As John took in this scene, I can imagine that he looked at the angel at this point and shook his head as if to say, "I'm not sure how to describe this? Where even to begin?" And so the angel speaks out, maybe even with a smile, saying, "*Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*"

Blessed indeed. Eternally blessed. How astoundingly true that is. What a marriage supper of the Lamb this will be!

Incredibly it is to us, you and me, that the Lord has given the privilege of giving out the invites.

*The work of missions
is God's passion and
God's work.*

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

There are so many invitations still to be given out, both in our neighborhoods and in the nations. Yet, for so many of us, if we're honest, we quickly get distracted. There are hundreds of other things that compete daily for our attention and distract us away from the reality of this Great Commission. In truth, for most, if not all of us, the opportunity of giving out these invites can itself be intimidating and daunting. Intimidating as we consider the vast world that stands before us, and daunting as we look back at ourselves in the mirror and come face to face with our very own weaknesses and fears.

The work of missions, however, is God's passion and God's work. He has a passion to call worshippers from every tribe, language, people, and nation,

and Scripture is full of that passion.

So unsurprisingly, his word gives us everything we need for this great endeavor. In his Word, we find a wealth of principles and imperatives that give shape to our mission, as well as great confidence to our souls. Once again, we find that the Lord who calls us also lovingly provides us with everything we need.

1. The Power of the Gospel

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most powerful good news: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

It can be so easy to write people off when it comes to Christianity, or at least put them in the 'highly unlikely' category. The guy you play soccer with on the weekends who looks as if he might have just got out of jail for grievous bodily harm. The neighbors who you've been reaching out to who look on the face of it to have it all and tell you as much when you talk to them. They're just so happy and feel complete and content, yet without Jesus. The work colleague who is a practicing homosexual and is openly pro-everything you're not. You name it, he passionately thinks the opposite and is glad to let you know about it. Or the student who you see at college wearing a full Burka, revealing only her eyes through a thin slit in her face veil. She keeps to herself throughout campus.

They all seem so unlikely ever to follow Jesus, but the power of the gospel means we ought never write people off. The gospel is a powerful message that is for all people everywhere. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Paul knows this because his own testimony proves it.

Prior to salvation, Paul was the church's most determined opponent. He hated Christ and his followers with a passion. So when we first encounter Paul in Acts 7, we see him holding people's coats at Stephen's martyrdom, "*in hearty agreement with all that was taking place*" (Acts 7:58). After that, he left Jerusalem, heading to Damascus, in hot pursuit of followers of 'the Way,' so he could find them and hurt them and ravage them with persecution.

He was the most unlikely of people to ever become a Christian. Yet he was

no match for the unstoppable power of God. In Acts 9, on the road to Damascus, he encountered the risen Christ and was radically converted. In a moment, he went from gospel persecutor to gospel proclaimer and gave his life to following and serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the earliest days of Sovereign Grace Churches, “keeping the main thing, the main thing” has been our mantra, and together we have resolved to “know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). The centrality of the gospel is vital for all of life, including our mission. Human sin is stubborn, but the gospel contains the power to save anyone; its reach is without limits or borders. What a powerful weapon we all hold in our hands!

2. The Centrality of the Church

The gospel is too valuable a message for us to be sent out into the world as lone rangers: a gospel message in our hands, the Great Commission in our hearts, and every man for himself. No, the beauty of God’s great plan is that he not only saves individuals but also brings people together. He not only justifies, he joins people together in the community of the church (Eph. 2:19-22). Together in the local church, striving side by side in the gospel, we display the manifold wisdom of God to the heavenly places (Eph. 3:10-11) and God’s glory to those around us (Matt. 5:14-16).

It is clear in the pages of Scripture that the church is the vehicle God has chosen to take the message of the gospel to every generation and people. The church community is where we learn to love God and others, where we are strengthened and transformed by the truth of the Word, where we’re taught to pray, worship, and serve. This is where we invest our time and abilities for eternity. This is where we grow in our roles as friends, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, and fathers and mothers. As C.H. Spurgeon puts it, the church is “the dearest place on earth.” Likewise, it is also the institution that God has called and commissioned to take the gospel to the nations, both the reached and the unreached (Acts 2:21-47; 14:1-23; 18:8; 19:20).

Therefore, the local church, rather than individual Christians, mission agencies, or parachurch organizations, bear primary responsibility for evangelism and missions. This in no way diminishes the important role that agencies and organizations can and do play. We are indebted to them in Sovereign Grace for the passion and expertise they bring to mission. But we must always remember the truth Andy Johnson states well:

The church was God's idea. It is his one and only organizational plan for world missions. Most of all, it is his beloved Son's beloved, blood-bought bride. Consequently, any humanly invented organizations that assist in mission must remember that they are the bridesmaids, not the bride. They are the stagehands, not the star. That position and honor has been given by Christ to his church, and only to his church.¹

Evangelism and missions always begins in the local church and ultimately results in new local churches. It is clear in Scripture that the church is the vehicle that God has chosen to take the message of the gospel to our neighborhoods and nations. How kind of the Lord then that we get to do this together. We are far more fruitful together!

3. The Faithfulness of God

*You and I are never
alone. Right to the end
of the age, the Spirit
is always with us.*

The most inspiring and faith-building provision of all is the reality that in this great endeavor, Jesus also gives us himself.

"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28.20)

What an incredible discovery this is!
It's so easy to feel daunted and intimi-

dated in our mission as we seek to be a friend of sinners and proclaim to them the glorious gospel. We can sometimes feel alone in this Great Commission.

But don't believe it for a moment. You and I are never alone. Right to the end of the age, the Spirit is always with us. More than that, Jesus, the King of the Nations himself, is more than sufficient to empower and equip us for all we face. Colossians 1:15-20 reminds us just how incredible a reality this is:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn in all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all

1. Andy Johnson, *Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 26.

things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross (Col. 1:15-20).

Jesus alone is supreme in personhood, supreme in creation, supreme in the church, and supreme in salvation. How incredible it is to know that he is with us! We are never alone. The true King of the Nations is always with us. What a happy and faith-building reality that is!

Missions Exists Because Worship Doesn't

John Piper famously writes:

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.²

Missions exists because worship doesn't. Missions exists because so many people in our neighborhoods and nations have yet to receive invites to the incredible marriage supper of the Lamb. So many people still haven't heard.

So let's give out the invites from Brazil to Benin, Canada to China, India to Italy, Mexico to Malawi, South Korea to Spain, Thailand to Turkey, and the United States to the United Kingdom. The gospel is powerful, the church is central, and the Lord is faithful. Ours is the privilege to give out our invites to the audience of the one who can save even the least of these.

2. John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad* (Westmont, IL: IVP, 2010), 15.

DAVE TAYLOR

Dave Taylor is senior pastor of [Sovereign Grace Church of Sydney](#) (Sydney, Australia). He also serves as the Director of Emerging Nations for Sovereign Grace Churches.