CONVERSATIONS WE NEED TO HAVE

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Category: Observations

Let's start off with an outrageous statement; "mission is not a biblical concept". That isn't to say that the things that missionaries and/or mission agencies do are not found in the Bible, but there is no one overarching description of something called mission.

Some people argue that the word mission is derived from the Latin word for "send" and so mission can be traced back to the Biblical concepts of God sending his people into the world. However, even if such arguments from derivation had any value the historical progression of the term undermines them. Mission was first used in its modern religious sense to describe the commission of Jesuit missionaries by the Pope. It was the same word used for other diplomatic envoys and cannot be traced back to the Bible. If you are interested in following this through in detail, then Michael Stroope explores this theme in detail in this interview and the books linked to in the notes.

Now, although I've argued that mission is not a biblical term *per se*, this does not mean that I don't think it is a useful term. To be honest, my mind isn't made up on that one, but the reality is that we are probably stuck with it.

So where am I going with this? The thing is, because mission is not a term which is described in the Bible, we have no easy definition of what it actually consists of. There are those who would see it as being restricted to the great commission commands at the ends of the Gospels and the start of Acts, while others would see mission as being derived from the whole of Scripture. Good cases can be made for either of these positions and we need to be charitable towards those who see things differently.

The thing is, there are many other areas in which people differ in their views of what mission is and how it should be carried out. Some examples are, the role of the local church and/or mission agencies, the interaction between local and global-cross-cultural mission, the future of western missionaries as the world church grows and flourishes... and the list goes on.

The thing is, mission is not a clear cut issue; there is space for argument and discussion. However, to a great extent, I don't see these discussions taking place. A great deal of mission discourse takes place from entrenched positions where people promote and defend their own ideas, without listening to what others have to say. Also, many mission practitioners are far too busy practitioning to stop, discuss and reflect.

One opportunity for stepping outside of our comfort zones occurs on May the 11th with the Global

Connections Passion for Mission Event. The blurb says:

> ***What if we really listened?***
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> *The world has had to adapt considerably in recent times. We have had little control over circumstances and restrictions are often dictating decisions, but the need to connect with others is stronger than ever and one way we can do this is to take a step back, to switch off from the noise, and to listen. To really listen.*
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> *The wise words shared by James in James 1:19 remain challenging to us today, so letâ€™s take note and consciously take the time to listen to global voices who have experienced missional challenges first-hand, who have had to adapt and evolve with ever-changing situations beyond their control â€“ perhaps together we will learn something insightful!*



There is a lot more to be said on this question, but why not sign up for the day?