# MISSION IS GOD'S NOT OURS

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**Category:** Observations

However you define it, mission is first and foremost a "God thing". It is carried out by the will of the Father, on the authority of the Son and in the power of the Spirit. The purpose is to bear witness to Jesus and to bring glory to the Triune God.

There is nothing particularly controversial in saying this. However, some of the implications of this basic premise are a little on the uncomfortable side.

The way that the Western mission movement tends to be organised means that people and organisations tend to assume that they are the ones responsible for certain aspects of mission. We have organisations that are focussed on specific parts of the world or on particular ministries and the assumption can develop that they are the experts in their field and that they can be viewed as the "gatekeepers" for whatever it is that they do. This is reinforced by the way in which many missionaries are funded; they have to write good convincing letters about their work in order to ensure a flow of prayer and financial support. Whether intentionally or not, these letters can imply that the particular missionaries are at the centre of whatever it is they are involved in and others are peripheral to it.

While Western agencies tend to be able to work pretty well together, this sense of ownership can make it very difficult for historic mission agencies to work with newer, indigenous groups who see things in very different ways to them. Even the language we use can illustrate our sense of ownership. Agencies talk about handing responsibility over to the "national church". The responsibility was never theirs to pass on - God is in charge.

Of course, not all agencies and missionaries think in these terms, but the temptation is always there. If God is in charge of mission and if the church is changing rapidly, then we are going to need to learn to hold on very loosely to any ideas we have about who should be doing what and where.