MISSION AS A TASK?

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Category: Observations

Popular mission literature and mission agency publicity is full of comments about "finishing the task" or "completing the great commission". Regular readers of Kouyanet will know that I am more than a little allergic to this sort of language (try this and this for examples).

With this in mind, I found the chapter by Ken Baker in Advancing Models of Mission to be very helpful and I'll give a few example quotes below. Before I do this, just a quick note, if you disagree with the quotes, please go away and read the whole thing in context. I obviously can't reproduce the whole chapter in a blog post and there is much more to what he says and why he says it than can be reproduced in a few one liners.

> *People do not live in â€œpeople groupsâ€ ; they live in specific places in space and time. People live in communities.*

> *I propose that the main concern lies in casting the Great Commission as a task. We have shaped it as something for us to do and finish. A task is necessarily linear, procedural, and agenda-driven, which means that â€œmeasuringâ€ and â€œcompletingâ€ naturally take a central focus. The mere conceptualization of the Great Commission as a task molds involvement toward measurable goals, seemingly discounting the limitations of such empiricism.*

> *The focus on quantification is an unfortunate example of the axiom that if we canâ€™t measure what is truly important (that is, transformative kingdom values), then we make important what we can measure.*

> *The task perspective clearly sets a tone of doing and measuring how we are doing. We cannot avoid it, since the task mindset resonates well with Western cultural values of goal-setting, linear productivity, efficiency, etc.*

> *Likewise, while task-oriented approaches and methods unfold in global contexts, they are largely conceived and promoted by those who are guests in the Majority World.*

> *Of course, there is a task aspect of global kingdom engagement; there is much to do. The problem, though, is seeing our involvement as only a task.*

> *I propose that we are better prepared for global engagement when we see our involvement as a role to live, instead of (only) a task to do.*

> *Role focuses on who we are as much as on what we do.*

> *As much of Scripture attests, the people of God have always had this roleâ€"i.e., a people among whom God dwells and through whom God intends to display an authentic witness of himself before the world.*

> *When we shape the goal as â€œfinishing the task,â€ we focus more on the expansion of the kingdom than on its character. But the character of the King must accompany the expansion of his kingdom.*