BIBLE AND MISSION: REALIGNMENT

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Category: Mission

Reading the Bible and taking on board the story of God's engagement with creation helps to realign the Church with God's mission. This is the third part in a mini-series on the Bible and Mission.

I would argue that biblically speaking, it is the Church, not the individual (and their *missionary call*) and not the missionary agency, which is the main agent for God's mission on the earth. I don't have time and space to unpack this here, but you can see a dialogue on some of the issues here.

Part of the role of the Scriptures is to equip the Church for their role in mission. The Bible is not there to make us feel good or to help us lead fulfilled lives. As Brian wrote on Twitter:

> *Reading the Scripture is not a means of self-actualization, rather it is a means of personal conversion to God.*

However, it is very easy for churches and individuals to read the Scriptures and purely think about themselves and their own needs.Â We must consciously read and teach the Scriptures on behalf of others. Brian (him again) has written a fewÂ interesting things along these lines:

> *Too many sermons merely preach to the choir of those who already agree with them. A missional approach to the Bible reminds us that the message of the Scripture is for both insiders and outsiders to the Gospel message. The Bible is interested in converting all of its hearers. How does an â€œinsiderâ€ need to be converted? Insiders need to be called constantly to realign themselves with ongoing movement of the Gospel into the world as God seeks those who are lost. (read more)*
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> *A missional reading demands a reading of the text from within a context of mission in which Christ followers are engaged not merely with increasing their own grasp of their own faith but are actively engaged with the World in order to make disciples of Jesus. Christian education therefore needs to have as its goal the making of disciples in the biblical sense of the world:* ***disciples who follow Jesus in the mission of making more disciples****. (read more)*
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> *Missional preaching centers around Godâ€™s call to insiders to realign themselves to the ways of God and Godâ€™s call to outsiders to align themselves to the ways of God. (and more)*

One of the problems with our approach to Scripture is that we tend to come to the Bible looking for answers to specific problems, but this is not really the correct way to approach it, as I wrote a while ago:

> *We often turn to the Bible looking for answers to specific questions (and God, graciously, sometimes answers them) but the Bible can do much more than that for us. Repeated*

> *exposure to the Bible, we can develop a world view which is shaped by Godâ€™s thoughts â€“ not our own. This allows us to see things the way that God would see them, and so we can answer the questions ourselves. The Bible doesnâ€™t simply give us the answers â€“ the Bible gives us the tools to know the answers for ourselves â€“ this is much more powerful.*

The Bible does not align us to God's purposes by giving us a book of answers and instructions. Rather, as we soak up the Scriptures, the Spirit works in our lives to renew our minds (Romans 12:2) and to change our way of thinking. Because of this, we need to remember that the Bible is first of all about God, not about mankind.

A final thought about how all of this applies to Bible translation:

> *It strikes me, that just as we can translate the Scriptures to make them more useful; so the Scriptures translate us with the same aim in mind.Â God has taken us from one kingdom to another, but we are constantly in need of transformation so that we reflect the context of the kingdom of God.Â The Holy Spirit, through the Scriptures, translates us into the language and culture of our new situation so that we are more useful and better fitted for the purpose God has for us. As God works in our lives, we remain ourselves, but we become more and more aligned to the culture of the Kingdom, and less aligned to the culture of the world around us.*
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> *A final, additional thought: perhaps if we spent more time wondering how the Bible was translating us, and less time arguing over which translation was the best, the English speaking church might be in a stronger position. (read the whole post)*

Michael Goheen has written an excellent paper which covers much of the material in the last two posts on this series. You can download it here.