THE PRODUCT AND GUIDE OF MISSION: WHAT?

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Category: The Product and Guide of Mission

After a brief hiatus, I want to resume my series on the Bible as the Product and Guide of Mission. The first few posts in this series have focussed on the observation that the Bible itself is a product of missional activity (writing, engagement and BibleFresh). For the next couple of posts, I'd like to concentrate on looking at the Bible as our guide for mission.

The first point that I would like to make is that the Bible, and by that I mean the whole Bible - not just a few verses at the end of Matthew, should be our guide to what mission is.

In the wonderful The mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative Christ Wright says:

> *The mission of God is what fills the Bible from the brokenness of the nations in Genesis 11 to the healing of the nations in Revelation 21-22. So any mission activity to which we are called must be seen as humble participation in this vast sweep of the historical mission of God. All mission or missions that we initiate, or into which we invest our vocation, gifts, and energies, flows from the prior mission of God. God is on mission, and we, in that wonderful phrase of Paul, are â€œco-workers with God.â€*

In other words, we are called to be co-workers with God in the things that Scripture shows him to be doing. Another quote from Wright illustrates this wonderfully:

> *â€¦ where do we find any justification for imagining that by rightly under taking what the New Testament commands us to do, we are absolved from doing what the Old Testament commands? Why should we imagine that doing evangelism in obedience to the New Testament excludes doing justice in obedience to the Old? Why have we allowed what we call the Great Commission to obscure the twin challenge (endorsed by Jesus himself) of the Great Commandment?*
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> *How can it be suggested that evangelistic proclamation is the only essential mission of the church? It seems impossible to me to justify such reductionism if we intend to sustain any claim to be taking the whole Bible seriously as our authority for mission and as that which defines the content and scope of our mission. Mission belongs to God â€“ the biblical God. The message of mission is to be drawn from the whole of Godâ€™s biblical revelation. So we cannot simply relegate the powerful message of events such as the exodus or institutions like the jubilee to a bygone era. They are an integral part of the biblical definition of Godâ€™s idea of redemption and of Godâ€™s requirement for his redeemed people. We pay no compliments to the New Testament and the new and urgent mission of evangelistic mission it entrusts to us in the light of Christ by relegating the Old Testament and the foundations of mission that it had already laid and that Jesus emphatically endorsed. Whole Christian mission is built on the whole Christian Bible.*

So what is mission? From a Biblical perspective it certainly involves being witnesses of Jesus Christ and teaching people to believe everything that he taught us (Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:20). But the Old Testament stories of the creation and Jubilee show us that caring for the planet is our responsibility; the prophets show us that working for justice and honesty is something that God calls us to do, and Jesus own ministry demonstrates that we need to care for the poor and sick.

The Bible is our guide to mission and we cannot simply reduce the whole of the Bible's teaching to a message of individual salvation and an eschatalogical hope of eternal life. There is an awful lot more to it than that, and our mission must be based on the whole ofÂ Scripture, not just those bits that are currently fashionable in Western Church circles.

Oh, and if you haven't read The mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative, get yourself a copy, read it and give your mind, body and soul a treat!

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