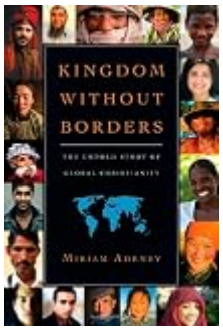
THE BEST BOOKS ON MISSION (AGAIN)

Posted on March 7, 2014 by Eddie

A subjective, but not entirely uneducated, list of the most useful books for anyone interested in studying world mission.
Category: Reviews

This, dear reader, is the definitive list of the best books about world mission. In this case, "definitive" has a rather vague sense and basically means "until I get round to updating it".

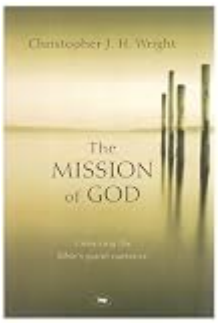
The Best Book On Mission



Without a doubt the best book on mission today isÂ Kingdom Without Borders: The Untold Story of Global ChristianityÂ by Miriam Adeney. That being said, you'll have to work pretty hard to find any mention of mission or missionaries within it's pages. Essentially, it is a book about the world church, or if you like, a book which results from the the success of the 19th and 20th century world mission movement. From my point of view, this book should be compulsory reading for anyone in church or mission leadership. You cannot understand world mission today without taking into account the development of world Christianity (though some try) and, for my money, this is probably the best place to start.

Best Biblical Overview of Mission

Demonstrating regrettable indecisiveness and a failure to understand the meaning of the world "best", I'm actually going to list three books in this category.



First, and most obviously, comes Chris Wright'sÂ *magnum opus;*Â The mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative. This book does what it says on the tin. Rather than starting with the normalÂ *mission texts*, Wright starts with Genesis and demonstrates how mission is a key theme running through the whole of Scripture. He doesn't present a Biblical basis for mission, but a missional basis for the Bible. The downside is that the book is long and heavy; not only will your mind be engaged, but reading it will develop your forearms too! If you are feeling lazy or can't afford another big book, you can download a pdf of a booklet by Chris Wright which covers some of the same themes (but that would be cheating).

Covering similar ground to Wright's book is Dean Flemming's excellentÂ Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing and Telling. Like Wright, Flemming works his way through the Scripture from Genesis to Revelation looking at the theme of mission. Flemming's key thesis is to integrate character, action and proclamation into a holistic view of mission across the whole of the Bible. There is nothing new here, but it is excellently presented.

My final selection in this category isÂ The Message of Mission (The Bible speaks today)Â by Peskett and Ramachandra. The Bible speaks today series are all excellent and this is no exception. Unlike the other two I've mentioned, this does not work through the whole of Scripture but expounds specific texts in order to illustrate various concepts and ideas in mission.

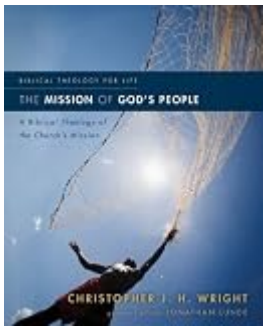
Best Overview of Current(ish) Mission Issues

There is no doubt that the best overview of (more or less) current mission issues is Global Missiology for the 21st Century. It is almost fifteen years old, so it isn't entirely up to date, but it is very comprehensive and it has the wonderful advantage of being a free download. I really can't conceive of any reason why you would not download it (well, perhaps you are on a very expensive internet connection).

The Best History of Mission

This one poses a bit of a problem. I'm sure that the best history of Christian mission is Kenneth Scott Latourette's 24 volume work. However, unless you are a library, you are unlikely to want to give up enough shelf space or money to get hold of it. In which case, you might find a second-had copy of his one volume abridged history (still a weighty tome) but you might prefer to get hold of the Pelican History of Christian Missions by Stephen Neil. Sadly, it seems to be out of print at the moment, but I'm sure that the usual online-second hand book shops would find you a copy. You can't have mine!

Best Book of Mission Praxis



There really is only one contender for this title:Â The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission (Biblical Theology for Life)Â by Chris Wright is absolutely excellent. In some ways it forms a companion volume to the Mission of God which I mentioned above, but it is much more accessible. Essentially, it is an overview of different activities which fall under the head of mission and an explanation of their biblical basis and a short exploration of how they can be carried out. It's another one that needs to be on lots of peoples shelves.

The Best Overview of Mission Theology

There is no getting away from this, it has to beÂ TRANSFORMING MISSION (American Society of Missiology). Bosch is the book! It gives an excellent overview of the development of mission thought historically and a broad canvas of where things are today. Some readers of Kouyant might object that it isn't an Evangelical book, but I would actually argue that this is a part of its value. Much Evangelical mission theology seems to assume that nothing happened before William Carey, thus discarding three quarters of the life and history of the church. By adopting a broader sweep, Bosch allows us to learn from the thoughts (and mistakes) of others which we might be otherwise unaware of.

If you've read Bosch and are looking for something else, you might appreciate:Â Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today (American Society of Missiology)Â orÂ Comprehending Mission: The Questions, Methods, Themes, Problems, and prospects of Missiology (American Society of Missiology).

The Best Overview of the Great Commission

If you are looking for a short, readable and cheap overview of one of the key Bible passages relating to mission, you could do far worse than getÂ The Great CommissionÂ for your Kindle. Then again, if you don't have a Kindle or if you are really mean, you can get the same work for free here.

Closing Thoughts

This is a somewhat updated version of earlier posts on the best books in mission and missiology. It is undoubtedly as flawed as those earlier posts were, but I hope it will give you something to think about. Meanwhile, if you have suggestions of books I've missed, feel free to suggest them in the comments - even better, buy me a copy! If you think the whole list is hopeless, then this is probably a good time to start your own blog and make your own list!