

What in the World are We Doing?

Keeping Our Eye on the Target

Why is this question important?

- “It would be logical to suppose that all the different aspects of the outreach of the church in foreign lands would be united by a common goal. Yet, what a variety of answers would be evoked were we to ask missionaries of the Christian faith throughout the world to define their goal!”
- “Our ultimate goal and the means which we employ to reach the goal are intricately related. If our goal is not clearly defined we may err in the choice of methods employed and fail to realize the true fruit of our labors.”

The Proposed Answer

- The goal of missions is churches planted, not just converts won.
- This is not to minimize or neglect evangelism, but to recognize that evangelism is the first step toward the goal, not the goal itself.

Evidence that Church Planting is the Goal of Missions

1. The Content of the Great Commission, Matt 28:19-20
2. The Backdrop of the Great Commission, Matt 16:18
3. The Implementation of the Great Commission, Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-3; 14:21-23
4. The Description of the Great Commission, 1 Cor 3:5ff
5. The Fulfillment of the Great Commission, Rom 15:19ff

The Content of the Great Commission

- The Command: Make Disciples
- Its Characteristics:
 1. Baptizing them
 2. Teaching them

The Backdrop of the Great Commission

- Context: A Pivotal Moment
 1. First mention of the church (v. 18)
 2. First mention of His death (v. 21)
 3. First mention of His return (v. 27)
- Key: A Promise
 1. About something in the future
 2. That the Lord will do

The Implementation of the Great Commission

- Acts 2:41-47
 1. Received the Word, baptized, added (v. 41)
 2. Devoting themselves to the Apostles' teaching (v. 42)
- Acts 11:19-26
 1. Preaching the Lord Jesus...many believed...the disciples (vv. 20, 21, 26)
 2. They met with the church (v. 26)
- Acts 14:21-23
 1. Evangelize (v. 21)
 2. Edify (v. 22)
 3. Establish assemblies (v. 23)

The Description of the Great Commission

- The “planting” of v. 6 refers to church planting, not evangelism:
 1. Acts is clear that Paul initiated the work at Corinth and was followed by Apollos (19:1).
 2. If Paul is talking about evangelism, it would mean that he didn’t lead these people to Christ, but we know that isn’t true, cf. 1 Cor 4:15.
 3. Verse 10 makes Paul’s point very clearly—“I laid a foundation and another is building on it”
- Paul viewed his missionary work as laying the foundation by establishing local churches.

The Fulfillment of the Great Commission

- Two intriguing statements:
 1. “so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ” (v. 19b)
 - “A claim to have fully preached the gospel of Christ is understandable in this sense, for Paul’s point is that he has finished planting churches where Christ was not named in the area extending from Jerusalem to Illyricum. This hardly means that every village or town heard the gospel” Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 770
 2. “with no further place for me in these regions” (v. 23)
- One clarifying statement: “so that I would not build on another man’s foundation” (v. 20; cf. 1 Cor 3:10)
- Conclusion: Paul viewed his missionary work as foundation laying—the planting of local assemblies which would then assume responsibility for the continued work of the Great Commission.

Implications of the Church Planting Goal for Missions

- NT Missions Must Aim to Plant *New Churches*
- NT Missions Must Aim to Plant *New Indigenous Churches*
 1. Are the churches planted indigenous to the culture in which they are planted, or are they merely a transport of one culture into another?
 2. Was the church planted with the view that it is to assume responsibility for itself? (Churches should be planted with the goals of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation.)
- NT Missions Must Aim to Plant *New, Indigenous, Reproducing Churches*

Implications of the Church Planting Goal for Missionaries

- The Primary Mandate for Missionaries is to Plant Churches
- The Secondary Mandate for Missionaries Is to Play a Support Role in Church Planting