

MISSIONS POWER

TRANSFORM MISSIONS DYNAMICALLY
IN YOUR CHURCH AND LIFE

Second Edition

TERRY WONG

Foreword by JOHN BEVERE

God's missionary mandate for taking the gospel to all nations is set in concrete. But the methods are not—they change from season to season. Terry Wong's book *Missions Power* provides us with a cutting-edge overview of missions for this season. His mixture of passion with God's power will raise your faith to a new level and help you to be all God wants you to be.

Dr. C. Peter Wagner

Vice-President, Global Systems Inc., Colorado
Former Academic Dean, Fuller Theological Seminary

Terry Wong has a passion for the lost that only God could give him. In this day of so much emphasis on our own blessings as royalty in Christ Jesus, it is so encouraging and refreshing to hear another perspective. Our purpose on earth is not just to enjoy for ourselves the powers of the age to come, but to seek and save the lost: the mission of Jesus Himself on earth. Terry understands with Paul that our lives are worth nothing to us if we do not finish the task Jesus has given us of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. This book will open your eyes to what you can do toward that end, if you are willing to pay any price.

Drs. Heidi & Rolland Baker

Founders & Directors, Iris Ministries, Mozambique

Terry Wong has as strong a vision for missions as any pastor I have met worldwide. His endless schedule of crossing oceans and continents to foster relationships, plant churches, and minister at conferences is amazing. More than that, his insight into helping other churches enter the world vision will transform your life. Missions is God's mission and you are about to be part of it!

Larry Stockstill

Director, Surge Project
Former Senior Pastor, Bethany World Prayer Center, Louisiana

Pastor Terry Wong speaks from a well of experience on a subject he is passionate about. He stepped into an inward-looking, ethnic church and his intense passion became contagious. Today Calvary Assembly is one of the biggest missions giving churches, per capita, in the Assemblies of God of USA. It is inescapable that Terry has boundless energy and is totally devoted to missions. He argues strongly that the need of the church today is not ecclesiology but missiology! His writing is laced with practical examples and powerful scriptural truth as he deals with the seven P's of Missions. Read it and be immersed in his passion.

Dishan Wickramaratne

Senior Pastor, People's Church Assembly of God
General Superintendent, Assemblies of God, Sri Lanka

God's will is for every church to be involved in missions! This book is a "must read" for every pastor who wants their church to obey God's will. It clearly gives biblical yet practical steps and principles on how to make your church a missions church.

Dr. Rick Seaward

Apostolic Overseer, Victory Family Centre, Singapore

Passion and conviction leap off the pages of this book. Read it yes, but better yet, inhale the energy. Pastor Terry Wong has written what he has lived, and practice makes powerful. *Missions Power* will convict and motivate you to go into all the world and beyond that, equip you to unleash a tipping point of global impact. Bravo Terry!

Norman Nakanishi

Senior Pastor, Grace Bible Church Pearlside, Hawaii

Terry is a missionary/pastor and this book is a reflection of that. His passion, knowledge and experience of getting churches involved in missions is remarkable. I am so glad that he has put this all down on paper as an inspiration and guideline for us all.

Scott Douma

Senior Pastor, Yokohama Grace Bible Church, Japan

I have known Terry and Vicky Wong for over ten years. During that time I have watched them embrace Jesus' last command and make it their first priority. I have watched Calvary Assembly go from a church with a missions program to a church with a missions passion. Under Terry's leadership they are now one of the great missions churches in the world today. Terry and Vicky live this message. I love them both and pray *Missions Power* will challenge and change many.

Jack Hanes

Senior Pastor, ImagineNations Church, Australia

Books don't often live up to their titles. This one does. Terry Wong's incredible journey leading Calvary Assembly in missions is both inspiring and instructive. Pastors willing to learn from Terry will have the joy of seeing themselves and their churches enter a new dimension of obedience to the Master and impact on the world for Christ.

Randy Hurst

Director of Communications, Assemblies of God World Missions, Missouri

Terry Wong is a leader, communicator, a visionary, a high impact man. In *Missions Power* you will read how a traditional church became a dynamic miracle ministering New Testament church, how you can lead your church to live, breathe and dream missions. The stories will grip you and excite you. I've known Terry as a growing vibrant Christian, since his university days. Now I know him as a mature leader, out to change his world!

Dr. David Lim

Senior Pastor, Grace Assembly of God, Singapore

Terry Wong incorporates solid missional biblical principles with exciting personal application. He makes a statement that every church, regardless of numerical size, has the potential of being the explosive, dynamic, passionate, missional church that brings elation to God's heart. It's a riveting book captivating every generation for the upcoming years.

Dr. George Nagato

Former Senior Pastor, Paradise Chapel, Hawaii
Former District Superintendent, Hawaii Assemblies of God

Dr. Wong gives us a clear message on the missionary call and missionary imperative of the church that is both biblically grounded and culturally relevant. Its message will both inform as well as challenge pastors and laypersons alike who seek to be obedient to the Lord's great commission.

Dr. Peter Hintzoglou

Adjunct Assistant Professor, Fuller Theological Seminary

Missions Power is a must read for any Christian thirsty for the heart of God. The practical and powerful insights from Pastor Terry Wong resonate beyond theory and speculation but are reality and revelation. *Missions Power* will inspire, motivate and bring you back to the first love of our Christian faith: Souls.

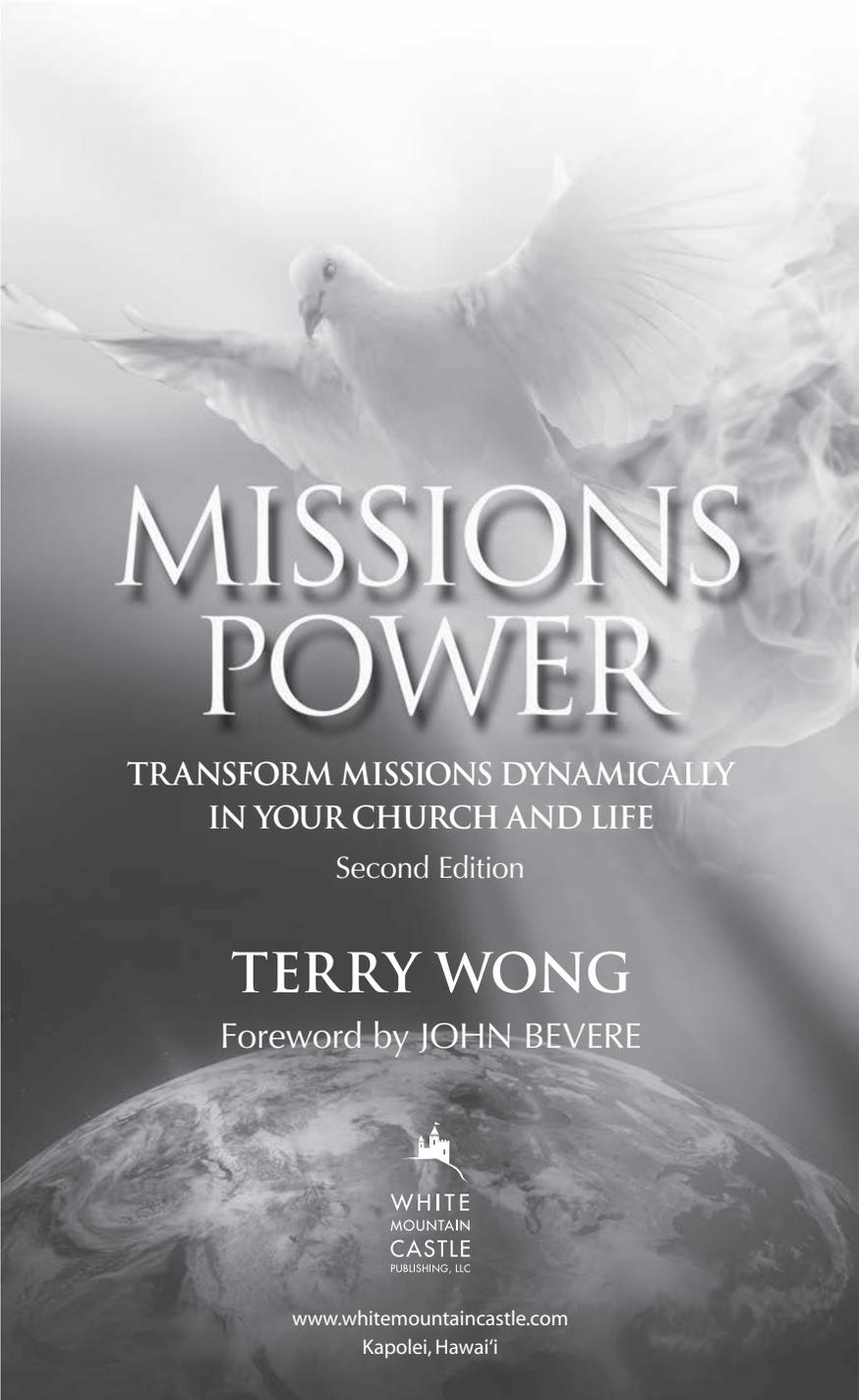
Art Sepúlveda

Senior Pastor, Word of Life Christian Center, Hawaii

If it were in my power, I would have every pastor read *Missions Power* by Terry Wong. Implementing the teaching in this book will literally change the local church while, at the same time, exponentially advance the spread of the Gospel through missions.

Dr. George O. Wood

General Superintendent, General Council of the Assemblies of God, USA



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Kapolei, Hawai'i

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DEDICATED TO

I dedicate this book to Vicky, my wife of over twenty-three fantastic years; and Brandon (18), Vanessa (16) and Ryan (10), my awesome children.

Vicky, your passion for China when we were still dating, woke me up to the possibilities of ministering outside North America. Your desire to reach out to “the least of these” caused me to expand my ministry beyond just preaching. Your support of me through the years has resulted in my life having purpose, a ministry bearing fruit and His church making an impact.

Brandon, from the tearful moment when I first heard your heartbeat to now when I see you fervently excelling in playing the piano, your passion for the Lord has ignited my passion for the Lord.

Vanessa, because you’re the “little girl” whom I always wanted, having you in my life has caused me to make room in my missions activities to go to the ends of the earth to rescue other “little children.”

Ryan, being a constant reminder of how much God can bless a parent, your adorable smile proves that every person in this world can experience the joy of the Lord, and that’s why I passionately attempt to give everyone that missional opportunity.

I love you all, as you are God’s precious gifts to me and have been my inspiration for MISSIONS POWER!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge the following incredible people for their part in the writing of this book:

Danny Yamashiro, who proactively approached and challenged me to write this book, believing that my story is inspirational enough to be told.

Jack Hanes, my first missions mentor who taught and modeled for me how to do missions.

David Lim, my first Bible professor when I was a young Christian who through the years continues to be to me a teacher whom I respect greatly.

Rick Seaward, my missions inspiration who offered some great suggestions in improving the contents of this book and whom “when I grow up, I want to be just like him!”

Greg Wendschlag, my best friend in the ministry who’s paralleled my life from being fellow youth pastors, being ordained together twenty-five years ago, being golf buddies, senior pastors and leading missions churches today.

Art Sepulveda, the pastor of one of the biggest churches in Hawaii who in spite of his busy schedule makes time to support my missions activities.

George Nagato, my denominational leader who constantly encourages me to be the best leader I can possibly be.

Roger Huang, my dearest friend who continues to demonstrate to me sacrifice in the ministry, especially when he founded City Impact in the San Francisco Tenderloin.

Debbie Dergousoff, my first mentor when I was saved who, through the years, continues to encourage me even as she herself has been faithful in ministry.

Howard and Nancy Ha, the former pastors of Calvary Assembly of God who invited me to pastor the church and passed their mantle to my wife and me.

Freeman and Sue Cheung, my devoted missions director couple and most passionate missions laypersons who make missions work at Calvary Assembly.

Danford Chang, one of my up-and-coming Timothy's who put in hours helping me administratively with this book.

Calvary Assembly of God Staff, my incredible pastors who believe in, embrace and execute upon our missions vision.

Calvary Assembly of God Board and Missions Advisory Team, my extended arm in supporting and promoting our missions vision.

Calvary Assembly of God members, my champions who give sacrificially and have given me so many of the stories in this book.

Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior whose message is what this book is all about.

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FOREWORD

When it comes to missions, God doesn't ask anything of us He wasn't willing to do Himself. Missions did not originate with the apostles or prophets or heroes of the faith. It originated with the Father. As Jesus said, "God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16 NLT).

Jesus, the One who commanded us to "go and make disciples," was the first to be sent. He is the "Apostle (Sent One)" of our faith (see Hebrews 3:1). The Father looked on a desolate world and sent His Son to bring us everlasting life. As Jesus labored on the earth, the Father provided the necessary direction for His ministry (John 5:19). And through the indwelling Spirit of Christ, Jesus grants the provision to make disciples of us all.

This is the model of missions to which every believer has been appointed. Some go to other lands, some provide what is needed for the work, and all fulfill the charge to make disciples of the nations. When Jesus released that Great Commission, He was inviting us to participate in the mission of God Himself. What a privilege!

As you read this book, you will be equipped with practical insights on living this high call. And you must realize that this is indeed a high call. As the people of God, we must never lose sight of the need of this world. People everywhere are crying out for restoration, and we carry the solution. As

our hearts become in sync with God's heart, we will discover a fierce desire for the salvation of all men.

Can you honestly say that this is your heart? Do you live with an eternal focus and compassion for the lost? If this passion is not yet burning within you, let Pastor Terry Wong inspire you. Through Scripture and the testimony of experience, my friend will propel you towards the heart of God.

Perhaps you would say that this passion already lives within you. Then *Missions Power* will supply you with strategic principles for living and leading a life of giving. You will learn to cast and sustain clear vision, build the missions focus of your church, and engage with Christ's cause both near and far.

While not all are called to spend their lives within the borders of a foreign land, we must operate in unity as Christ's Body to fulfill the command of our Lord. God has a vital role for you to play in His plan of reaching the world. Press into the truth on these pages and allow God to expand your vision for His passion.

Both those who stay and those who go are called to be in missions and on a mission. Friend, don't miss the opportunity. Millions stand to be benefited by the fruit of your faith. I charge you: live for their sake and for His glory.

John Bevere

Author/Speaker

Messenger International

Colorado Springs / United Kingdom / Australia

PREFACE

This is a book that's been in the making for several years and would not be possible without the invaluable contributions of significant people. Dr. Peter Wagner, by his example as my once almost obsessive missions book-writing seminary professor, inspired me to write a book on missions when I was just a young student at Fuller Theological Seminary. Jack Hanes mentored me years later and challenged me to plant hundreds of churches in China. My own church Calvary Assembly of God responded passionately to this challenge. Planting churches in China provided the experiences and stories detailed in this book. Danny Yamashiro, himself a passionate missionary, encouraged me to finally “pick up the pen” so that others, by reading this book, may be inspired to reach out to others.

On the cover of this book is a picture of a dove hovering over the world. The dove represents many important elements of this missions story. Theologically, the dove is a symbol of purity and integrity of the Holy Spirit.

The dove is pronounced ceremonially clean in Scripture, and this accords with his nature; he is selective in his diet, swift in flight, beautiful in his plumage, gregarious and sociable in his manner of life, and monogamous in his mating practices. Among the characteristics of the dove that have application in understanding the Spirit are: gentleness, tenderness, grace, innocence, mildness,

peacefulness, patience and faithfulness.¹

The Holy Spirit as a dove moves upon people's hearts in a persuasive and guiding manner. He is a Gentleman and does not aggressively push His will upon others.

The dove on this book cover has a focused glitter in its eyes. The dove is on fire. Biology tells us that a dove, which is normally peaceful, becomes unusually passionate and desperate when its young are endangered and especially when they are missing. This is the message of missions. God's children are harassed and endangered by the enemy. Some of them are missing. Some of them are being killed. Jack Hanes, former World Missions President of the Australia Assemblies of God, tells us that 35,000 people die everyday without having ever heard the name of Jesus even once in their lifetime.² The enemy is causing havoc. As a result, God is stirred up. With passionate and compassionate eyes, He is desperately seeking to rescue His children. He wants to bring the kingdom of God into their lives. He is commanding every believer to "go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19) with the fire of the Holy Spirit. The dove represents a God who desperately wants His children back.

The dove is also symbolic of a church called Calvary Assembly of God that was tired of being ingrown and is now sacrificially partnering with God to reach out to His lost children. This church is focused on its mission. It is not a church that wants to do missions by having a side ministry called the "Missions Department." It is a church that breathes missions,

speaks missions and does missions because missions is the lifeline of its existence. This church does missions because the fire of the Holy Spirit has taken hold of its members, and they want to change the world for Jesus!

The dove is also representative of me. Having been accused of having a Type-AAA personality, when I am passionate about something, I go all out! I don't wait for something to come to me – I go after whatever convicts and challenges me. I realized a few years ago that there's basically one thing I can do and should do on earth that I can't do in heaven. I will be able to worship in heaven so I don't spend all of my hours playing the drums and guitar like I used to do. I will be able to fellowship with believers in heaven so I don't excessively fill my available time with brothers and sisters in Christ when there are those who do not yet know Christ. I will be able to eat "angel food cake" in heaven so I don't get addictively caught up in consuming the ways of the world, even though that's the trend of today. Instead, I'm consumed with missions because I won't be able to do it in heaven. I am passionate about reaching the lost because they will be the fruit in heaven. I am focused on making Jesus' last command my first priority.

MISSIONS POWER is about seven P's that need to be understood, embraced and acted upon. The *PRINCIPLES* of missions set the theological foundation for strong missions activities. Without solid Biblical truths, attempted missions will be a passing fad. The *PASSION* for missions must be unmistakably present, especially in leadership, in order for

missions to be contagious to others. Without a Holy Spirit fire burning within, missions will soon flicker out. The PASTOR is the key for a church to be a powerful organism of missions. Without his proactive and cutting-edge leadership, missions will soon be relegated to being just another church department if that has not already happened. The PEOPLE necessitate the execution of missions in the kingdom of God. Without laborers in His harvest field, missions will not happen. The PROCESS of missions must be intentional, deliberate and strategic in order for missions to be maximized. Without a plan, missions will be a “hit or miss” activity some of the time and a “miss” activity most of the time. The PNEUMA is God’s part in missions, anointing the missionary in witness, in speech and in signs and wonders, and drawing the pre-believer to the Lord Jesus Christ. Without the Holy Spirit, missions will be all human might and power, which cannot come remotely close to what He can do. The PRAISE is the coming together of God’s missions church to acknowledge, thank and celebrate the victories and stories of missions. Without giving the glory back to God, missions will become prideful and lose its God-given power.

If any one or more of these P’s are applied, I believe missions power will be unleashed from heaven and multiply missions efforts. If all seven of these P’s are applied, I believe that missions power will be maximized and result in unprecedented harvest growth. There will be more fervent prayers focused on missions that will bring about harvest. There will be more missions dollars released into His harvest field. There will be

more missions resources advanced to bring in the kingdom of God. There will be more laborers sent to rescue the lost. That is the goal of this book.

I have deliberately tried to make the PRINCIPLES chapter more readable for the layperson by not including a lot of the heavy theology. By doing so, if the chapter is found to be too light, rest assured that there will be a future writing which will be more theologically water-tight. If my attempt at lightening the chapter is found to be inadequate, perhaps a future revision will be more readable, or turn to the other chapters that are more story-based.

While there is a heavy emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and on our part, I have tried to underscore Jesus' example, model, source and teaching in missions. To complete the involvement of the Trinity, which is the necessary and minimum foundation of missions, I have also tried to point out the Father's role in missions.

While it may seem like I am only referencing men by using pronouns such as "he" and "him," that is not the intent. Merely, it is easier to write "he" than it is to write "he/she" or "him" than "him/her." Therefore, unless explicitly specified, please note that male pronouns also apply to women.

This is a book for a variety of readers. For the pastor who's already experiencing the joy and excitement of pastoring a missions church, may this book enhance your current missions program, equip you with more messages and release even more missions dollars and resources into the harvest field. For the pastor who's starting to build a missions church,

may this book not be a template for you to copy exactly, but may it provide principles that you can adapt into your own church culture. For the pastor who's struggling to make missions more than a department but instead the lifeline of the church, may this book give you inspiration and boldness to get past traditionalism and to fulfill the Great Commission in your church. For the missions student, may this book teach you not only the what and why of missions but also the nuts and bolts. For the business person, may this book show you that missions is the best investment you can make because, even in years of recession, God can give back "good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over" (Luke 6:38). For the Christian, may this book challenge you to go after God's own heart, for it beats missions. For the pre-Christian, may this book be a revelation to you that God loves you so much that He not only sent His only begotten Son, but also a missions church, so that if you believe in its message, its missions power will set you free, and you will have eternal life.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PRINCIPLES *of* MISSIONS POWER

*The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is
the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.
But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time...*

MATTHEW 13:20-21

Missions power comes from understanding and being rooted in the Biblical and theological principles of missions. A person who is founded on these principles can weather the storms of traditionalism and muster the boldness to change his church, which in turn can be an agent of change in the missions harvest field.

The Greek word used in the New Testament for Church *ekklesia* consists of two parts, *ek* meaning “out of” and *klesis*, “a calling.”³ The combination of these two parts means that the Church is a group of people called out of the world. “The Church is the people or Israel of God.”⁴ It is God who calls the Church. “But you are a chosen people, a royal priest-

hood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God” (1 Peter 2:9-10). The people of God are no longer to be of the world but are to be Christians. Acts 11:26 gives the origin of this term, “It was in Antioch that the disciples were for the first time called Christians” (MSG). Christians are not just to be “adherents of Christ” but “slaves of Christ,”⁵ obeying God’s commands and seeking to be Christ-like, unlike what they used to be when they were of the world.

To be Christ-like on an individual level means that each person of God must “work out [his] salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), striving to be as Christ and to do as Christ, following the motto, “What Would Jesus Do?” To be Christ-like on a corporate level means that the people of God are to be the Bride: sanctified, pure and submissive to the Head, the Bridegroom. To be Christ-like on a social level means that the people of God are to be a community. Dietrich Bonhoeffer states “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.”⁶ Hebrews 10:25 states “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Bonhoeffer further elaborates on the idea of community, “It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means, third, that in Jesus Christ we have been cho-

sen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity.”⁷ The people of God are not just a group of people gathered in one place but are a community where fellowship, encouragement, outreach and unity exist. They are a family. Ray S. Anderson and Dennis B. Guernsey state, “the corporate life of the church, immediately following Pentecost, experienced a communal life with a domestic character.”⁸ The people of God did things together, as a community and as a family.

Jesus’ last command to His Church was a missional command, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). The Church is not to be an exclusive, physically-separated, inward, monastery-like people. The church is only the Church when it exists for others. The priorities of the church must align theologically. “Mission precedes and creates the church. The mission is always God’s mission through Christ to reach the world.”⁹ Christology is the Biblical teaching and life of Jesus the Messiah. Missiology is the purpose and methods of God’s people engaging with the world. Ecclesiology is the teaching about and practices of the Church. Alan Hirsch lays out the following formula for missional ecclesiology or for putting first things first, “Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology.”¹⁰ In other words, the way that the Church should be and its practices are a result of how it should engage missionally with the world, which stems from how Jesus lived His missional life and what He taught. The priority of the church is not itself; that is, its priority

should not be ecclesiology. We will use this as the definition for ecclesiology as others, including Kurt Fredrickson, Fuller Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Director, prefer in this context the term, “ecclesial practices.”¹¹ If ecclesiology is allowed to determine missiology, then the tendency will be towards inwardness. Missiology may never happen. “Church must follow mission.”¹² Furthermore, missiology needs to be determined by Christology, otherwise the church will become a social service only. The church needs to be rooted in Christ and all about Christ.

As part of Jesus’ Great Commission, He gave this promise, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit is given for empowerment to fulfill the missional command. “Pentecost is more than the birth of the church; it is the indwelling power of the Spirit of Christ as the source of the church’s life and ministry.”¹³ The Holy Spirit is Jesus’ extended arm to the Church to ensure that missiology is the priority. “The Great Commission gives the church its instructions; Pentecost provides its initiation and power.”¹⁴

The role of the Holy Spirit is so critical in the church and its mission. On one hand, with little or no emphasis on the Third Person of the Godhead, the amount of missional activities will be limited. This can be seen in many non-charismatic churches today. For example, instead of teaching and practicing *charismata*, the gifts of the Spirit, an over-reliance on natural talents and intelligence occurs. This may yield

some missional fruit, but it pales in comparison to the type of response that is generated when, for example, an instantaneous physical healing occurs. On the other hand, with too much emphasis on the Spirit and, specifically, speaking in tongues, the focus will be on ecclesiology and not missiology. The erroneous focus is on speaking in tongues as the end result rather than empowerment for missional work. “Pentecostals tend to emphasize baptism in the Spirit rather than spiritual baptism into the mission of Christ.”¹⁵ This can be seen in many Pentecostal churches today. They tend to exercise spiritual gifts for inward edification and operate them in the presence of Christians only. The Pentecostal experience of the Baptism in the Spirit should help Christians speak evangelistically in earthly languages just as much as speaking in other tongues!

The gifts of the Spirit need to be exercised for the right reasons. Throughout the book of Acts, signs and wonders occurred to bring about evangelistic opportunities. Through healing the crippled man, Peter and John were able to witness about Christ (Acts 3). Through the exorcism of the demonized girl, Paul and Silas were able to lead the Philippian jailor and his family to Christ (Acts 16). Through various miracles, Paul was able to plant the church in Ephesus (Acts 19). John Wimber and Kevin Springer state, “Signs and wonders resulted in dramatic church growth. They were the catalyst for evangelism.”¹⁶ However, Anderson cautions the attitudes behind spiritual gifts when he writes, “Other churches are so preoccupied with the Spirit that environmental chaos and

confusion reigns, with members competing with one another for ‘spiritual space’ in which to exercise their own gifts. Spiritual maturity is not evidenced by possessing spiritual gifts, but rather by being possessed by the Spirit in such a way that we are moved toward ministry to others.”¹⁷ Anderson’s emphasis is on missiology, not ecclesiology.

Unfortunately, many churches have strayed away from their theological purpose. Many churches don’t even seem to be rooted in Christology. They are using the name “Christian” but are not Christ-like. Many churches claim to be involved in missiology when, in fact, they are more consumed with ecclesiology. Most of their programs are inward in nature. They say that they want new people, but when the rare visitor appears, they neither welcome nor acknowledge him. Consequently, the role of the Holy Spirit and His spiritual gifts are minimized. This tendency, surprisingly and sadly, has even been prevalent in many Pentecostal churches. Acts 1:8 should remind the church that the main purpose of the Holy Spirit is a missional one. However, as stated earlier, so many Pentecostal churches edify only themselves and not others. Does it make sense to preach only to Christians who have heard the Gospel multiple times when there are unbelievers who have not heard the Gospel once? Similarly, does it make sense to demonstrate the manifestation of spiritual gifts to Christians repeatedly when there are unbelievers who have never seen the power of God once? In the “traditional” Pentecostal church, signs and wonders are exercised for the benefit of the believers. Little attempt is made to expose charismata

to unbelievers. In general, Hirsch is not too optimistic about the condition of the North American church: “Although we hear about successful attempts to revitalize existing churches, the overall track record is actually very poor. Ministers report their attempts to revitalize the churches they lead do not yield the desired results.”¹⁸

There is hope because one of the main reasons my denomination, the Assemblies of God, was formed in 1914 was to do something proactive with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early 20th century. “The fire of harvest thrust zealous workers into the harvest, not only at home, but to mission fields abroad. There was a need for proper financing, legal representation, correlation of work, and endorsement for holding property in foreign lands.”¹⁹ The heartbeat of the Assemblies of God has always been missiology. In general, the Assemblies of God is not a denomination that places great priorities on expensive real estate, lavish buildings and deep pockets. Instead, the denomination takes seriously C. Peter Wagner’s bold statement, “The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches.”²⁰ The Assemblies of God is so missions-minded that it will plant a church even if it calls for a large mortgage and no pews. The Constitution and Bylaws further reflect this mindset, “The priority reason-for-being of the Assemblies of God as part of the Church is (among three other reasons) to be an agency of God for evangelizing the world (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16).”²¹ From a denominational perspective, every Assemblies of God church should be mis-

sional in vision and in practice.

The unfortunate truth is that most Assemblies of God churches are more focused on ecclesiology than missiology. This can be seen in the financial habits of Assemblies of God churches. For example, the top four churches in World Missions giving in one anonymous district give in excess of \$200,000 per year. The fifth place church gives just over \$100,000. After that, the numbers quickly drop. The sixth place church gives under \$30,000 and the tenth place church gives under \$10,000. This indicates that the remaining Assemblies of God churches in this district barely give to missions, if at all. Over 90% of their budgets are spent on themselves.

Many churches are run by the pastor. Therein lies the potential problem. From reasons ranging from insecurity to ignorance, most pastors choose ecclesiology over missiology. Their congregations then follow suit. The pastor encourages his congregation to be evangelistic, yet he himself doesn't evangelize. He would rather get affirmation by teaching saints more of the Bible than risk getting sneers by sharing salvation with sinners. He chooses what's comfortable as opposed to what's commanded by Christ. The result is a church that grows inward and knows much but does little.

Jack Hanes so ingeniously plays and speaks the part of Satan when he writes, "If I were the devil,...I would marginalize missions. I would see to it that pastors had a missions PROGRAM, and not a missions PASSION. I would make sure the church had a missions DEPARTMENT, not a mis-

sions DYNAMIC. I would ensure Christians had a missions CONSCIENCE, but not a missions COMMITMENT.”²² Is that what’s happened in many churches?

I propose that another way to state Hirsch’s formula “Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology” is “Jesus started missions before He started the church.” Jesus didn’t spend all or a majority of His time teaching the disciples how to do church. Jesus spent His time teaching and showing the disciples how to be missional. He declared and demonstrated that the Kingdom of God had come. He fed five thousand men. He healed the sick. He raised people from the dead. He went into His community and reached out to people. The disciples got a good dose of Christology as they witnessed how that translated into missiology. They, in turn, lived that kind of Christology by doing missiology. The resulting ecclesiology was a church whose members gave away all of its property to those in need. The church shared in the secular problems of ordinary human life. The church’s missiology determined the church’s ecclesiology. This was the result of Jesus starting missions before starting the church.

Today’s church needs to return to that model as opposed to allowing Christendom to shape how it does church. Traditionalism has crippled the church in fulfilling its God-ordained purpose of effectively reaching out to others. Jesus fought traditionalism, even to the point of offending the authorities. He healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. He ate dinner with a sinful tax collector at his

house. He forgave a paralytic and then healed him. Exercising mercy and reaching out to others was more important to Jesus than following the traditions of the church.

David Fitch underscores this point further as it applies to Sunday morning gatherings.

If the church is the social body of His Lordship incarnating Christ in the world for God's mission it must not be segregated into a gathering on Sunday morning. The church must be present as Christ in the neighborhoods. It must gather to be present among the hungry and hurting, however that might look. This means the practice of the church must be decentralized in its organization away from one central place to being present in the everyday lives of the people.²³

First, Fitch is saying that God's way of reaching the world is through His church as opposed to disjointed little Jesuses evangelizing on their own. Second, the church is not just in the business of preaching evangelistic messages, if it's even doing that. It also is in the business of meeting social needs as exemplified in Matthew 25. Third, the church is not just to wait for needy people to come to it, but it must go to them. The traditional view of Sunday morning as the major ministry time is inadequate. The real ministry is what happens between Sunday mornings. It's focused on missiology, which determines ecclesiology.

Do all of these faults mean that the church is not yielding any fruit? What, in fact, has been happening today with the church worldwide? According to the latest statistics from the U.S. Center for World Mission, the world's salvation rate

is at an all-time high. The salvation rate is outpacing the world's birth rate as 3.5 unbelievers are being born again for every baby being born physically into the world.²⁴ Globally, Jesus, together with all the missions churches and missions-minded Christians, is saving the world into God's kingdom! God's grace, in spite of our shortcomings and ignorance, is exercised, and His kingdom is growing. Imagine what will happen if we all became more intentional and involved in missions.

As described in Revelation 5:9-14, "every tribe and language and people and nation" will one day be gathered to form His kingdom, to worship Him and to declare His glory. That will be the result of all the missions efforts put forth and the culmination of all the missions power exercised. Let's all be part of the team that will reach out to our respective communities and nations of the world to usher in the kingdom of God through MISSIONS POWER!

Reflection Questions

1. How inward is your church, and how outward is your church?
2. What are the missional strengths of your church?
3. In what missional activities are you involved on a weekly basis?