

Who is Defining the Priorities of Our Church's Mission Efforts?¹

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The following article challenges pastors and missions leaders to break free from good mission endeavors to seek out God's mission endeavors. It challenges us to question who is defining the priorities of our church's mission efforts.

We need to avoid pursuing human-sized goals with human-strength plans but earnestly and continually pray that the Holy Spirit will empower us to be vessels for God's glory.

If we seek to reach the world according to our own priorities then we are doomed to frustration and failure. The Lord desires obedience not sacrifice, so as disciples of Christ we must consider God's priorities and shape our efforts to be in sync with His will. Based upon the Gospel message and the Commission of Jesus, I believe there are three priorities we should consider:

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PRIORITY 1

**God's Glory—
God and His Glory is both the
beginning and end of missions.**

Missions was birthed in His heart because He is a missionary God reaching out to a lost humanity. The end of missions is the worship of God as is well shown in Revelation 7:9-10 "After this I looked, and there was an enormous crowd—no one could count all the people! They were from every race, tribe, nation, and language, and they stood in front of the throne and of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They called out in a loud voice: "Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb!" (GNB) In our efforts to obey God's Commission to us, it is crucial that we prioritize God's glory. We need to avoid pursuing human-sized goals with human-strength plans but earnestly and continually pray that the Holy Spirit will empower us to be vessels for God's glory.

PRIORITY 2

**Growing the Body of Christ—
The church is the goal of missions.**

The goal of missions is to see the Body of Christ birthed and expanded within a people, tribe, nation, language and/or place. Ministry that does not see local churches

birthed is often valuable, but until these church “communities of faith” are established and extended, the goal of missions has not been reached. However, this goal is not an end in itself, or the church becomes guilty of breaking the first commandment. The newly established church must be encouraged and taught that it is their mandate to reach out within their own group and beyond to the entire world. However, when we speak of growing the Body of Christ, we do not just mean numbers of converts and churches started. We must ask God to grow the church not just in quantity but also in quality. It is not enough to start churches if those churches are selfish and powerless. The goal is Acts 2 churches being continually transformed by God and in turn serving God in devoting themselves to the Word and prayer and fellowship while sharing the good news, living sacrificially and transforming their own communities and nations.



Extending God's Kingdom— The unreached must be our priority in missions.

Is it right that some hear the gospel twice when others have never heard it once? Or some hear it 10 times, 100 times, 1000 times, even 10,000 times when some have never heard it one single time? Evangelism is sharing the good news, while missions is sharing the good news where it is news. There can be no question that while we are called to many good efforts, our priority in world missions today must be those living beyond the gospel. God does not wish that “anyone should perish but that everybody would come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Approximately 30% of the world’s population has no access to the gospel and just as tragically 42.6% of the world’s population are members of “unreached” ethne – those without a culture-impacting indigenous

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church that is strong enough to reach its own people.² If reaching the world is the charge Jesus gave us as His disciples, then we cannot defend the vast sums of money and time spent on ourselves while we pray and go and spend so little to reach those most in need of the gospel. This is not to say that we should only focus on the unreached, because no church can be truly concerned about the unreached without being concerned about the lost around them. But as a worldwide church we find it much easier to prioritize ourselves and those around us at the expense of those with the greatest need for the gospel.

So if your church is seeking to obey Jesus’ mission commission by worshipping and glorifying Him in your words and deeds, a key priority should be helping reach out and start churches among unreached cities, nations, peoples and groups. That will in turn bring glory to God by their transformed lives and transforming service to their communities and their resulting efforts to bring the good news to other cities, nations, peoples and groups. ❏

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² In the 15 years since this article was first published, the percentage of those without access to the gospel has grown from 27% to 30% and those in unreached ethne has grown from 39.5% to 42.6%.