BIBLICAL BASIS FOR A MISSIONAL FOCUS BY LOCAL CHURCH

In the very beginning of the Bible, we find God’s concern for humanity. Because of sin and rebellion, God has acted throughout history to redeem a people for Himself. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, all people find themselves under the curse of sin. God’s concern for people flows through the Old Testament pages. In the Abrahamic covenant, God established a plan to bless all people and declared Israel as “his special treasure and declaring them to be a kingdom of priests to carry out his plan.”[[1]](#footnote-1) In the book of Exodus, God called Moses to lead His people out of bondage. This event in scripture clearly reveals God’s plan in sending Moses on a mission to rescue His people.

The book of Isaiah declares the glory of God and his desire for all nations shall “see the salvation of the Lord” Isaiah 52:10. In Isaiah 66, scripture says, “the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues” so they would see his glory. Clearly, God is portraying a sending of people so others might enjoy His glory.

God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach to the Assyrians. Jonah refused the missional mandate by God probably because he knew they might repent and turn to God. God sent His messenger on a mission to convey a message to His people. God did this because of His great love and mercy.

Missions is at the heart of the gospel. God gave His Son so they He might redeem His people from the penalty of sin. John 3:16 says “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting Life.” God’s love sent Jesus to take on the form of man and suffer and die for the sins of the world. Scripture tells us Jesus had a world-wide mission.[[2]](#footnote-2) Jesus mission was to help the needy and outcast and to share the kingdom of God that all people might believe and turn to God.

Before Christ ascended to the Father, He gave His marching orders to the church. Jesus said all authority has been given to me by God. The next phrase in Matthew 28:19 says, “go and make disciples.” This is the only imperative in Matthew’s gospel. “We must share the gospel to make disciples. Lifestyles must match words but words are needed to witness.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Jesus furthers his commandment by telling the church to teach these new believers. Christians must teach new converts how to grow in Christ and impact the world with the gospel message. “The scope of the Great Commission discipling process is “all the nations, embracing all “people groups” of the world and nothing less”.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Jesus public ministry touched countless lives in various situations. He spent time with sinners and prostitutes demonstrating that all people need forgiveness for sins. Jesus healed the sick in passages such as Luke 17 and met the needs of the outcast such as in John 4 with the Samaritan woman. Jesus was on mission making impact in towns and villages out of obedience to the Father and preaching the kingdom of God.

Jesus told this disciples that they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth in Acts 1:8. The book of Acts continues Jesus’ ministry by taking the gospel to all men under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The apostles, or “sent ones”, are now commissioned to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came with power indwelling the believers which gave boldness for the purpose of spreading the Word of God. Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:14-24 focused on the death of Christ and the urgency of his audience to repent of sin and call on the name of the Lord to be saved.

Throughout the book of Acts the early church was empowered to preach the gospel to all classes of people in all areas of the world. In Acts 4, the apostles faced opposition for the first time. But even through these obstacles they still witnessed to the life and death of Christ and urged men to repent because “there is no salvation in any other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”[[5]](#footnote-5) In Acts 8, the early church is scattered throughout Judea and Samaria because of persecution. But, the persecution seemed to empower the believers to share their faith. The Bible says there was much rejoicing and many were healed and saved. The early church preached the gospel, spoke of forgiveness, called for a response, and practiced baptism.[[6]](#footnote-6) In Acts 10 the gospel is brought to the Gentiles. The early church struggled with the Gentile Mission. These Jewish believers did not understand reaching the Gentiles because of the exclusivist mind-set of the Pharisees. Yet, Jesus said “go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Jesus mission for the church was to go to the Gentiles. “Therefore, when Peter baptized Cornelius, he made official the practice of “going and making disciples of the Gentiles.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Other examples of believers spreading the gospel are found in Acts 11 in Antioch of Syria. The Christians preached the gospel and “a great number believed and turned to the Lord” in Acts 11:21.

The Apostle Paul was a murderer and hated the church. God changed His heart in Acts 9 and called him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Scripture says, “Saul ravaged the church” in Acts 8:3. The Lord said to Ananias, “he is a chosen instrument of mine, to bear his name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” Acts 9:3,5,15. Scripture tells us Paul understand his mission to the Gentiles and responded in obedience even through adversity and difficulties. One can view Paul’s writings to the churches in the New Testament and understand the urgency of responding to the gospel and the passion for the cross. Paul saw a vital need for humanity because every person must confess Jesus Christ as Lord or spend eternity without God. The book of Romans is one large collection of biblical teachings. In the book, Paul addresses the problem of sin and our justification through Christ’s blood on Calvary. Paul proclaims that “Christ died for us” and “we have now been justified by his blood” Romans 5:8-9. In the book of Galatians, Paul discusses how Christ became a curse for us Galatians 3:13. In Romans 8:1, we are justified and considered forgiven and not guilty of trespasses. Paul is declaring that all of humanity is lost in sin.[[8]](#footnote-8) Paul elevated the cross of Christ in his preaching and urged people to call on the name of the Lord for salvation in Romans 10:13,14.

In the book of Revelation, living creatures are around the throne declaring God’s worth and holiness. This depiction of worship should cause the church to care about all men and respond in obedience to the Great Commission. Jesus looked upon Jerusalem and wept because they were sheep without a Shephard. The church must be moved with compassion and reach out as the hands and feet of Christ just as Jesus did when He was on earth.

1. Terry, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Adapted from J. Herbert Kane, Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Terry, John Mark, “*Missiology*”, ( Broadman and Holman Press, Nashville TN, 1998) 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Pinchard, Philip, Missions Notes. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Terry, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid, 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)