

# ROOTS

*READING*

# INITIATIVE

**THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

*BY KEVIN DEYOUNG AND GREG GILBERT*

**EVERYDAY CHURCH**

*BY STEVE TIMMIS AND TIM CHESTER*



**PLNTD NETWORK RESOURCE**  
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [PLNTD.COM](http://PLNTD.COM)

# What is the Mission of the Church?

KEVIN DEYOUNG & GREG GILBERT

Discussion Guide

*Written by Matt Capps*

*“The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship and obey Jesus Christ now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father.” (241)*

## 1. The title of this book is “What Is the Mission of the Church?”

- a. In your opinion, how do you think most Christians would answer that question?
- b. Out of curiosity, how do you think non-Christians would answer that question?
- a. Now, how do you think others would answer that question based on your churches vision and practice? Simply put, in the minds of others what is your church trying to accomplish?

**2. Stephen Neill’s quip “if everything is mission, nothing is mission” is used to illustrate the argument that the church is sent out for a specific task and that the church is “not sent to do everything.” (19ff.) According to the authors, the specific task of the church is to “go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might be worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father.” (63)**

- a. Is the answer that the authors provide for the question “what is the mission of the church” sufficient? Explain why you agree or disagree.
- b. You will notice that there seems to be no mention of “reflecting the gospel” or “being a faithful presence” in their definition. What do you think about that?
- c. The authors claim that “everything we do in obedience to Christ should not be understood as part of the churches mission.” What do they mean by this statement?

**3. The authors set up a dichotomy between missional thinkers and traditional thinkers when they write that “missional thinkers are warning against a careless, loveless indifference to the problems and potential opportunities all around us, a dualistic disregard for the whole person.” On the other hand, a “different group of Christians [traditional missiology] fears overly optimistic utopian dreams, a loss of God-centeredness, and a diminishment of the church’s urgent message of Christ crucified for hell-bound sinners.” (23-24)**

- a. What are some examples of both missional and traditional ministry models?
- b. In your opinion, what is lacking (if anything) in both the missional or traditional mindset?
- c. Consider your own context. Are there certain things you should start doing, stop doing, or do better to focus your ministry efforts?

**4. Based on the discussion of biblical texts throughout chapter 2 how would you unpack the following question?**

- a. What is the difference between the mission of God and the mission of the church?

**5. On pages 58-59 the Great Commission passages are summarized by answering seven questions – Who?, Why?, What? Where? How?, When?, and To Whom? Read through the answers to each question. As you read them, answer the following questions.**

- a. Where do you find encouragement?
- b. Where do you find comfort?
- c. Where are you confronted?
- d. What are the imperatives?

**6. On page 27 we read that “we should not cheapen good deeds by making them only a means to some other end (evangelism), but neither do we want to exaggerate our responsibility by thinking it is our duty to build a kingdom through our good deeds.” This seems to be wise counsel for a biblically balanced philosophy of ministry.**

- a. What are some practical ways of keeping balance in ministry philosophy?

**7. The authors argue that the heart of the biblical narrative centers around the question “how can hopelessly rebellious, sinful people live in the presence of a perfectly just and righteous God?” (69) Can you re-tell the biblical narrative in your own words to answer this question? Below are the structural categories for the bible’s narrative given by the authors. (See pages 70-90)**

- a. Creation
- b. Fall
- c. Redemption
- d. Consummation

**8. At the end of chapter three we read “the story [of God’s redemptive work] is not about us working with God to make the world right again. It’s about God’s work to make us right so we can live with him again.” (89) With this quote the authors set up the tension that will frame the following chapters.**

- a. Does talking about the “good news” as forgiveness of sins through Jesus sell the gospel short? Why or why not?
- b. Should our understanding of the gospel include seeking justice in society? Why or why not?
- c. Can you articulate the difference and harmony between the zoom-angle (What must one believe in order to be saved?) and wide-angle (What is the whole good news of Christianity?) view of the gospel?
- d. The writers argue that “the gospel of the kingdom necessarily includes the gospel of the cross”, why is this important to keep in mind as we live as missional people in a lost world?

**9. The authors make a case that the biblical phrase “kingdom of God” should be understood as God’s reign over his people – dynamically and relationally. They also argue that the church should not only manifest this reality, but also bear witness to it in a broken world. (118-128)**

- a. How should this look within the church family?
- b. How should this look as the church penetrates the world?

**10. In this book the authors understand the biblical teaching about the kingdom of God in terms of an “inaugurated eschatology.” Namely, that God’s kingdom has already broken into this world but has not yet been fully realized. (117)**

- a. How does inaugurated eschatology give the church a biblical realism when it comes to working towards the welfare of this world?
- b. How does inaugurated eschatology give the church biblical confidence and hope as we look to the world that is to come?

**11. Consider the “zoom lens” and “wide lens” analogy that the authors use for the gospel and apply it to the mission of the church.**

- a. What would be the “zoom lens” focus of the church’s mission?
- b. What would be the “wide lens” focus of the church’s mission?

**12. The issue of social justice is a hot topic right now. The authors note that “younger evangelicals are more concerned about the poor, about digging wells, about sex trafficking, about orphans than any other time in recent memory.” (142)**

- a. Why do you think social justice is such a primary focus among younger evangelicals at this moment?
- b. In the book we read that the commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself” boils down to five commands, namely, share, tell the truth, don’t take advantage of the weak, be fair, and talk it out. What are ways that you and your church can exercise these commands in your context? (143-147)
- c. According to these authors how should we define “justice” and “injustice”?
- d. Do you agree with this quote: “if we are too embarrassed, too lazy, or too cowardly to support fellow Christians at our doorstep who depend on our assistance and are suffering for the sake of the gospel, we will go to hell.” (165) See 171.

**13. The authors offer “Seven Modest Proposals on Social Justice”. Take some time to discuss each one and ask questions like – what are some potential ways that this principle can be applied wrongly? How can I/we apply these principles to our own ministry context?**

- a. Don't undersell what the bible says about the poor and social justice. (173-174)
- b. Don't oversell what the bible says about the poor and social justice. (175-177)
- c. Accept the complexities of determining a biblical theology of wealth, poverty, and material possessions. (177-179)
- d. Be careful with the term “social justice”. (179-183)
- e. Appropriate the concept of moral proximity. (183-186)
- f. Connect good intentions with sound economics. (186-192)
- g. Love your neighbor as yourself. (192-193)

**14. In the section on connecting good intentions with sound economics (186-192) the writers make the argument that “charity alone is not the solution to poverty. Direct handouts work best as a form of relief.” (188) The authors continue that we must look beyond the immediate to the longer effects of any acts and consider the unintended consequences.**

- a. Looking beyond handouts, what are some ways you can help those in need?
- b. What are some of the potential unintended consequences of not planning or intentionally acting beyond the immediate handout stage of charity?
- c. What would be a good procedure or plan for helping the hurting beyond initial charity?

**15. On page 196 we read that “eternity...the new heavens and the new earth – ought to set the trajectory of a Christian's life so profoundly that his life doesn't quite add up when the world looks at it.”**

- a. Can this be said of you?
- b. What does this look like practically – day to day?

**16. “A good number of recent books have argued from these issues to the conclusion that the mission of the church to provide health care, repair housing slums, plant trees, fund disease research, and clean streets – in short, to work toward the perfect, shalom-filled new heavens and new earth that God intends there to be at the end.” (197)**

- a. It seems that the authors of this book have a different vision for the mission of the church. Do you agree with DeYoung and Gilbert?
- b. What are the biblical arguments they give for their case?
- c. If working for social justice is not within the scope of the mission of the church what is the proper way for the church to approach such issues?

**17. The authors are clear that Christians are to be a people of both “declaration and demonstration” (223), and argue that good works fit into Christian theology and into the Christian life for five reasons.**

1. We do good works to obey God, whom we love. (224)
2. We do good works because we love our neighbors. (224-225)
3. We do good works to show the world God’s character and God’s work. (225-226)
4. We do good works because they are the fruit of the Spirits work in us. (226-237)
5. We do good works to win a hearing for the gospel. (227-229)

**Take some time and discuss each one of these.**

- a. How does the gospel of Jesus Christ empower and guide these five reasons for good works?
- b. The most controversial of these reasons would be number five. Many would pause and consider whether or not the authors are advocating for a “bait and switch” strategy. The writers counter with the claim that they are advocating for “holistic compassion.” (228) Do you agree with this assessment? How does ones understanding of declaration and demonstration affect their philosophy of evangelism?



**18. On page 232 we read “there is a difference between the church considered as a bunch of individual Christians and the church understood as an institution.”**

- a. Consider the distinction between “the church organic” and “the church institutional”, are there things that the “church institutional” must/should do that individual Christians should not attempt on their own? (and visa versa) Give some examples of both, and the reasons why?

**19. The authors argue that “a local church should tend toward doing those activities and spending its resources on those projects that more directly, rather than less directly, further its central mission.” (235)**

- a. Since resources and time is limited, what are ways that local churches can determine the importance of ministry endeavors?

**20. “Since hell is real, we must help each other die well even more than we strive to help our neighbors live comfortably. Since hell is real, we must never think alleviating earthly suffering is the most loving thing we can do. Since hell is real, evangelism and discipleship are not simply good options or commendable ministries, but are literally a matter of life and death.” (245)**

- a. You’ll remember on page 229 that we read “evangelism...[is] a deep and profound act of love for another person.” How does this concept and the doctrine of hell secure the “ballast” of our ministry?

**21. DeYoung and Gilbert note that “if we could somehow remake the world right now into a place of [human flourishing] we would still not have heaven.” (246) They add, “worship is the end of the story, not human flourishing.” (247)**

- a. How does this help one aim the ministry and mission of the local church?
- b. How does this help one prioritize responsibility and motivation in life?



**22. The authors point out that “real discipleship, if it is going to last, must also be realistic discipleship. We need to guard against self-imposed exhaustion, against thinking we are never doing enough and things are always terrible.” (260)**

- a. How does this truth liberate us as we seek to be faithful to discipleship, a central aspect of the mission of the church?