***Missional* Matters**

Volume 1, No. 1

February 5, 2010

**Whose Mission Is It?**

Here is where the confusion usually begins. In engaging the whole missional dialogue we often bring this new language to our current understandings of missions in the local church. Missions for most of us is one of the ministries of our church in which we support missionaries and efforts, either globally or locally, with the intent of bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to people groups in word and in deed. We support such efforts with our giving, holding missions conferences in which we hear what God is doing somewhere around the world.

Though such efforts are laudable, the first understanding in being missional is understanding whose mission it actually is. When we begin to ask this question we begin to realize that the church is not the sending agency for missions, but rather the church is sent into mission – the entire ministry of the church is mission.

The first principle in understanding mission is understanding whose mission it is.

In this understanding we need to have it become rooted in our minds and in our hearts that first and foremost the mission is work that belongs to God. God, the One who is I AM (Exodus 3:14), is the Lord. God is the initiator of the mission. God is actively engaged in mission. God is the accomplisher of the mission.

If we are ever going to understand what *missional* really entails, it is imperative to understand that God is the protagonist in the mission. The mission is God’s. It is not our mission. God’s mission in the world is to reconcile humanity to God, to one another, and to restore all of creation (cf. Rev. 21) through Jesus Christ. This mission of God’s, to which we are called, is a “participation in the sending of the Son, in the *missio Dei*, with the inclusive aim of establishing the lordship of Christ over the whole . . . creation” (Georg F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 5).

Therefore, we come to the realization that God, and God alone, is the source and the beginning of mission. The mission of the church – our mission – derives from God Himself being in mission. That is why we are far more interested in seeing what God is doing all around us, what God is accomplishing around us, than merely focusing upon our agendas of sharing the Gospel and alleviating human suffering. Our first questions in ministry and mission, in participating with God, is what is God doing and to how is God calling us to be involved? We have no other mission except the one in which we engage in response to God’s calling.

What is to be rejected, then, is the notion that mission is simply Christians sending out those we call as missionaries. Mission is not essentially the church’s sharing of the Gospel or a response to human need, involving only a few people in the church. “Mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation. ‘Mission’ means ‘sending,’ and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God’s action in human history” (Darrel Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 4). Mission is not what we determine to do. True mission involves the church being in partnership with God who initiates, is engaged in, and accomplishes his purposes in redeeming, liberating, and restoring humanity and creation through Jesus Christ.

Next week: Why Does the Church Exist?

For more information and access to articles on being missional, connect with [www.imissional.org](http://www.imissional.org)

© 2010 by Roland G. Kuhl