

Missional: New Term, Old Concept

By Taryn Hutchison

“Missional” may be a current buzz word in churches today but the concept is not new. Back in Genesis, God first expressed his missional design by sending Abraham out to bless every nation.

So what does missional mean, anyway? I’m proud to report that the term was first coined at a place where I used to work. Dr. Francis Du Bose, professor at Golden Gate Seminary near San Francisco, first turned “mission” into an adjective in 1983.

Missional has to do with God’s missionary nature. He sent his Son into our world; then he sent the Holy Spirit to empower us; now he sends us to win others. We are all sent – not just missionaries.

As followers of Christ, our lives have purpose. Everything we do and even say must be driven by that purpose. By fulfilling our mission, we live missionally.

Our model for living missional, purposeful lives is Christ himself. Jesus came down to us and lived among us. He showed us how.

His purpose was clear: to win the lost to himself. Luke 19:10 reads, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

He imparted that very purpose to us. “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” (John 17:18).

Missional has to do with incarnational ministry – letting Christ live through us as we interact with the lost. It’s not about inviting people to come to us, to visit our church service in hopes the pastor will convert them. It’s about us meeting them where they are. It’s about “go and be” rather than “come and see.”

Usually, a church with a missions program considers it as one activity among many. A missional church, on the other hand, focuses everything it does toward helping fulfill God’s agenda for the world. It is externally-focused.

In “The Missional Church Network” newsletter, Brad Brisco put it this way: “It is not so much that God has a mission for his church in the world, but that God has a church for his mission in the world.”

We live our lives intentionally and strategically, out among the people of the world, reflecting God’s missionary heart and embodying the life of Jesus in our communities.

Even in boredom and drudgery, we can live out our purpose. Brother Lawrence practiced the presence of God as he peeled potatoes in his 17th century monastery.

Most days, my new administrative job doesn't exactly engage my mind or ignite my passions. If the work was all there was to it, I would question whether I'm in the right place.

But it's not. My purpose is bigger than the clerical tasks or the paycheck. It's in the missional aspect of my life's calling.

I took this job hoping to make some friendships with a handful of college students, meet with them at lunchtime, and be used of God in their lives. What I've found is so much more.

I've stumbled upon a huge student-led Cru (Campus Crusade) group. Almost every lunch break is booked with appointments with students hungry for input and discipleship. When I served on staff with Campus Crusade, I dreamed of having a group like this.

They love Jesus, they have strong social skills, and they're leaders. These students are reaching their campus for Christ. They are missional.

God has great plans for these students. And I get to be part of it. I know God didn't place me here just to answer the phone. He has a larger purpose for me. What's your purpose?