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GOSPEL CENTRALITY AND GLOBAL MISSIONS

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In a 2018 Barna survey,¹ a sample of U.S. churchgoers² were asked if they had previously “heard of the Great Commission.” The results of the survey revealed that 51% of respondents said they did not know the term, 25% said they had heard of the term but could not recall the meaning, and 6% said they were not sure. Only 17% percent of those surveyed indicated that they had heard of the term and were able to define it. The astonishing results should leave us wondering why 83% of surveyed churchgoers were not able to explain Jesus’ commissioning of the church to go and make disciples of the nations. Admittedly, just because a churchgoer can not recognize and define the Great Commission does not immediately signal that they do not understand the concept of global missions. After all, the term “Great Commission” is not found in Scripture.³ Nonetheless, the results of the survey are disheartening.

One other interesting - albeit obvious - result of the survey was the connection of a churchgoer’s understanding of the Great Commission and the likelihood of pastors to preach on missions and the Great Commission. 28% of Southern Baptist pastors and 18% of Baptist pastors surveyed said their most previous sermon on missions was specifically focused on the Great Commission. Further, non-mainline pastors are more likely than mainline pastors to preach on the Great Commission (15% vs. 6%).⁴ Barna’s report concluded, “In other words, the degree to which a churchgoer is personally aware of the phrasing of the Great Commission could be explained by the degree to which their own church denomination or leader publicly references it.”⁵ When asked “What do you feel pastors’ approach should be in communicating about the Great Commission (as a verse, concept and mission)?,” pastor and author, David Daniels, replied,

Some churches view mission and evangelism as “one item on a spiritual buffet.” That is, the Great Commission is one of many options for churchgoers who feel personally inclined. Other churches view mission and evangelism as “one item on a spiritual plate”—like beets, the Great Commission doesn’t appeal to most people, but everyone has to eat their vegetables, so to speak. Both of these distorted views fail to put gospel proclamation as the centerpiece of the Church’s existence. David Bosch rightly states in

¹ “51% of Churchgoers Don’t Know of the Great Commission.” *Barna*, March 27, 2018. <https://www.barna.com/research/half-churchgoers-not-heard-great-commission/>.

² “Churchgoers” were defined in this survey as those who have attended church within the past six months.

³ It is worth noting that while Matthew 28:18-20 is most commonly referred to as the “Great Commission,” we can identify five New Testament texts which, *together*, offer us the full picture of the church’s missionary task (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Lk 24:44-49; Jn 20:22; Acts 1:8). To this point, George Peters wrote, “The Great Commission is a composite commission...No one of [the New Testament missions texts] gives it in its completeness, but they beautifully supplement each other.” George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 174.

⁴ According to Barna, “Non-mainline are those in charismatic/Pentecostal churches, churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, churches in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition and non-denominational churches, among others. Mainline are those in American Baptist Churches USA, the Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church and Presbyterian Church USA.” “51% of Churchgoers Don’t Know of the Great Commission.”

⁵ Ibid.

his book *Transforming Mission*, “There is a church because there is a mission, not vice-versa.” When pastors think exclusively about the gospel as God’s means for serving people instead of the Church’s motivation to serve the world, the Great Commission gets lost in the flurry of church-centric activities. The Great Commission and the glory of God it declares must be more than a verse; it must be the driving force of a disciple-making church.⁶

Daniels makes the observation that for many churches and Christians, mission and evangelism is seen as an optional activity for some to care about and engage in should they be interested and gifted. This view sees the gospel as a mere tool for use in the church’s activity, in this case, mission. And yet, Daniels posits, that view fails to see the gospel foundation and motive for global mission.

As pastors, we have a unique calling and responsibility to see that our people know the whole counsel of God which includes his global plan to redeem people from every tribe, nation, and tongue through the faithful and intentional witness of his people. The purpose of this paper is to challenge and encourage us as pastors who consider their ministries and churches to be “gospel-centered” - that is, pastors characterized by a high view of the gospel and the desire to not only proclaim the gospel to unbelievers, but also apply the gospel to believers - that gospel centrality necessarily keeps the nations in focus. We ought to be gospel centered churches who love not only the *content* of the gospel, but also the *scope* of the gospel (the nations) as well as the *messengers* of the gospel (missionaries). To do this, I will offer a brief biblical theology of mission as a means of highlighting the global focus of the gospel. Further I will examine a few New Testament texts that demonstrate the church’s call to send and care for those who go to the nations with the gospel. But first, we will look at the important words of the newly resurrected Christ to his disciples concerning the global plan of redemptive history as revealed in Scripture.

The Gospel is for the Nations

The Emmaus Road and the Global Purposes of God

In the final chapter of his gospel, Luke records for us what was surely the greatest Bible study of all time. After some had claimed that the tomb of Jesus had been found empty, the resurrected Christ appeared to two disciples on their way to Emmaus. As they spoke, Jesus, hidden from their recognition, confronts their confusion over what had transpired over the previous three days. Luke writes, “And [Jesus] said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he

⁶ David Daniels is lead pastor of Pantego Bible Church in Fort Worth, TX and the author of *Next Step Discipleship* and *Next Step Church*. “The Future of Teaching the Great Commission: A Q&A.” *Barna*, January 15, 2019. <https://www.barna.com/research/future-teaching-great-commission/>.

interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).⁷ Later that day Jesus appeared back in Jerusalem with the rest of the disciples to open the Scriptures and their minds concerning the work of God through Christ in redemptive history. Luke tells us,

Then [Jesus] said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:44-49).

According to Jesus, “everything written” about him in the Old Testament spoke of his eventual suffering, death, and resurrection. However, Jesus continued and included the truth that “repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in [Jesus’] name to all nations” as the trajectory of Christ’s atoning work. We can not miss that Jesus groups the act of proclaiming the gospel to the nations along with the work of the gospel itself as the heart of redemptive history to which all of Scripture speaks. As it turns out, the Emmaus road points us far beyond Emmaus to the uttermost parts of the earth.

That Jesus would explain redemptive history this way should not be a surprise to us. Like the disciples on the road that day, those who are familiar with their Old Testament should have seen the signs of God’s movement towards the nations long before the incarnation of Christ. And those familiar with the New Testament’s record of the Church’s growth, expansion, and culmination should be familiar with the result of gospel advancement. In fact, the entirety of Scripture is a record of mission. Robin Dale Hadaway writes, “Between the first two chapters of Genesis and the last two chapters of the Revelation, the human experience unfolds. This includes sin, redemption, reconciliation, and salvation. Missions consists of the activities of God and his representatives to bring Adam’s race back into fellowship with him through his Son, Jesus Christ.”⁸ From here, a brief biblical theology of missions will serve us in keeping the nations in view while we labor in gospel ministry.

⁷ Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture references in this paper are from the English Standard Version (ESV) (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016).

⁸ Robin Dale Hadaway, *A Survey of World Missions* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 18.

A Brief Biblical Theology of Missions⁹

Andreas Köstenberger introduced his work, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, by calling attention to the importance of mission in the biblical story. He writes,

Between Eden and the eternal state, between Abraham and Armageddon, between Babel and the beasts confinement to the lake of fire, few biblical topics are as important as mission. This is because mission, while purposed by God prior to sin, is inextricably linked to human sinfulness and need for redemption and God's provision of salvation in the person and work of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. This 'good news' of salvation in Jesus, however, must be made known. Thus, mission is the ingredient that both precedes Christian experience and constitutes a major motivation for Christian living: the saving mission of Jesus forms the foundation for Christian mission, and the gospel is the message of this mission, a mission that is not optional but mandatory.¹⁰

Here, we will briefly look at the major threads of mission that run throughout the storyline of Scripture, pointing to and culminating in "the saving mission of Jesus" which "forms the foundation of Christian mission."

From Fall to Babel

After the fall of man, Scripture tells the dark story of humanity falling further and further into decay as the reality of a fallen world becomes more apparent. In the opening chapters of Genesis we are confronted with murder, polygamy, and wickedness, leading to a coordinated effort of rebellion against God at Babel. Genesis 11 records the plan of God, "Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth..." (Gen. 11:7-8). In Acts, Paul recounts this episode as he preached in Athens, offering God's reasoning for the diversity of nations. Paul said, "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:26-27). The creation of "nations" at Babel as a means of judgment *and redemption* is important as we consider a biblical theology of missions. Hadaway notes, "In the Old Testament, the most common word for 'nations' or 'peoples' is the Hebrew term *goy*, and its plural, *goyim*. The Septuagint translates *goyim* 'Gentiles' and the Greek word *ethnos* as 'nations.' Of some 160 occurrences of *ethnos* in the New Testament, about 40 instances are

⁹ Obviously, much more could be said on this topic than what is presented here. For more on a biblical theology of mission, see Robin Dale Hadaway, "The Biblical Basis of Missions," *A Survey of World Missions* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020); Andreas Köstenberger, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2020); George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972); Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006).

¹⁰ Köstenberger, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 1.

quotes from the Old Testament, words for nation or Gentile. The *ethnos* constitute the object of God's love, mercy, and mission in the New Testament. These nations or people groups began at Babel and are important in missions."¹¹

Abraham

Moving on to Genesis 12 we find "one of the most significant missional statements in the Old Testament"¹² when we read of the covenant God made with Abram, in which God promises, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing" (Gen. 12:2). This nation would, of course, become Israel, and while this nation would inherit a special position with the Lord, it would also inherit a special purpose among the nations. God's covenant with Abraham continued, "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). God's covenant with Abram in Genesis 12 is filled out in Genesis 15 and 17. We see the global scope of God's covenant in the changed name of Abram in chapter 17. We read, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations" (Gen. 17:4-5). The narrative surrounding God's work through Abraham continues with a focus on Abraham's line of descendant through Isaac rather than Ishmael, showing that "the divine promise of blessing for the families of the ground is to be fulfilled not through all of Abraham's descendants (i.e. through the nations of Israel) but through one future descendant, who will rule over the nation."¹³ While one nation would be established through Abraham, all nations are in view at its origin.

Israel and the Nations

After the great exodus event from Egypt, God establishes Israel as his covenant people at Mt. Sinai, this time in a covenant with Moses. As God gives the law to Israel guiding their life and worship as his covenant people, we should not miss the missional purpose of the law. God told Moses, "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5-6). Israel was called to serve as priests to the nations around them, that is, they were to represent God to the world. This, in effect, is what we would identify as Old Testament missions. Ultimately, mission in Scripture flows in two different directions. In the New Testament, the Church is sent out to the nations. In the Old Testament, however, the nations are drawn to Israel. This has been designated as the "centrifugal" and "centripetal" method of missions in redemptive history. George Peters explains, "The Old Testament upholds the centripetal method which may be thought of as a sacred magnetism that

¹¹ Hadaway, *A Survey of World Missions*, 20.

¹² Köstenberger, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

draws to itself...According to the Old Testament, the world of nations is to come to Jerusalem.”¹⁴ Moses’ charge to Israel in Deuteronomy 4 is an example of this calling to draw nations to the Lord through their priestly service as law followers:

See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? (Deut. 4:5-8).

Prophets

Of course, Israel was not faithful to follow the Lord, and thus failed to fulfill their calling to faithfully represent the Lord among the other nations. And yet, this did not change the Lord’s desire or plan to reach the nations. As the prophets spoke to Israel, the theme of the nations’ inclusion with the people of God continued. One example worth noting here is Isaiah’s words concerning the nations’ entrance into Jerusalem: “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it” (Is. 2:2). Later in Isaiah we read that restoration and salvation will be brought to Israel and the nations not by Israel’s own faithfulness and accomplishments, but by a “servant”¹⁵ of the Lord, “a Davidic king, who will exercise universal authority, bringing justice and righteousness to the whole world.”¹⁶ Isaiah relates the word of the Lord, saying, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Is. 49:6). Though Israel failed to be the kingdom of priests which drew the nations to the Lord, the coming, better Priest would bring salvation to the nations.

Jesus and the Church

Though Jesus’ earthly ministry was initially focused on the nation of Israel (ex. Matt. 15:24), all nations were in view at his incarnation. Luke records for us the words of Simeon who, when taking the young Jesus into his arms, praised the Lord, saying, “...my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel” (Lk. 2:30-32). Hadaway notes that the turning point for Jesus in his mission to the nations occurs in John 12 when a group of Greeks desire to join in

¹⁴ Peter, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 21.

¹⁵ References in Isaiah to this “servant” are Is. 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12.

¹⁶ Köstenberger, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 29.

worship just after his triumphal entry on Palm Sunday.¹⁷ After the death and resurrection of Christ, the centripetal movement of the mission of God to the nations takes off with the commission of the disciples (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Lk 24:44-49; Jn 20:22; Acts 1:8). From there we read of the early church's growth and missionary expansion in the book of Acts and the other New Testament epistles. It is, of course, this period of redemptive history we find ourselves and our ministries, but as we continue in our New Testaments we know that the spread of the gospel among the nations will one day reach a glorious conclusion.

Revelation

The climax of the work of God in Christ is seen in the tremendous vision given to John as he gazed upon the throne of God while the "myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands" (Rev. 5:11) praised the resurrected Christ. Those who make up this chorus are said to be the "ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). We also see the nations dwelling inside the walls of the New Jerusalem as we conclude the final book of the Bible (Rev. 21:24-26). All of this points to the future end of mission altogether. Köstenberger notes the effect this future vision should have on us today. He writes, "This points to the limited time frame for mission, stressing its urgency as well as its ultimate purpose; that is, the gathering of a diverse representation of redeemed humanity for the worship and praise of God."¹⁸

Conclusion

Again, the Bible is a record of mission as God works to create a people for himself that is made up of people from not solely one ethnic people group, but of every nation on earth. Bruce Ashford and Heath Thomas conclude,

...the most profound story at the beginning of the twenty-first century is the explosive growth of Christianity around the world. For Christians who have listened attentively to the biblical narrative, this comes as no surprise. As God promised throughout the Scriptures, he will make his people a light to the nations. And as he reveals in John's vision, his promise will find its fulfillment when Christ returns to receive worship of vast multitudes from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

But that time has not yet come, and God's people remain in the middle of the script - a script in which we are called to immerse ourselves in the biblical narrative so that we can challenge the world's idols and ideologies with the axioms of the Bible and live faithfully in this time before Christ returns. Our mission is comprehensive, drawing on the totality of who we are as creatures made in God's image, radiating outward

¹⁷ John 12:20-24. Hadaway, *A Survey of World Missions*, 24.

¹⁸ Köstenberger, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 229.

through word and deed into every sector of society and every sphere of culture, and extending to every nation and people even to the ends of the earth.¹⁹

As we grasp Scripture's testimony concerning the work of God in Christ and the global scope of which that work constitutes, we are confronted with an important realization: We can not claim to be passionate about the gospel if we are apathetic towards the nations; a gospel-centered church will be a global-minded church. In an article titled, "Your Church May Not Be as Gospel-Centered as You Think," Tony Merida challenges his readers, "The gospel fuels our mission. You can endure opposition when you have promises like those in Romans 8. When you have a gospel this big, you'll want to take it to the nations. Many don't have a passion for the nations precisely because they don't have a gospel worth preaching."²⁰ As we aim to have "gospel centered" ministries, we must keep the global purposes of God in front of our people. Again, gospel centrality necessitates a passion for the scope of the gospel. But it also calls for intentional partnership with messengers of the gospel, the topic to which we will now turn.

The Gospel is Sent to the Nations Through Partnerships

While God purposes to redeem men, women, and children from every nation on earth, he has also purposed the means by which he will accomplish it. We have been reminded that he has commissioned us to go, bringing the good news of the gospel to the unreached peoples of the world. The witness of his people are the means by which the nations are called to repent and believe. However, global missions is not the task of solely one individual, one church, or one denomination; it is a task that advances through partnerships. Briefly, we will see how these partnerships in the gospel and for the gospel are natural, necessary, and (hopefully) noteworthy.

Of all the New Testament epistles, Paul's letter to the church in Philippi stands out as an example of a healthy gospel partnership. After leaving Philippi to continue on his missionary journeys, the believers in Philippi desired to support Paul by way of prayer (Phil. 1:18-19), finances (Phil. 4:15-16), and encouragement (Phil. 2:25, 4:10, 18). And Paul, the missionary, was incredibly grateful. He wrote to them,

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. (Phil. 1:3-8)

¹⁹ Bruce Riley Ashford and Heath A. Thomas, *The Gospel of our King: Bible, Worldview, and the Mission of Every Christian* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 200-201.

²⁰ Tony Merida, "Your Church May Not Be as Gospel-Centered as You Think." *The Gospel Coalition*, April 10, 2018. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/your-church-gospel-centered-think/>.

Clearly, there was a deep connection between this church and Paul. But we should note that the gratefulness Paul expressed for the church in Philippi was due to their “partnership in the gospel” (Phil. 1:5). Later he identified this partnership as their partaking of “grace, both in [Paul’s] imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel” (Phil. 1:7). In other words, not only were they partners in believing the gospel, they were partners in spreading the gospel. And this was a natural partnership in light of the gospel’s work in their lives. Just as unity and familial bonds are the result of our common faith in Christ,²¹ so should be the coordinated efforts to spread that common faith found in the gospel to rest of the world.

Gospel partnerships are natural, but they are also necessary. The apostle Paul would emphasize this truth in his letter to the church in Rome. In chapter 10, Paul wrote, “For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” (Rom. 10:11-13). After many chapters of teaching the content of the gospel, Paul here is reminding the Roman believers of the scope of the gospel; it is good news for all. God bestows “his riches on all who call on him.” However, to call on the Lord, they must first hear of the Lord. This dilemma is then presented by Paul, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?” (Rom. 1:14-15). J.V. Fesko points out that Paul is using a rhetorical pattern to make his point that the gospel must be sent for the nations to hear and believe. The pattern is referred to as a “*sorites*,” that is, a “chain of propositions” in which “we find a logical chain of causes” to form an argument. Fesko writes, “The pattern appears quite clearly, in that the predicate in each sentence becomes the subject of the following sentence and each step in the chain logically leads to the next: believing requires hearing, and hearing requires preaching, preaching requires a preacher, therefore someone must send him.”²² Within God’s design for making disciples among the nations, there exists a necessary relationship between those who will believe among the nations, those who go to them, and those who send those who go. The nations will not believe if they do not hear. They cannot hear, if no one is sent to them. As pastors who want our churches to be involved in the gospel going out to the world, we must help our people remember the necessary partnerships of a global missionary ministry.

As we seek to partner with missionaries who take the gospel to the lost of the world, we should be striving for more than the mere reality of partnership. We should also be concerned for the quality of that partnership. We find instruction and encouragement in John’s 3rd letter, written to a man named Gaius who made efforts to support missionaries in their ministries. He wrote,

²¹ Paul uses the Greek word “*koinonia*,” translated as “partnership” (Phil. 1:5).

²² J.V. Fesko, “Romans 8:29-30 and the Question of the *Ordo Salutis*,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 8 (2014), 52. Two other examples of Paul’s use of a *sorites* can be found in Romans 5:3-5 and Romans 8:29-30.

Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth (3 John 5-8).

Again, Gaius had supported those who had “gone out for the sake of the name,”²³ his support described as “a faithful thing” in which he became a “fellow worker.” Like Gaius, we, too, ought to partner with those who have gone out with the gospel. But notice the quality of the partnership that John calls for here. We are to “send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.” This should cause us to stop and consider the way in which we have sent missionaries. It is not enough to ask, “Are we sending missionaries?” We must also ask the probing question, “Are we sending missionaries ‘in a manner worthy of God?’” Or even more pointedly, “Would God approve of the way we have sent each missionary?” A global gospel ministry calls for nothing less than partnerships that glorify the Lord as they work together to see the Lord glorified all over the world. The gospel partnerships that are pursued and developed in a gospel-centered ministry are natural, necessary, and should be noteworthy.

Conclusion

As pastors who desire to see our churches rooted in and saturated with the gospel, we must be diligent to keep the nations in view. Leading our churches to know, love, and engage the nations with the gospel as well as faithfully partner with global gospel workers is both our calling and privilege as gospel-centered pastors. Christopher Wright notes, “Our mission flows from God’s mission, and God’s mission is for the sake of his whole world - indeed his whole creation.”²⁴ May it never be said that our people are clueless when it comes to the Great Commission as the majority of churchgoers apparently seem to be. Let’s not allow our churches to be kinks in the “great flow of God’s mission.”²⁵ Let’s proclaim the content of the gospel in our ministries, but let’s also point our people to the scope of the gospel as well as joyfully partner with messengers of the gospel.

²³ Christopher Wright notes, “Most likely these were...itinerant missionaries...people engaged in traveling ministries of evangelism, church planting, and all that followed on from that: liaising between the local churches, teaching, building structures of local leadership, networking, carrying letters and news, sharing resources, bringing questions and taking back answers, correcting false teaching, encouraging perseverance.” *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 218.

²⁴ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 26.

²⁵ Ibid.

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