

Good news! Joe is back. It has been a month or so, and he asked to meet me for breakfast. Join me in the diner? I hope I'm up for this, because he sounds a little agitated.

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Good morning. I was very glad to get your call. How's life?

*Pretty much the same as always. Nothing too exciting. I get up, go to work, and try and fill in my evenings because I'm bored some of the time.*

Me too! I sometimes wonder, "When is life really going to start?" I don't feel it all the time, but I have times when I just want to get on with whatever God has for me next.

*Yeah, I thought you would get at the whole God thing before we even ordered breakfast.*

I'm glad I didn't disappoint you! Let's order, and then I want to know what you want to talk about.

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Okay, tell me what you're thinking about.

*Actually, the whole God thing you talked about last time we were here is bugging me. Maybe I misunderstood you? I think I need some answers!*

Do say more. What's bugging you?

*Okay, don't fall off your chair, but I have been doing my own informal sort of research about what you told me. And the thing is, your version is really, well, strange.*

Strange? How so?

*None of my friends recognize the whole mission angle. And most of them, especially the ones who used to go to church, agree that God is much more judgmental than loving.*

How many of your friends have you talked to about this? Tell me more!

*I guess this is a little surprising. I didn't start out expecting to talk to anyone. I thought about what you said for a couple of days before I asked female friend to tell me what she thought about it. I tried to tell her the same story you told me, but with a lot less words... I wanted to ask her because she was raised really strict and forced to go to church until she turned sixteen. She was shocked at your whole approach. She didn't*

*recognize your version of God. Not at all! And her parents' God was all about saving souls, but not so much about what you called the rules of the Garden.*

Okay. She thinks my version is different. And?

*She said the pastors she heard as a kid warned her about people trying to change the gospel. She thinks you will probably go to Hell for changing the story!*

Really? But she isn't going to church anymore?

*Nope. I think she still believes in God, but she can't stand the judgment and constant criticism in church. So she blows it off. She says she wants to be "spiritual, but not religious." But I think she really just wants to party and not have to answer to anyone.*

I've met people like her. A lot of people in my generation felt the same way in their twenties. What else did you discover in your informal survey?

*So her reaction was kind of discouraging. But a couple of days later I was still thinking about things, and so I tried your story out on a couple friends at my bar. We had some beers and talked about the meaning of life. The bartender turned the TV down and a whole group joined in on one of those almost endless discussions. Here's the deal: We agreed that the world is heading for a total disaster. If things don't change, either the Muslims will start World War Three, or we will just slowly poison the planet and the cockroaches will win. The bartender threw in that last idea, and we all agreed the bugs would win.*

Wow. So why did you tell the story there?

*The conversation got so completely negative that I thought it would be interesting to see how your story played out. My friends don't know much about a loving God who served them through sacrifice. They agreed that if God were really like Jesus, maybe that kind of god would be okay. And they all agreed that trying to force any view of God or religion on others would just bring the next war on. None of them thought Christianity cared about the planet or recycling. James, they don't recognize your version of the story.*

So how did it feel to tell the story there?

*Hey, I was just trying it out. It's not like I believe this or anything. I told them I heard it from an old guy in a coffee shop. The thing is, I kind of wanted them to believe things could be different. They are just so lost. They have no desire to make a difference. They can't imagine trying to change anything for the better.*

What about you? Do you want to make a difference, to change things for the better?

*James, I'll be honest with you. I'm 26 and I'm frustrated with people who are hopeless. A lot of people don't know how to think about the future. They're kind of paralyzed or stuck. I keep thinking there must be a way for my generation to make a difference. I wouldn't mind it if some version of your story were true. It would be kind of nice to have a little cosmic help in making things better. Is your story true? Help me understand why no one else tells it this way?*

Joe, your questions deserve really good answers. Let me give you the short version here, and also something more substantial to read?

*Are you giving me part of your book? I'll try it, but skip the quiz at the end! What's the short version? Help me get this!*

I'll make this as brief as possible. I want to start by saying I am not alone. Lots of people are beginning to tell the story this way, and I would like to think I have learned this from the best of them. I've been studying this stuff for years. And I am still learning.

Here's a big idea: Try to imagine telling a story to both your grandparents at Sunday dinner and your buddies at the bar. Could you tell them the same story?

*No! I might tell them about the same thing, but I would never tell my grandparents the same story I would tell in the bar. At least I wouldn't tell it in the same way.*

Why not? What's the difference?

*They expect very different things from me. And the situations are very different.*

Exactly! People of different ages hear the same stories with different expectations, and good storytellers consider this in telling the story. Okay, maybe a less extreme example will help you get this: Did you tell the story differently to your female friend and your buddies at the bar?

*It was mostly the same, but the way I told it was different. There was a lot more discussion at the bar. She wasn't as interested and so I made it a lot shorter.*

Okay. So stretch with me on this: Over several thousand of years, the same story has been told to different audiences by good storytellers. Each telling to a new audience called for different emphases. When we lay this out over time, we can find there have been at least five different ways of telling the story. And right now, many of us are feeling after a sixth and somewhat different way.

*I'm not sure I want that whole lecture. What do I really need to know?*

I don't want to judge and critique the whole history of Christianity. But I do think Christian storytellers took a wrong turn around the year 400. We have had a couple of revisions since then. We are in the process of a major revision right now. We need to find the freedom to tell a story about God's love for the world. And we need to deemphasize stories about a few privileged people who get to escape from the doom and gloom everyone else gets stuck with.

*Here's what I'm getting out of all this: You are strange, but in good company. You have decided to tell the story differently. And you want to help people find hope?*

Fair enough. Here's my discussion of all this for other storytellers. Feel free to skim it if it is really boring. Can we have breakfast again? I'll buy if you help me keep this simple.

### Chapter Three: Which Story Are We Telling?

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his son to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17)

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. (Jonathan Edwards)

The second paragraph contains the most famous lines of Jonathan Edwards' sermon, "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God." He preached his sermon in a steely-grey monotone on July 8, 1741 in Enfield, Connecticut.<sup>1</sup> Reports from his day tell us that people writhed in the aisles as he preached it. I respect much of Edwards' work. I admire him enough that I took time to find and visit his grave in Princeton, New Jersey. But I can't even imagine that his view of God in this sermon is correct. And I don't I think Jonathan Edwards would like my Chapter Two very much.

I believe the story in Chapter Two is a fair summary of God's story. It is, if your imagination can stretch with me, the story you tell when you sight a laser beam through Genesis 1:26, straight through John 3:16-17 and hit Revelation 22:5. I believe this line will keep us very close to the core of the story flowing through the Bible. I am forced then to ask: How did we get from the story of a loving God who calls us and equips us for mission to Edwards' sermon about a wrathful God who

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<sup>1</sup> The entire sermon is available on-line at: [www.ccel.org/print/edwards/sermons/sinners](http://www.ccel.org/print/edwards/sermons/sinners).

hates and abhors humanity? Allow me to briefly sketch<sup>2</sup> this for you in three movements: the missional practice of the first three centuries,<sup>3</sup> the narrowing of salvation with Augustine, and a significant loss of missional focus since Augustine's time.

### The Missional Practice of the First Three Centuries

Jesus summarized the lives of his followers in two commandments: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40 NIV). After his resurrection, he sent his followers into the world to keep these commandments and to teach others to do the same.<sup>4</sup> *This joyous obedience—life in a right relationship with God and all creation—expresses the missional focus of the first three centuries.* Let's see how this developed.

Jesus told a lot of stories: "The kingdom of God is like..." Some of his stories were told as riddles. It seems like his first followers were especially dense—dumb as stumps? They kept asking, "Okay, what did that mean?" Some of his stories, like the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), are anything but cryptic. We are frustrated by their much too direct call for forgiveness and reconciliation. After his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus aimed a story at the religious leaders in Jerusalem that takes my breath away:

Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He

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<sup>2</sup> The ideas presented in this chapter are complex. I ask scholars to forgive what is a very partial sketch of ideas. David J. Bosch, provides us with a more comprehensive treatment (600+ pages) in *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Mayknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991, 2011). With Hans Küng, he identifies six epochs of Christian experience with six corresponding paradigms of mission: the apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity; the Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period; the medieval Roman Catholic paradigm; the Protestant (Reformation) paradigm; the modern Enlightenment paradigm; and the emerging ecumenical paradigm (185). *Christianity Today* regards this volume as one of the 100 most significant books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Much of what I have here is in sympathy with his analysis.

<sup>3</sup> "Missional" is a fairly recent term, but one of great significance for this conversation. Alan Hirsch, "Defining Missional," *Leadership Journal*, Fall, 2008, helps us understand that a missional practice is the result of obedience to a missional God: "A proper understanding of *missional* begins with recovering a missionary understanding of God. By his very nature, God is a 'sent one' who takes the initiative to redeem his creation. This doctrine, known as *missio Dei*—the sending of God—is causing many to redefine their understanding of the church. Because we are the 'sent' people of God, the church is the instrument of God's mission in the world." In Protestant circles, the term *missio Dei* appears to have been coined by Karl Hartenstein shortly after an International Missionary Conference at Willingen, Germany in Germany in 1952. He sought to clarify that the church participates in God's mission. See Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 62-64.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 8:34-35; 10:41-45; John 17:18, 20-23; 20:21-23; and Acts 1:8.

put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

"But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

"What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. Haven't you read this passage of Scripture:

"The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes?"

Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away. (Mark 12:1-12, NIV)

Can you see it? Here is the history of their nation, a description of their failure to love God and neighbor, and a clear statement of their intentions for him.<sup>5</sup> The religious authorities understood his story, and arranged his judicial murder. Jesus' stories invited change and provoked a reaction!

Jesus interpreted many of his stories as he spoke about his mission: *He came to show his followers what God is really like.*<sup>6</sup> This allowed them to understand that loving God means spending time with God in the service of others. Loving their neighbors was part of loving God.<sup>7</sup> Jesus showed them what loving their neighbor really looks like—He came to sacrifice himself for his community.<sup>8</sup> This was his humble service

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<sup>5</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 63, 68-9, points out that Matthew's reading of the same parable emphasizes "the missing fruit." Loving neighbor becomes the "litmus test" of loving God. I think we can say more than this: Jesus reframes Isaiah 5:1-7 and draws an obvious parallel between the nation judged in the Babylonian captivity and his own generation. Isaiah's indictment of Israel included their failure to care for the poor and to be a light to the Gentiles. As a nation, they had a mission: They were to bless the nations by showing them God's true concerns. If this sounds far fetched, then contemplate how Isaiah 5:7 is expanded in Isaiah 58-62. The nations serve Israel because Israel shows them the meaning of justice, righteousness, and right relationships.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 1:23; 11:25-27; 28:18-20; John 1:18, 5:16-47; 8:12-30; 12:44-45; 14:5-11; 17:26.

<sup>7</sup> This explains what looks like a collapse of two commandments into one in Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14; and I John 3:16-5:5; but especially I John 3:16-20.

<sup>8</sup> Mark 8:31; 9:30-32; 10:42-45; 14:22-25; John 10:11-18; 15:9-17; and I John 3:16.

to his community and for the world.<sup>9</sup> Jesus explained his life, ministry (including his stories), death, and resurrection as the focus of what Scripture was saying.<sup>10</sup>

After his resurrection, and ascension, Jesus' disciples (followers who are becoming like their master) continued to tell his stories. They traveled all over the ancient Mediterranean world telling his stories, and even more stories about him. The Apostle Peter, one of Jesus' most important early disciples, traveled as far as Rome. A man named John-Mark served as his translator and assistant. The church remembers John-Mark by his second name, Mark. He wrote down the stories Peter told, and edited the whole collection into what became known as the "Gospel of Mark." Mark was more than a secretary. He was an expert storyteller and his Gospel is brilliant first century storytelling. It is best when read out loud, and this takes about 90 minutes in English. It ends with chapter 16, verse 8: "Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid."

Now imagine yourself, sitting in Rome in the first century. You've just listened to the whole Gospel of Mark read to you, and it ends this way... What are you thinking?

I think the entire Gospel of Mark functioned like one of Jesus' stories. It served as an extended parable, a mystery, or a puzzle. The original ending made people want to find someone who knew what happened next. This was brilliant, because they had to find someone connected to Jesus' own community. They heard the good news: Jesus rose from the dead. He has equipped and commissioned his community of disciples to invite others into a new kind of life.<sup>11</sup> They can give themselves in humble service to and for the world with confidence because Jesus guarantees them an extended community and even eternal life in the age to come.<sup>12</sup>

Stay with me in the first century for a few more moments. What was this new life like? It was like being born again in a new community.<sup>13</sup> New believers learned to cry out to God as their loving *Abba* (Daddy) by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup> They learned to recognize that they were being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit who was residing in them.<sup>15</sup> Their minds were renewed as the Spirit formed

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew 3:13-15; Mark 8:34-9:1; 9:33-37; 10:42-45; 12:28-31; John 13:1-17, 34-35; 15:9-17.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 4:21; 24:25-27, 44-49; John 5:39-40.

<sup>11</sup> Mark 10:45 serves as the purpose statement for the Gospel of Mark. Its context is critical: Given the failure of Peter (Mark 8:31-33) and of the nine (Mark 14-18), James and John figure they are in for the best spots in Jesus' kingdom (Mark 9:33-37 and 10:35-41). Jesus makes it very clear: If you want to be great, you need to serve all others (Mark 10:42-44). We are to be like Jesus, who serves us by giving his life as a ransom for us (Mark 10:45).

<sup>12</sup> Mark 8:34-38, 10:26-31.

<sup>13</sup> I Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:22-24; I Peter 2:2-3, and 9.

<sup>14</sup> Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:4-7; I John 3:1-2, 19-24.

<sup>15</sup> John 7:37-39; 14:15-17, 26; 16:8-15; Acts 1:8; Romans 2:4, 5:1-5, 12:2; Ephesians 4:22-24, 5:18-20.

the character of Jesus within them.<sup>16</sup> As his character was formed in them, they began to manifest his love for God and to practice his self-giving love and forgiveness in the world.<sup>17</sup> This life of obedience would bring them their deepest experience of satisfaction and joy.<sup>18</sup> Hear this carefully: By the death of Jesus, they were saved from the world's corrupting power and from the wrath to come.<sup>19</sup> With his risen life,<sup>20</sup> they were also saved for the world—for the very good works God prepared for them to do.<sup>21</sup> *His mission became theirs*, and they began to change the character of life in the Mediterranean world.<sup>22</sup> What was this new life like? It was missional.

Pause for a moment longer and ask: Who was invited into this missional life? The early disciples offered this new life indiscriminately to anyone who would listen.<sup>23</sup> This included all kinds of people that good Jews would have normally looked past: the very people that crucified Jesus,<sup>24</sup> Samaritans,<sup>25</sup> eunuchs,<sup>26</sup> murderous persecutors,<sup>27</sup> and Gentiles.<sup>28</sup> Everyone was invited to repent, to be transformed, and to serve within the new missional community.

The Apostle Paul traveled, preached, and wrote some important letters to early congregations and individuals. As we will see below, some of his texts are difficult, and have provoked controversies. But there should be no question about to whom

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<sup>16</sup> Romans 8:29; Galatians 4:19. Returning to the image of God's vineyard, we find a powerful picture in John 15: Jesus is the vine. We are the branches. The fruit we produce while connected to him will last. The fruit of loving one another shows our world what God is like. Our joy will be full, and God's mission in the world moves forward.

<sup>17</sup> John 20:21-23, Matthew 6:12, 14-15; Ephesians 4:30-32, 5:1-2; Colossians 3:12-14. See also the strong claim that the church exists, not for itself, but "completely and exclusively for the world" in Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Paul and the Early Church*, Volume Two (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 1577-78.

<sup>18</sup> John 15:1-17 (especially verse 11) and Galatians 5:22-23.

<sup>19</sup> John 16:33, 17:15-18; I Thessalonians 1:10.

<sup>20</sup> Romans 4:25.

<sup>21</sup> Ephesians 2:8-10. Good works are too often set against faith, especially by those who misunderstand Paul. We are not saved *by* our works (Ephesians 2:8-9), but *for our good works in the world* (Ephesians 2:10). See also Matthew 5:16; John 15:1-17, 20:21-23; Acts 2:45, 9: 36, 10:38; Romans 12:1-16; Galatians 6:9; II Thessalonians 3:13; II Timothy 3:17; Titus 2:7, 3:8, 3:14; I Peter 2:12; I John 3:16-18;

<sup>22</sup> John 14:12; Acts 17:6; 28:28-31. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 49, tells us the early church held the world together "through their practice of love and service to all." One can find a "remarkable picture of the early Christians' involvement with the poor, orphans, widows, the sick, mine-workers, prisoners, slaves, and travellers." Their practice was not "a stratagem to lure outsiders to the church but simply a natural expression of faith in Christ."

<sup>23</sup> Jesus promised Peter that he would "catch people" (Luke 5:4-11). Acts 2:38-39 show his understanding of the reach of this promise.

<sup>24</sup> Luke 23:34; Acts 2:36-37; 3:11-26; 4:8-12; 6:7. Peter offered forgiveness and new life to the very people who crucified Jesus—and this is within a couple of months of Jesus' death.

<sup>25</sup> Acts 8:4-17.

<sup>26</sup> Deuteronomy 23:1 and Acts 8:26-38.

<sup>27</sup> Acts 9:1-31.

<sup>28</sup> Acts 10, 15:22-29.



new life should be offered. His second letter to the Corinthians clearly identifies his understanding about whom God intends to reconcile: God wants reconciliation with all the world.<sup>29</sup> His first letter to Timothy also speaks plainly:

<sup>3</sup>This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. <sup>7</sup>And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles. (I Timothy 2:3-7, NIV)

We need to hear from the Apostle John because he agrees with Paul and people think he is easier to understand. Knowing Jesus' intention to draw all people to him,<sup>30</sup> John tells us whose sins Jesus paid for:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup>He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (I John 2:1-2, NIV)

Jesus himself told his disciples to make disciples in all nations,<sup>31</sup> and to go as his witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth.<sup>32</sup> And so I think it is fair to say that in the first century, *Jesus' disciples believed that a new life—characterized by the joyous service of others—was available to all people and so it should be offered to all people.*<sup>33</sup>

As the first generation of believers began to age and die, Matthew, Luke, and John wrote their own versions to tell the Jesus story to their own communities. And not surprisingly, other people wrote false gospels and twisted Jesus' words to say all kinds of crazy and stupid things.<sup>34</sup> Within a hundred years, the whole art of

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<sup>29</sup> II Corinthians 5:16-21. See also Romans 5:18, 11:32, Romans 15:7-16; I Corinthians 9:19-22; Galatians 6:9-10; Ephesians 3:2-11; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:28-29;

<sup>30</sup> John 12:32.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.

<sup>32</sup> Acts 1:8.

<sup>33</sup> See II Corinthians 5:18-21 and consider Paul's desire to always preach where no else has been (Romans 15:20). Later in the first century, we find this powerful statement in I Clement 7:5-6: "Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ and understand how precious it is to his Father, because, being poured out for our salvation, it won for the whole world the grace of repentance. Let us review all the generations in turn, and learn that from generation to generation the Master has given an opportunity for repentance to those who desire to turn to him." Cited from Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, third edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 55.

<sup>34</sup> For a review of much of this, see Darrell L. Bock, *The Missing Gospels: Unearthing the Truth Behind Alternative Christianities* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006) and Lee Martin McDonald, *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin Transmission, and Authority* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007).

gospelling people became very complicated because you had to make sure you were working with the right story. Many people hijacked the story of Jesus for their own purposes. They wrote or edited their own version of the story and used these false gospels to control and manipulate other people. I'm not saying all of them were malicious, but some of them definitely were.

Marcion—a wealthy ship owner in Rome—serves as an interesting example of this. Sometime before the year 140, he literally trashed the gospels written by Matthew, Mark, and John. He kept only a revised version of the Gospel of Luke and some of Paul's letters. How revised was his version of Luke? He stripped all Jewish influences out of the story of Jesus. Why? He hated the God of the Old Testament. Again, why? Because this God wasn't afraid to be involved in material substance. Why was Marcion so bothered by physicality?

The prevailing worldview of sophisticated people in the early second century was dominated by some of the ideas of the Greek philosopher Plato. Plato's ideas had been modified in the more than 400 years since his death into a way of thinking, a way of seeing the world, sometimes called "Middle Platonism." Part of the story told by Plato was that the material world is evil. He believed that "the body is the prison of the soul."<sup>35</sup> It seems that Marcion grabbed hold of some of these ideas and reasoned that if physical matter, and the body are evil, then any god who created them must also be evil. Of course if matter is evil, then food, sex, and pretty much anything else you enjoy are also evil... Just imagine how your life might change!

Marcion wasn't the only character in the second century offering a revised version of Christianity and a radically different script for your life story. Hang in there with me as I describe this, because some of these second century groups anticipated what we encounter as "new age" spiritualities in our own twenty-first century.

Experts on the second century recognize a loosely organized movement called "Gnosticism." Here are some of the more common Gnostic doctrines. Let me keep this in the present tense? Gnostics believe that physical matter is evil. Salvation, understood as an escape from suffering physical matter, comes by way of secret knowledge (*gnosis* in Greek, hence the name "Gnostics"). This knowledge comes through a teacher who has already escaped—or was never really part of—the physical world. Knowledge IS power. Some people are just dirt clods and incapable of this knowledge or way of knowing. The dirt clod folk aren't worth much and have no possible happy future in a realm of elevated, refined, immaterial existence. Their suffering isn't important. Your suffering isn't important either if you are one of the chosen ones. If you can understand this secret teaching, then you are one of lucky, powerful, chosen ones. For \$19.95 (plus shipping) you can have the next key to enlightenment...<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Plato, *Phaedo* 62b.

<sup>36</sup> N.T. Wright points to the self-help spirituality of Gnosticism in *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2012), 17.

Okay, I couldn't resist the last line. How often does religion tell you that the physical world is evil, so send us your money? And notice how a Gnostic view of things minimizes the importance of your body and your own suffering? How does this feel? You know, in your gut?

Can things get worse? Oh yes! If salvation is about knowing the right ideas, then arguing and proving that you are right becomes one of the most important things you can do. Really? Why not just look past your neighbor and assume he is a dirt clod? Part of the appeal of Gnosticism was that it told you that you were very special if you could recognize and understand Gnostic ideas. And if your neighbor can't understand it, too bad! His stupidity shows that he isn't important anyway. He isn't qualified to be a member of your special club...

God answered much of the Gnostic challenge with the writings of Irenaeus of Lyon in the late second century.<sup>37</sup> Irenaeus learned his lessons from a man named Polycarp. Polycarp learned his lessons from the Apostle John. John learned his lessons from Jesus. It was hard to get better credentials than this in the late second century. Irenaeus believed that our suffering is important, and that all people are worth arguing with. He wrote five books arguing with folks like Marcion and the Gnostics. But he didn't just argue with people. He also told God's story.

Sometime between 178-202, Irenaeus wrote a little book called the *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*.<sup>38</sup> He set the story in the context of who God is as Father, Son, and Spirit, and the Rule of Faith (paragraphs 1-10). He told the story beginning with the Garden of Eden and moving through the effects of the death and resurrection of Jesus (paragraphs 11-42). He proved that his version of the story was correct by examining the Old Testament narratives and prophecies (paragraphs 42-100).

Realizing that his book was too long to be practical for most people, he also provided "rules of faith" that could be used (like a ruler) to measure other stories and sermons. Here is one of his shorter "rules," made all the more interesting by his claim that the Holy Spirit writes this story in the hearts of our neighbors even if they are barbarians, so that they—and hopefully we—are:

believing in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and all things therein, by means of Christ Jesus, the Son of God; who, because of His surpassing love towards His creation, condescended to be born of the virgin, He Himself uniting man through Himself to God, and having suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rising again, and having been received up in splendour, shall come in glory, the Saviour of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are

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<sup>37</sup> See Mary T. Clark, "Irenaeus," *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1990), 471-73.

<sup>38</sup> Irenaeus of Lyon, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, translated by Joseph P. Smith, Ancient Christian Writers Series, 16 (New York: Paulist/Newman, 1952).

judged, and sending into eternal fire those who transform the truth, and despise His Father and His advent. (*Against Heresies* 3.4.2)

Let's pause and consider one last idea with Irenaeus: Who is the story for? The story is for all creation—including even the barbarians.<sup>39</sup> The gospel is meant to be good news for everyone, and not just for a special few lucky Gnostics.<sup>40</sup>

### A Narrowed View of Salvation with Augustine

The official persecution of Christians stopped with the Edict of Milan in 313. It seemed the doors were finally open to share the good news with the entire world. With help from Constantine's troops, the bishops met and agreed on the Nicene Creed in 325. In a fairytale, we would see Christianity expand and flourish in a Christian Empire. It didn't happen. The Roman Empire began to collapse. The great city of Rome was sacked in 410 by the Visigoths. By 430, even the Roman cities in North Africa had been burned and looted by the Vandals. The classical age of Western civilization was all but dead. What used to be called the "dark ages" had begun. The context of preaching, teaching, and hearing God's story had changed. And I believe that the story being told also changed.

Augustine (Saint Augustine to many of us!) witnessed the end of that age. In the process of his life and work, he changed the story. Those are fearsome words. Don't hate me for writing them. I certainly don't hate him. Allow me to explain?

Peter Brown's masterpiece—*Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*<sup>41</sup>—begins with a description of the affluence of North African cities at the time of Augustine's birth in 354. His family was wealthy. He received a fine education and became professor of rhetoric in the imperial court in Milan. He was a big success. Like many men in his time, he kept a mistress for many years and enjoyed her company. He sent her away (after 15 years!) to prepare for an advantageous marriage. His conversion to

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<sup>39</sup> The longest passage I have found in Irenaeus supporting freewill is found in *Against Heresies*, IV.37.1-7. The meaning of "God thus determining all things beforehand" refers to the way and path of the return. This agrees with what the rest of the chapter says, and especially with IV.38.3.

<sup>40</sup> See Clark, Irenaeus, 472; and Peter J. Thuesen, *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19. He observes "In the early church, the emphasis fell on human freedom as the antidote to the perceived fatalism of astrologers, Gnostics and Stoics." See also Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston, *God's Strategy in Human History* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1973), 243-295. This Appendix lists texts from the first four centuries, and discusses the shift Augustine brought in reaction to Pelagius. One can add additional passages for freewill, and since 1973, Calvinist scholars have pointed to maybe a half dozen texts that restrict freewill. It is safe to say that the vast majority of early church writers believed that humans retain enough free will to choose to respond to the invitation as they are aided by the power of the Holy Spirit. Wipf and Stock issued a second edition in 2000. In an email dated July 4, 2012, Dr. Paul Marston told me of hopes for an updated edition, appearing in England but not in the USA.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967, 2000).

Christianity in 387 and ordination as a priest in 391 led him to abandon his engagement. Returning to Africa, he became bishop in Hippo in 396. He died in 430, just before the Vandals burned the city of Hippo.

Prior to the year 391, Augustine believed humans had free choice. He taught that God foresaw our human desire to believe, and granted grace to enable that belief. In Augustine's words, "God only predestined those whom he knew would believe and follow the call."<sup>42</sup> This was the standard view and held by persons of sound faith.

Augustine began telling a different story in 395.<sup>43</sup> As a pastor he began to see that humans are far more broken than he had imagined. They are indeed trapped by habits and sins they cannot choose to lay aside. Searching the Apostle Paul's letters, he came to believe that humans could not delight in God unless God gives them this delight.<sup>44</sup> This is where it becomes difficult: God doesn't give this delight to all humans. If we ask why God chose only a small portion of humanity for salvation, we get a very strange answer: The number of human souls saved equals the number of angels who fell in the Satanic rebellion.<sup>45</sup> The rest of humanity was justly condemned to Hell before they were even born—before even the creation of the world. Augustine believed that their torment in an eternal Hell showed God's justice, holiness, and glory. To prevent humanity from corrupting his plan as the angels did, God gave a gift of perseverance to souls predestined to salvation.<sup>46</sup>

Augustine grounded his views in the Apostle Paul's letters, and so he had to answer I Timothy 2:3-4 (quoted above). Augustine reinterpreted this to mean that God wants some from all nations to be saved, but not all in all nations.<sup>47</sup>

Many reasons might be offered to explain Augustine's narrowed view of God's intentions. Brown suggests that Augustine had seen too many near life-long Christians fail to persevere, and that this undermined any remaining confidence in the human will.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, Augustine's narrowed view of God's intent may be a reflection of the new economic reality. As the classical world was destroyed by invading hordes of barbarians, Roman prosperity bled away. Those who survived

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<sup>42</sup> Thuesen, *Predestination*, 19 and 231, note 13. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 232. Oddly enough, Augustine's early comments on Romans 8:29 represent him in the first edition of *Romans*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, VI, edited by Gerald Bray (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 1998), 235.

<sup>43</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 141-50.

<sup>44</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 221, observes that "Augustine wrestled with an anthropological problem rather than a theological problem."

<sup>45</sup> Augustine, *Enchiridion*, chapters 28-29. His concern with God filling out the predetermined number of seats in heaven feels much more like Neo-Platonism than like Christianity to me.

<sup>46</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 401-10.

<sup>47</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 404; and Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace*, 44.

<sup>48</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 407-8.

found themselves in a very sparse economy. Is it too much to think that this new economy changed the context in which God's story could be told and heard?<sup>49</sup>

A second consequence followed from Augustine's pessimism: Christianity had less and less to do with trying to change the world as an expression of loving God and neighbors, and more and more to do with merely saving souls. The world was left to secular authorities; salvation of souls became the concern of the church.<sup>50</sup>

A third idea was developed with horrifying consequences. Augustine allowed the use of force in correcting backslidden church members.<sup>51</sup> This evolved into using force in seeking conversions. This didn't produced deep conversions, and it redefined mission in a ghastly way: Charlemagne "converted" the Saxons at the point of a sword.<sup>52</sup>

It would be unfair to blame Augustine for all such travesties, the Inquisition, and the Crusades. But step back and see where people took his ideas: Mission was narrowed from an active and loving service God and others by all disciples, to the work of priests and monks and administered by the institutional church, and finally to the forceful and at times violent work of the state for the sake of its own security.<sup>53</sup>

Allow me to summarize these first two sections. The first generation of Christians believed that the offer of a new life in Jesus was available to all people: God loves all of humanity and wants all humans to repent. Early Christian leaders made great sacrifices as they invited all nations to become like Jesus in their trust and service of God. With very few exceptions, teachers and preachers before 390 followed their teaching and example. After 390, Augustine saw a different emphasis and changed the story. He emphasized that all humans deserve damnation. Only a small portion, equal to the number of fallen angels, would be given the gift of faith and a place in the heavenly city as a demonstration of God's mercy. Augustine narrowed the church's understanding about salvation. He thought God intended to save only a few. And these few were saved in order to be seated in heaven. This led to a significant loss of missional focus for both individuals and churches.

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<sup>49</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 410; and Thuesen, *Predestination*, 22. It is important to notice that Augustine still believed that telling God's story was the best way to encourage new believers. See his *Catechising of the Uninstructed* (from 406 CE).

<sup>50</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 221-25; and see Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that have Shaped our World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), 153-54.

<sup>51</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 231-39, and see Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 222-25, 241.

<sup>52</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 227-235, especially 229. See also Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, second edition revised by Owen Chadwick for The Penguin History of the Church (New York/London: Penguin Books, 1964, 1986), 67-69.

<sup>53</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 241-43.

### A Significant Loss of a Missional Focus

The church in the west—what became the Roman Catholic Church—accepted Augustine's narrowed view of salvation. It became the standard view in the Middle Ages: "Augustine embodied the beginning of this paradigm, Thomas Aquinas its climax."<sup>54</sup> In what might be called a perfect storm, Augustine's narrowed view and the Church's reliance upon the Creeds led to a significant—and at times, a total loss—of any missional focus.

The great creeds of the fourth century grew out of the "Rules of Faith" proposed by Irenaeus and other respected authorities. They were useful in establishing boundaries for some areas of Christian thought. As such, they were political tools to help bring uniformity to a movement that had been oppressed and which now expected rapid advancement. They maintained the form of a story—with a beginning, middle, and end. But they said very little about the life of Jesus between his birth and his death.

The Apostles' Creed moved from his birth to his death with no mention of why he was born, why he died, or for whom he died. The Nicene Creed offers only a few more details: He made all things, he came down from heaven, he became human for our salvation, and he was crucified for our sake. Once again, it says little about who God intended to save, or how this salvation was effected by his death.

Neither creed says what we are saved from. Neither creed says what we are saved for. First century historian and biblical scholar N.T. Wright provides a reasonable explanation for what he calls the missing middle of the creeds: "Early Christians read and studied the gospels and tried to live by them. Their allegiance to them is not in doubt. But they saw no need to mention the central substance of the gospels in the creeds as well."<sup>55</sup>

Over the course of centuries, the average Christian lost touch with the humility and life of Jesus as portrayed in the four gospels. How could common Christians even think of imitating the imperial Christ whose agents in the church forced submission with sword, torture, and flame? "Keeping the rules" replaced the imitation of Jesus' life, love, and service. *There was no way for the average Christian to even know what a missional life looked like.* And if all your neighbors were forced to be Christians, then what difference would it make? Religion became a matter of believing what the church told you to believe, following the rules, and escaping to heaven after death.

A relatively small number of monastics engaged in missionary activities on the expanding borders of Europe. It is worth noting that the most significant revival of missional living was experienced by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) following their

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<sup>54</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 242. Bosch notes that Aquinas differed from Augustine in one important aspect: He rejected the use of force in conversions (224).

<sup>55</sup> N.T. Wright, *When God Became King*, 12.

intensive meditations on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in their Spiritual Exercises.<sup>56</sup> With the discovery of the “new world,” Dominican and Jesuit missionaries helped subdue and convert the natives who survived the armies’ conquests.

The Lutheran Reformation of 1517 failed to revive any significant missional focus. Martin Luther (1483-1546) followed Augustine on predestination and salvation from the world.<sup>57</sup> He expected the world to end in 1558. It didn’t end, and within a generation of Luther, Lutherans were debating the usefulness of a strict Augustinian understanding of predestination. The *Formula of Concord* of 1577 brought only temporary relief to those who questioned the wideness of God’s mercy.<sup>58</sup> Two generations later some Lutheran authorities actively discouraged calls for mission work because “Jesus can tolerate no partners.”<sup>59</sup> These terrifying words from Lutheran theologian Johannes Heinrich Ursinus (1608-1667) were joined by his claim that all that is needed is for everyone to “mind his own door” and thank God “for preserving a small insignificant people who trust his name.”<sup>60</sup> There was a brief revival of missionary interest with the Pietists in the first half of the eighteenth century, and some renewed interest led by Pietists in the early-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But in general, one can lament the history of Lutheranism for its failure to tell God’s story outside of Lutheran church walls.<sup>61</sup>

John Calvin (1509-1564) followed both Augustine and Aquinas in his understanding of predestination.<sup>62</sup> The Reformed Churches tracing their line through Calvin were spared from passivity by one big idea: They believed that the exalted Christ was actively renewing the face of the earth through the Holy Spirit and actively bringing a new age of prosperity and true faith. At least conceptually, Reformed Churches could respond to God’s initiative and seek to extend the reign of Christ’s glory and

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<sup>56</sup> See Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, The Penguin History of the Church, VI, Revised for the Second Edition by Henry Chadwick (London: Penguin Books, 1964, 1986), 126-27; and see my *Sacred Listening: Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006).

<sup>57</sup> Thuesen, *Predestination*, 27-29, and Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 244-53. Bosch’s summary could be updated with Ingemar Öberg, *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematic Study With Special Reference To Luther's Bible Exposition* (St Louis, MO: Concordia, 2007).

<sup>58</sup> See the “Formula of Concord,” Epitome, Article 11, and the Solid Declaration, Article 11. The Formula didn’t end the debates, and predestination remains a difficult doctrine even today (See Thuesen, *Predestination*, 160-68).

<sup>59</sup> Robert Kolb, “Is the Great Commission Still Valid for Lutherans?” An unpublished paper delivered at a Crossings Conference (January, 2010) informs us that the Swedish Crown was a notable exception and sponsored mission efforts from 1525-1655.

<sup>60</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 257.

<sup>61</sup> One could argue that Lutherans have yet to understand one of Luther’s basic paradoxes: “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.” And, “A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, and subject to all.” See “The Freedom of a Christian,” in *Luther’s Works: Career of the Reformer I*, volume 31 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 344.

<sup>62</sup> You can find a useful summary of much of this discussion in Thuesen, *Predestination*, 29-32.



grace.<sup>63</sup> Some congregations and many individuals embraced the tasks of evangelizing the lost, relieving the sufferings of the poor, and transforming culture under the Lordship of Christ. It is fair to say that the Reformed Churches have been, for the most part, much more successful in showing Christ's love to the world than the Lutherans.

Some in Calvin's camp still wanted to ask: For whom did Christ die? Calvinists split over this question into two groups within a generation of Calvin's death. Those who sided with Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) became known as Arminians.<sup>64</sup> They insisted that God wants to save all people, and that the Holy Spirit is working in every person's life to bring them to faith in Christ. God predestines those God foresees believe to salvation. This "common sense" reading was very close to that of the early church (and Augustine before 391). It resonates with many Baptists. It is foundational for Methodists, Mennonites, holiness groups, and Pentecostals. Missiologist David J. Bosch claimed that an Enlightenment emphasis on free individuals led to "the gradual 'Arminianization' of Protestantism" and to "significant shifts toward an Arminian position in Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, and Anglican circles."<sup>65</sup>

Many Protestant "missions" were founded with the European colonial expansion of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to David Bosch,

the entire modern missionary enterprise is, to a very real extent, a child of the Enlightenment. It was, after all, the new expansionist worldview which pushed Europe's horizon beyond the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean and thus paved the way for a worldwide missionary outreach.<sup>66</sup>

The history of these missions since 1790 is complex—Bosch calls it overwhelming. A summary is beyond the scope of this present chapter. But allow me four observations: First, the investment of money and personnel, the industry of many missionaries, and the commitment and perseverance of a significant number of men and women who suffered deprivation and hardship is truly admirable. Second, with Bosch, one can find many faults with the failure to separate the western European and American culture of the missionaries from the Christianity they introduced around the world. And this helps us value this observation: "The gospel always comes to people in cultural robes."<sup>67</sup> Third, and in profound contrast, there are notable examples where individual missionaries showed both wisdom and compassion in encouraging authentic Christian practice in indigenous robes.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 261-67.

<sup>64</sup> See Thuesen, *Predestination*, 29-31, 37-40; and see the summaries in works like Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 503-530.

<sup>65</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 351.

<sup>66</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 280.

<sup>67</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 304.

<sup>68</sup> A stellar example of things working well is recorded in Kenneth R. Mulholland, *Indian Carried*

Fourth, one can find many examples in this history of truly missional individuals. All of this being said, it is also fair to insist that today only a small portion of western European and American Christians understand the Gospel as a call to missional living. Take a soaring eagle's view with me and allow me to explain.

One of the most terrifying effects of the Enlightenment is the isolation it encouraged by reducing communities to individuals.<sup>69</sup> An emphasis on individuality and autonomous freedom seemed to be a good thing in an age that believed in unrestrainable progress and a future of material abundance. One can understand the move to smaller and more mobile family units in an age of relatively inexpensive and safe travel. Why shouldn't families seek the best among abundant educational and employment opportunities? It all seemed reasonable in an age that expected that "every day, and in every way, things will be a little bit better."

Both the Reformation and the Enlightenment contributed to an experience of even the church as a voluntary society of individuals for Protestants.<sup>70</sup> Such churches were in a weak place to notice and counter the breakup of extended family units. The required mobility of clergy families in many denominations contributed to a pervasive blindness: Why would congregations even want to establish and model life together in deep community?

A belief in progress, and the experience that one could solve any problem with reason, prevented individuals, families, congregations, and communities from seeing the dangers of isolating individuals. The horrors of the First World War and the poverty afterward in Europe, and the experience of the Great Depression in the United States, started a shift in thinking about the dangers of economic individualism. Governments responded with government pension programs like Social Security and Medicare. Rather than foster a sense of having community, this further isolated individuals because there is little sense that the bureaucrats running things have any real concern for the care receivers. As individuals have lost faith in government, and in government's resolve to provide for their senior years, some individuals have saved money to provide for themselves. A few Christians have been truly mission minded and, believing in Jesus' imminent return, invested themselves and their money in evangelism. Many others, half-believing the many reports that Jesus would return any minute or that the world was ending soon, let greed get the best of them and bought more toys to play with while they waited for the end.

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*Christianity: Wampanoag Christianity on Martha's Vineyard, 1643-1690.* (University of Utah: doctoral dissertation, 2010).

<sup>69</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 268-73, provides a useful summary of the "contours of the Enlightenment worldview." He introduces "emancipated, autonomous individual" as the Enlightenment's seventh contour (273).

<sup>70</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 336.

What does this all look like, at the ground level, in many American congregations today? Visibly successful seniors are living as well in retirement as they lived in their working years. Some are living at an even higher standard of living because now they have both the time and the money to travel. And the rest? Most people approaching retirement have much lower expectations. A few Christians have invested themselves in mission and are content with their relationships and a financially meager retirement. Most others, having invested in things instead of relationships, hate the idea of moving back in with their children. They hope something will be left of the government programs they were forced to invest in. Ask people in their fifties to discuss retirement, and many are nearly paralyzed with dread.<sup>71</sup> At the very moment they should be investing themselves and their finances in the kingdom of God, they are trying to manage their debt and put a few dollars aside.<sup>72</sup> They fear their future. They have become their own isolated bureaucrat, a stock character with fewer and fewer meaningful choices.

At the ground level, we must admit that calling for missional living and a stronger commitment to community is risky business. How so? Any prolonged medical trauma in our community exposes our hearts and reveals our "god": "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth" (I John 3:17-18). A sober assessment of this call, and the economic realities implied by deeper community—even within the current generation of seniors—leads quickly to a sense of hopelessness. The problems and needs are beyond us. And there seems to be little energy for missional thinking or vision.

Here is the point: The causes are exceedingly complex, but from our seniors down, very few modern and postmodern western Christians know what missional living looks like. We are impaired, afraid to let go of our "abundance," and in desperate need of good models.<sup>73</sup> We have heard one version of the "good news"—the story about a few people being saved for heaven. The call to missional living has been much harder to hear.<sup>74</sup> It is a very difficult call for most modern and postmodern western Christians to listen to. And it calls for dramatic change.

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<sup>71</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 280; and see his Chapter Ten on "The Emergence of the Postmodern Paradigm."

<sup>72</sup> All but forgotten and ignored, Jesus warns, "You cannot serve both God and money" (Matthew 6:24).

<sup>73</sup> Asking me to read Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (London: Oxford, 2007) and Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), my friends working with immigrant communities tell me "the white church" needs to learn some of their first lessons from the people they don't even see.

<sup>74</sup> But let us also hear it from: Francis Chan (with Danae Yankoski), *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008); Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical* (Zondervan, 2006); Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway,



Greetings to all: This is a fourth public draft of Chapter Three. What else does it need? Where is this too much? Is it real enough? Thanks in advance! James.

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2012); Steven Furtick, *Greater: Dream Bigger. Start Smaller. Ignite God's Vision for Your Life* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2012); Pete Greig (and Dave Roberts), *Red Moon Rising: How 24-7 Prayer is Awakening a Generation* (Orlando, FL: Relevant Books, 2005); Craig Groeschel, *Altar Ego: Becoming Who God Says You Are* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013); Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker/Brazos, 2006); Kyle Idleman, *Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011); Kyle Idleman (again!), *Gods at War: Defeating the Idols that Battle for your Heart* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013); David Platt, *Radical: Taking Your Faith Back from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2010); David Platt (again!), *Follow Me: a Call to Die. A Call to Live.* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2013); Richard Stearns, *The Hole in our Gospel: The Answer that Changed my Life and just Might Change the World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009); and many others.