

## The Future Relevance of Faith Based Organizations

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### Introduction

The church is called to serve the holistic mission of God, which includes supporting and fostering the well-being and flourishing of all human beings. Participating in God's mission involves an inner dynamic (*being* the church) as well as an outer movement (missional engagement within the world). It cannot accomplish the broader outward mission alone, but it can serve as a catalyst for change and partner with other groups and organizations to reach common goals. Since the church's mission is holistic and comprehensive, seeking the bodily and spiritual well-being of whole human beings throughout the whole world, Christians are called to invest their time and resources both within the church and outside of the church. To serve God's mission most effectively Christians and churches must work with organizations that specialize in meeting particular needs that the church is not designed to meet on its own. This session will make a case for this claim by highlighting and unpacking three inter-related biblical themes: the mission of God, the call of the church in relation to God's mission, and the patterns of charitable giving in the Old and New Testament as they relate to church and mission.

### 1. The Mission of God

#### a) We were made for this world

- Gen 1:31; 2:7; 2:15
- Creation in seed form (Augustine). Development is part of God's plan:

"The Bible itself portrays the move from creation to *eschaton* as movement from a garden (in Genesis 2) to a city (in Revelation 21–22). Redemption does not reverse, but rather embraces, historical development. The transformation of the initial state of the earth into complex human societies is not part of the fall, but rather the legitimate creational mandate of humanity. Creation was never meant to be static, but was intended by God from the beginning to be developmental, moving toward a goal." (J. Richard Middleton)

- Gen 1-2 together: classic stewardship texts (creation or stewardship mandate)
- Here, simply, Mission = Vocation.

#### b) God's mission: holistic redemption of the world

- Election of Abraham / Israel; the Exodus, prophetic books.
- Jesus' holistic mission (E.g., Luke 4:18-19; Matt. 25:31-48)
- Significance of the Incarnation:

Bonhoeffer: "In Christ the reality of God meets the reality of the world and allows us to share in this real encounter . . . Christian life is participation in the encounter of Christ with the world." (*Ethics*)

Bonhoeffer: "In Christ we are offered the possibility of partaking in the reality of God and in the reality of the world, but not in the one without the other." (*Ethics*)

Luther: "A Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbour. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbour through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbour. Yet he always remains in God and in his love. . . ." (*On Christian Liberty*)

- Post-Fall (Gen 3 onward): Mission = Reconciliation (Gospel) + Vocation (New Creation)

## 2. The Church and the Mission of God

- a) Mission is a defining feature of the church
- b) The church participates in the *missio Dei*
- c) Incarnational, rather than attractional posture
- d) The church exists for others
- e) Scriptural basis
  - God's covenant with Abraham (e.g., Genesis 18:18; 22:17-18)
  - Mission of the triune God (e.g., John 20:21-22; 14:26; 15:26-27)
  - Great Commission and Great Commandment (e.g., Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 12:29-31)
  - God's love for the world (e.g., John 3:16; 1 John 4:8)
  - The church in the Bible's Grand Narrative (e.g., Eph. 1:9-10, 22-23; 2:14-18)

## 3. Patterns of Giving in the Bible

- a) Purpose of the Tithe in the Old Testament (Ps. 24:1; Lev. 27:30)
  - i) Tithing supports the priestly ministry (Num. 18:20-21; Deut. 14:27)
  - ii) Tithing supports the Temple (Num. 18:25-26, 28)
  - iii) Tithing supports Israel's needy people (Deut. 14:28-29)
- b) Purpose of Giving in the New Testament
  - i) Giving supports the ministry of all believers (1 Cor. 9:13-14; 2 Cor. 9:13)
    - Those who preach the good news vocationally. (i.e. pastors, missionaries)
    - Those who share the good news in volunteer ministries
    - Those who serve and reach out to the community
  - ii) Giving supports the worshipping community (2 Cor. 8:12; Acts 2:44)
    - Enables the church community to gather, worship God, and give him thanks publicly
    - Common needs of the community
  - iii) Giving supports justice for the nations (Acts 10:4; Rom. 15:26)
    - Paul's vision: an inter-racial, international one in which different people groups are reconciled to God and each other.
    - Important initiative: Paul's collection
    - Christian mission: supporting missionaries & charity groups in feeding the poor, clothing the naked, protecting the vulnerable, caring for widows, orphans, those who are lonely, outcast and forsaken.

## Conclusion

We need faith based organizations in order to fulfill God's call to be fully human (and thus to look after God's world and the people that inhabit it) and to participate faithfully and effectively in the holistic mission of the triune God (creation, redemption, new creation).