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THE MINISTRY OF MISSIONAL PREACHING AT EMMANUEL IN PARAMOUNT,
CALIFORNIA

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ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Missional Preaching at Emmanuel in Paramount, California

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The goal of this paper is to reflect on the need for missional preaching at Emmanuel in Paramount, California, to articulate the theological framework for such a ministry, and to strategize its implementation. This paper originated from Emmanuel's commitment to renew the neighboring city of Compton and the ensuing need to develop disciples who embody God's mission so deeply that they will serve that city for decades and potentially move into it. This paper argues that the mission of preaching derives from the mission of the Church which in turn derives from the mission of God. Since mission is inherent to the character of God, the Church is inherently missional and so is its preaching. This paper defines a missional church as the sent people of God, a definition which intrinsically includes the Church's doxological, communal, and missional priorities.

The missional priority has historically been underrepresented in the Church, but a renewed emphasis on its mission has arisen in recent years. Although this corrective has helped refocus attention on mission, the Church and its preaching must always hold to all three priorities. Because of this new and helpful focus on the missional element, the Church and its preaching are rightly called "missional," but that term is technically a misnomer because the Church and its preaching should always balance the doxological, communal and missional priorities. This paper finds that the preaching at Emmanuel has been missional for decades but not intentionally so. A plan is proposed to make Emmanuel's preaching missional by intentionally integrating missional theology into the training of its preachers and into the planning of sermons from the year-long sermon schedule to individual sermons.

Theological Mentor: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

Words: 278

To Katy
who always lives on mission

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I would like to thank Emmanuel Reformed Church for the love and support you have given to me and my family through our years together. A special thanks to Emmanuel's pastors who have coached me well and who have pushed me to preach missionally.

Don't be a thumb-sucking, navel-gazing, namby-pamby, evangelical fat cat.

–Reverend Harold Korver

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INTRODUCTION

Emmanuel Reformed Church (hereafter, Emmanuel) in Paramount, California is a large, urban church with strong denominational ties to the Reformed Church in America. A number of those who worship regularly on Sundays trace their lineage directly to the Dutch immigrant farmers who began the church in 1925. While Emmanuel has maintained this core, it has also reached its changing community. Almost half of the congregants are non-White, and the church, though heavily weighted towards the poor and working class, spans the socio-economic spectrum from undocumented laborer to wealthy business owner. Emmanuel has six worship services each weekend, including two in Spanish and four in English, all of which share one budget, are led by one pastoral team, and have one governing board of elders and deacons.

The congregation has recently come to define its central activity as deeply connecting people to Jesus, people, and God's mission. The mission element of Emmanuel's central activity has infiltrated every program of the church. Emmanuel's mission has also given rise to deep connections into the neighborhood through an afterschool program, a preschool, a food ministry, a community basketball league, and two non-profit organizations. The capstone of Emmanuel's mission is The Compton Initiative, a cooperative effort which Emmanuel created in order to mobilize businesses, churches and civic groups in a forty-year commitment to the renewal of the neighboring city of Compton. The two lynchpins of the Compton work are a community development initiative that refurbishes homes and schools and a church planting movement that raises up leaders and churches to renew the city spiritually.

The immediate context of Emmanuel is the city of Paramount, in which it resides, and the city of Compton, which lies adjacent to Paramount. Both cities are part of Los Angeles County in southern California. The city of Paramount made the news in the 1980s by being declared by the Rand Corporation the fourth worst city in America with a population fewer than fifty thousand people. Widespread crime, poor education, and unemployment were crucial issues then. While there remains much work to be done in Paramount, in the past thirty years the city has undergone significant renewal, even earning the prestigious title “All American City” by the National Civic League. Emmanuel has been deeply involved in that renewal and the City Manager went on record to credit the church as the catalyst of the changes in Paramount.

The renewal of the city of Paramount gave the leaders of Emmanuel the impetus to envision similar change in the much larger and daunting city of Compton. Compton, known for being the birthplace of the Bloods street gang and the music genre of Gangsta Rap, is notorious for its violent crime and poverty. The local churches in Compton have not been particularly successful in addressing the blight in the city. Although there are over two hundred registered churches in the city, few of their pastors reside in the city because the churches are largely commuter churches with little investment in the community.

As the leadership of Emmanuel began partnering with churches in Compton and the vision for The Compton Initiative evolved, it became clear that there were significant implications for how Emmanuel did ministry. The complexities of Emmanuel’s history and diversity, the needs of its community, and the scope of its mission called into question whether the church could be effective in fulfilling its calling. In 2007, the

pastoral team realized that it had neither a clear idea of how to create the kind of Christians who could carry out the church's mission, nor even a clear idea of how to define that kind of Christian in the first place. The pastoral team began to work on a definition of what it meant to be missional Christians and to work on a process that articulated how to create them. Along the way the pastoral team began to wrestle with the efficacy of its preaching in creating this new kind of Christian. The questions were asked, What is the purpose of preaching? How do preaching and mission connect? What should be preached and how should it be preached? Is there a strategic way to plan the church's preaching in order to enhance the completion of its mission? How does the local church evaluate preaching in light of the mission?

I lead the preaching team at Emmanuel and in that role I play an instrumental part in answering these questions. I am convinced that the answers to these questions will impact not only our church but our region and even our world. As a church, Emmanuel believes that Compton will change and will become "a city on a hill," as Jesus said in Matthew 5:14, and when that happens the world will take notice. The only way that Compton will change is through communities of Christians who live there, relocate there, or serve there who grasp theologically and live out passionately their identity as the people of God who are sent on God's mission of restoration of that city.

One of the crucial means to create that kind of Christian is through preaching. Preaching is not the only way, nor is it necessarily the best way, to create Christians who live on mission; however, it remains an important way to mold the church's heart around God's mission. As Al Tizon writes in *As If The World Matters*, "These two basic assumptions – 1) mission is integral to the church's identity, and 2) preaching plays a

central role in shaping that identity – warrant the need to understand something called missional preaching.”¹

In order to enable Emmanuel to deeply connect people to Jesus, people and God’s mission, this paper will develop an understanding of missional preaching and will strategize its implementation. There are three keys to making this happen. The first is understanding the context of Emmanuel and its mission in Paramount and Compton. The second is understanding what missional preaching is. The third is strategizing and implementing missional preaching in this context. This paper is divided into three parts which represent those three keys.

Part One tells Emmanuel’s story and traces its evolution into a missional community from its Dutch origins in the 1920s. Three hinge-point moments capture this shift – the transition from Dutch to English in the 1940s, the embrace of a “mission outpost” mentality in the 1970s, and a commitment to being multicultural in the 1990s. In each of these hinge-point moments the church opened outward into the community instead of closing inward. Emmanuel’s most recent outward movement into the city of Compton sets the stage for the crisis in preaching that this paper seeks to address. The heavy emphasis on mission at Emmanuel requires that the nature and efficacy of Emmanuel’s preaching be intentionally understood and addressed because, as Ervin Stutzman writes in “Preaching in the Missional Church,” “missional preaching prepares God’s people for their work in the world.”²

¹ Albert Tizon, *Preaching As If The World Matters*, unpublished manuscript of forthcoming book.

² Ervin R. Stutzman, “Preaching in the Missional Church,” Preaching.org, http://www.preaching.org/features/display_feature/33 (accessed June 27, 2009).

Part Two lays the biblical foundations for the missional nature of the church and its preaching. Given the number and span of definitions of what it means to be missional, extra attention is given to the grounding of the church's mission in the biblical text. Then, in order to bring balance to the missional priority of the church and its preaching, the doxological and communal priorities of the church and its preaching are also explored and defined, resulting in a balanced theology for the ministry of missional preaching.

Part Three evaluates the preaching at Emmanuel in light of the theology of mission previously established. Since the beginning of 2008, Emmanuel has become more intentional in its attempts at making its preaching missional, so this part looks at those attempts and envisions what missional preaching will look like in the coming years at Emmanuel. Out of this understanding of missional preaching and the evaluation of where Emmanuel has been, a practical guide to missional preaching is then developed for determining the preaching calendar, drafting sequential preaching series, planning individual sermons and developing the preaching team. As part of this process an evaluation is developed to measure the missional effectiveness of sermons and series.

The implementation of this biblical understanding of missional preaching through these practical guidelines is the end product of this paper. This implementation encompasses a clear strategy for the pulpit to be maximally leveraged to enable Emmanuel to partner with God to deeply connect people to Jesus, people, and God's mission in Paramount and Compton.

PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

THE CONTEXT OF EMMANUEL

Emmanuel was formed in 1925 by Dutch dairy farmers in an area of Los Angeles County called Hines-Clearwater, which would later be named Paramount. There was no church building in the area since it was almost exclusively dairy farms, so a group of about twenty-five immigrants began meeting in the early 1920s in a tavern on Sunday mornings, conducting services in the Dutch language. A nearby English congregation of the Reformed Church in America helped organize these Dutch dairymen and their families into an official congregation of the Reformed Church in America.

That original congregation has undergone many changes over the years, and along the way an important pattern has repeated itself. Emmanuel has continued to embrace major changes that have focused it outward. There have been a number of critical moments when the church decidedly took a turn toward its community instead of towards toward itself. These hinge-point moments paved the way for Emmanuel to become the missional church it is today.

The Early Years

By the 1940s significant change had come to the Hines/Clearwater area. As the population increased, English had become the common language of business, and the children of the charter members of the church were speaking English in school. The pastor, Rev. VanderLinden, envisioned a future for the church that few in the congregation could see. He became the first visionary to lead Emmanuel through a hinge-point moment, helping the church realize that it did not exist just for itself.

Rev. VanderLinden began to meet one on one with the Dutch farmers and other congregants, building trust and casting a vision for an English outreach to the community. VanderLinden embodied the words of Reggie McNeal in *Revolution in Leadership*:

Beyond the horizon of time is a changed world, very different from today's world. Some people see beyond that horizon and into the future. They believe that dreams can become reality. They open our eyes and lift our spirits. They build trust and strengthen our relationships they stand firm against the winds of resistance and give us the courage to continue the quest. We call these people *leaders*.¹

Vanderlinden led Emmanuel through a major shift, one small step at a time. Although many resisted the idea of investing church resources outside of church, in the time leftover after preaching and visitation, VanderLinden started an educational ministry to children that was all in English. Then, in order to make room for them in the church, he began an English worship service. To the consternation of the Dutchmen, their children began to worship at the English service, but VanderLinden pressed on. The fruit of his labor remains to this day, evidenced by the fact that there are a dozen current congregants

¹ Reggie McNeal, *Revolution in Leadership* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 87.

who themselves began attending worship at Emmanuel in that English service in the 1940s – and that is not to mention the family members, friends and coworkers whom that dozen have brought into the church in the past seventy years.

Through Tradition into Mission

The next hinge-point moment for Emmanuel came in about 1970. From 1965 through 1975, the 91 Freeway was being constructed, which increased access to the area and catalyzed commercial and residential construction. The dairies and their Dutchmen started moving out of Paramount because of the rising cost of land. The final dairy left the city in 1977. During this season of significant transition for the city, many of the congregants who worked for the dairies relocated in order to keep their jobs. While some managed to make long commutes back to Paramount, most did not. Overall attendance significantly declined, to the point where there were only about thirty core families remaining in the church in the late 1960s and Sunday attendance had dropped to about three hundred.

Besides the numeric decline due to socioeconomic transitions, Emmanuel's pulpit was empty in the last years of the 1960s. The search committee felt certain their next pastor would be Rev. Harold Korver from Iowa, but he consistently rebuffed their interest. In 1969 the head of the search committee, Ray Biel (who was Rev. VanderLinden's son-in-law), pointedly asked Rev. Korver if he had prayed about the decision and Rev. Korver felt convicted because he had not done so. That moment has been burned into the collective psyche of the church to this day, because as Rev. Korver began to pray, he felt nauseated when he faced any direction but West. After days of

discomfort and against the protests of family and friends, Rev. Korver acknowledged that he was indeed called to Emmanuel, and the nausea ceased.

Because of his previous experience with dying churches that served only themselves, from the very start Rev. Korver was committed to Emmanuel deeply embracing mission. Rev. Korver had pastored an urban church in Chicago through the racially tumultuous 1960s and was scarred by the reluctance of his Dutch parishioners to embrace their changing context. So when Rev. Korver realized he was called to California, he made certain that his experience at Emmanuel would be different. He drew up a document and had all the elders and deacons sign it before he would be their pastor. That document stated that “Emmanuel will be a mission outpost into the 21st Century.”

From the beginning, Rev. Korver wove mission into the very essence of Emmanuel’s DNA. Kenneth Callahan might as well have been describing Rev. Korver and the advent of his ministry at Emmanuel when he wrote that “the day of the professional minister is over. The day of the missionary pastor has come. . . . The day of the church culture is over. The day of the mission field has come. . . . The day of the local church is over. The day of the mission outpost has come.”² Rev. Korver was indeed a missionary pastor who was committed to bringing in the community. He was not content to allow the church to remain Dutch when the community included White people of all backgrounds plus a smattering of other ethnicities. He was not content to allow Emmanuel to live only for itself and not for those outside the church.

² Kenneth L. Callahan, *Effective Church Leadership* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), 3, 13, 22.

The visionary convictions of Rev. Korver were manifested in the practical ministry of the church. Under Rev. Korver's leadership, an education building was completed which far exceeded the space requirements for Emmanuel's Sunday school program. Under Rev. Korver, the church embraced its missionary identity and soon the new education building was being used daily for various programs catering to the community. An inscription on the back of a memorial plate, issued in 1972 to commemorate the completion of the education building, articulates the vision that Rev. Korver had infused into the Christian community in Paramount. It reads:

Hynes-Clearwater Reformed Church was organized in 1925 by Dutch pioneers for their worship place in a new country. God's blessings continued to fall upon Emmanuel, and in 1951 a new sanctuary was dedicated to His honor. The Education building was erected in 1971. But 1972 will be remembered as Emmanuel's greatest year. It was the year she accepted the challenge of the future. Her basic lifestyle changed from a restrictive organization to an others-centered communion; from an exclusive club, to an inclusive fellowship; from a staid tradition to a moving mission. Emmanuel is reaching out with dynamic personalities and inspirations to meet the needs of the community.

The words "others-centered communion," "inclusive fellowship," and "moving mission" captured who Emmanuel started to become in the 1970s, and the education building has remained an often-referred-to outward sign of that shift.

Other phrases from that crucial hinge-point, and the missionary theology they represent, are still common at Emmanuel in 2011. Literally thousands of times, Rev. Korver used the phrase, "through tradition into mission," in his preaching and teaching. That phrase is still in common parlance today around the church, as is the phrase "mission outpost." The year 1971 was a hinge-point because the church needed to renew its vision for its identity, and providentially a leader was called and installed who took the reins and led the way into a future with mission at its core. The corporate psyche of

Emmanuel was deeply affected by this hinge-point moment, and thereby created a corporate pool of shared meaning around this new identity of being a mission outpost.

Although the mindset of being a mission outpost did not always drive every decision of the board or every new program, it did serve as a foundational perspective that could always be drawn upon when fresh vision dawned and new initiatives emerged. Through this transition in the 1970s from tradition into mission, the church began to perceive itself as the sent community that George Hunsberger argues forms the backbone of a missional church. He writes “Unlike the previous notion of the church as an entity located in a facility or in an institutional organization and its activities, the church is being reconceived as a community, a gathered people, brought together by a common calling and vocation to be a sent people.”³

Emmanuel’s Present and Future

Two more hinge-points in Emmanuel’s history have been instrumental in setting its missionary agenda in the present and for the future. The first occurred in 1997 when Pastor Ken Korver, Rev. Harold Kover’s son, launched a multicultural community worship service called the Noon Service. The second came in 2005 when Pastor Ken launched The Compton Initiative, an urban renewal movement in the city of Compton.

The Noon Service began as a response to the changing demographics of the community. The 1990 Census report showed that Paramount had become 59 percent Hispanic, but the church remained 98 percent White. The impact of the changing face of

³ George Hunsberger, “Missional Vocation: Called and Sent to Represent the Reign of God” in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 81.

the community escalated in 1992 when race riots erupted in Los Angeles. During the riots, as thick smoke drifted over the city, the major roads into Paramount were barricaded with school buses at the order of the city council to keep looters out of the city. Although the city of Paramount escaped the riots unscathed, the riots brought to light how dramatically the demographics of the area had changed, and many people from Emmanuel felt unnerved. As a result, Emmanuel saw several hundred of its White congregants move away from the area to locations that were deemed safer or more comfortable.

The call and the need to reach out was highlighted by the empty chairs in the sanctuary on Sundays, and yet the very fact that outreach was going on created some discomfort because inevitably, most of those who came in were people of different ethnicities. According to McNeal, the challenges faced by Emmanuel at this time were not unusual since “it takes enormous courage to give spiritual leadership in the North American church culture, because the church is increasingly hostile to anything that disturbs its comfort and challenges its club member paradigm.”⁴ That courage was the hallmark of Emmanuel’s leadership as it decided to stay in the city and to impact it with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For one full year after the riots, Rev. Korver and Pastor Ken preached weekly that Emmanuel would stay in the community. They were committed to reaching the community that surrounded the church, even though they did not know how. Although land in Orange County and money for a building were offered, the leadership of the church refused to move the physical location of Emmanuel. They were convinced that

⁴ Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 145.

Emmanuel's destiny was bound up with the city in which it resided. A visible sign of that commitment is the central decoration in the foyer of the sanctuary. It is a wood carving by one of the old Dutchmen that proudly reads, "Seek the peace of the city," referring to Jeremiah 29:7, a verse which ends with "if it prospers, you too will prosper."⁵

Emmanuel stayed in the city, and although there was little clarity as to how to reach the city, the leadership began to prepare for outreach. For two years, Emmanuel used Greg Ogden's *Discipleship Essentials* to disciple its people.⁶ Pastor Ken intentionally disciplined as many of the people of color in the church as he could – about twenty in total. It was out of that core of people of color, plus about twenty White congregants, that Pastor Ken formed the core team that would become the Noon Service. This team polled the local community about what kind of worship service would be appealing and what time such a worship service would begin. They found that a casual, multicultural worship service at noon on Sundays was the greatest interest of the community. The core team was shocked at the preferred time since it did not register at all with their experience or their culture, but they honored the preferences of the community and planned for the service to begin at noon.

In January, 1997 the core team of about forty people made twenty-six thousand phone calls to households in Paramount and the surrounding areas. They hung door-hangers, extended personal invitations, and organized ministry teams for various aspects of the worship service. On February 6, 1997, Emmanuel launched the Noon Service. From its inception it began as an intentionally multicultural community worship service.

⁵ All biblical references will be taken from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

⁶ Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

The twenty leaders of color, which comprised essentially all of the people of color at Emmanuel, served as greeters, singers, and small group leaders. Therefore, when people from the community entered the sanctuary they experienced a multicultural church from the start, even though Emmanuel was not particularly multicultural.

From that first Sunday the Noon Service began to grow, and as it grew the repercussions impacted the rest of Emmanuel. The new people who came to the Noon Service represented many ethnic backgrounds. The 2000 Census reported that Paramount was 73 percent Hispanic, which was 14 percent higher than in 1990, and that change was reflected in who attended this new worship service. The result was that the Noon Service drew a crowd that was majority Hispanic. The incoming congregants were not all Hispanic. Because the Noon Service had a Gospel choir with strong African American leadership, African Americans found a home there as well. Since the head pastor was White and many of the original leaders were White, there were many White people who attended and felt at home. The Noon Service was truly a multicultural worship service, as evidenced by the statistics in table 1.

Table 1. Noon Service attendance by ethnicity

Year	Total Attendance	Latino (%)	White (%)	Black (%)	Other (%)
1997	172	40	42	15	3
2002	300	55	34	10	1
2007 ^a	323	46	32	18	3

^a The Noon Service had recently birthed the first Spanish Service, which resulted in many Hispanic congregants purposefully leaving to start that service.

The hinge-point moment of starting the Noon Service opened up the whole church to significant change. One major impact was on the morning worship services. They

started to become more diverse as people from the Noon Service migrated into other services that fit their schedule or their style better. In 1990 only about 3 percent of the other morning worship services were non-White; in 2009, 22 percent were non-White. Another major impact on the whole church was that as Emmanuel reached the community, the church became more aware of the community's needs and more compassionate towards those outside the church. As a result, Emmanuel started a food ministry to feed people in Paramount; the church started a basketball ministry to reach out to young men in the community; and the church started a huge afterschool program to serve children as well. These outreach ministries were part and parcel of the work of the Noon Service. They dovetailed together perfectly. Often it was the Noon Service people who both led these ministries and who benefited from them, even though they were targeted towards the community. Since the Noon Service was the community, there was no dissonance. Instead, the Noon Service deeply connected the church to the community.

One of the other crucial ways that the birth of the Noon Service hinged Emmanuel outward was that it made way for the church's first Spanish worship service. In the early 1990s when Emmanuel was a sea of white on a Sunday, Maria Figueroa could be seen worshipping there like an island, with her hands upraised and calling out "Gloria a Dios!" She kept telling Pastor Ken that the day would come when Emmanuel would worship in Spanish. Maria was one of the original worship leaders in the Noon Service, and she helped create a welcoming atmosphere where many Hispanics could come and feel comfortable, even if English was their second language. Eventually, since the Noon Service looked like the neighborhood demographically, people kept bringing their family members to worship, which led to their being more and more primarily Spanish-speaking

people there. Finally, the Spanish-speaking contingent in the Noon Service grew to the point when it had enough of them to form the core team of a Spanish worship service. In April of 2004, Maria Figueroa and about a hundred others were birthed out of the Noon Service into the brand new Spanish worship service which met at the same time but on the other side of the parking lot. Over sixty percent of Paramount speaks Spanish in the home, so by creating an incubator for the Spanish service, the Noon Service served as a crucial hinge that opened the church outward into the community.

Through the major hinge-points of transitioning from Dutch to English, from church to mission outpost, and from monocultural to multicultural, Emmanuel largely became an outwardly focused church. Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson define an outwardly focused church with these six statements:

- They are inwardly strong but outwardly focused.
- They integrate good deeds and good news into the life of the church.
- They value impact and influence in the community more than attendance.
- They seek to be salt, light, and leaven in the community.
- They see themselves as the “soul” of the community.
- They would be greatly missed by the community if they left.⁷

Five of these six statements are certainly true for Emmanuel. One of them, “They value impact and influence in the community more than attendance” would be true if the words “more than” were exchanged for “as well as,” since Emmanuel is definitely focused on growing its attendance. Overall, the church clearly became an externally focused church. The way it got there was through these three key hinge-points – the move from Dutch to English in the 1940s, the move through tradition and into mission in the 1970s, and the embrace of the community through the Noon Service in the 1990s.

⁷ Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, *The Externally Focused Church* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2004), 12.

As of March 2011, overall attendance at Emmanuel hovers at about 1,850 on an average weekend. The one English service that was started in the 1940s has become four English services now, and the overall English attendance is about 1,500 a week. The original Spanish service that was started by the Noon Service in 2004 birthed a new Spanish service in 2009, and the original one hundred Spanish speakers have now become 325 on a weekend.

One hinge-point remains to be explored, and that is when Emmanuel turned toward Compton in 2005. As the Compton hinge-point is discussed, however, it is vital to remember that it does not stand on its own. Rather, it builds on the hinge-points that had come before it. In fact, during the 2009 Thanksgiving worship services, Pastor Ken had the congregation listen to all three of those hinge-point moments as Emmanuel prepared to launch its first church into Compton. One of the old Dutchmen who was a teenager at Emmanuel in the 1940s spoke about the birthing of the English service and then he told of the calling of Rev. Korver in 1971. He was followed by a young man who converted through the Noon Service. These were followed by the testimony of Emmanuel's first church planter who moved into Compton that very week. The work in Compton is clearly the biggest hinge-point moment that Emmanuel has faced in its eighty-five-year history, and it lays the groundwork for the theological need addressed in this paper.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONTEXT OF THE COMPTON INITIATIVE

Through a chain of events in the fall of 2005, Emmanuel gained an expansive vision for its neighboring city of Compton, California. The border between Paramount and Compton runs two and a half miles long along the Los Angeles River and the 710 Freeway. Before 2005, however, for the people of Emmanuel Compton was further away than most places on earth.

The Background of the City of Compton

The city of Compton spans 10.2 square miles and contains a population of almost 100,000 people. Although it was incorporated in 1888 as a Methodist church colony that prohibited the consumption of alcohol, Compton has veered a long way from its roots. In the 1940s, Compton was middleclass and largely Anglo. It remained at the same socioeconomic level for two more decades as it transitioned to becoming more African American middleclass and less Anglo. In the 1970s, many of the middleclass families moved to surrounding areas and Compton began to slide into a lower socioeconomic status overall. Starting in the 1990s, many immigrants from Latin America began moving in to the city which shifted the demographics once again. As of the 2009 census

report, the education and income levels of the city were far below the national level, which are demonstrated in Table 2. The poverty rates and crime rates were far above the national levels. The median household income in Compton was \$41,890, only sixty percent of the national median of \$70,096.¹ In Compton there were thirty-eight murders per one hundred thousand people, five times the national average of seven murders per one hundred thousand people.² The population of Compton is now majority Hispanic and the majority of families speak Spanish in the home as Tables 2 and 3 show.

Table 2. Compton demographic statistics affecting education levels

Educational issues	Compton (%)	United States (%)
Speak Spanish in home	57.5	12.1
Lack high school degree	42.3	15.5
Families below poverty level	21.6	9.9

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, data set 2005-2009, <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Table 3. Demographic statistics by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Compton (%)	United States (%)
African American	34.9	12.3
Hispanic	61.9	15.1
Other	3.2	72.6

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, data set 2005-2009, <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Two factors have contributed disproportionately to the notoriety of the city of Compton, overshadowing the statistics on its education, poverty and crime rates. In the 1970s, a set of the Crips street gang from Piru Street in Compton broke off from the main gang and formed its own smaller gang which became known as the Bloods. In order to

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey: data set 2005-2009. U.S. Census Bureau. http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=16000US0615044&q_r_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_S1901&-ds_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_ (accessed March 10, 2011).

² City-Data.com. Compton, California. Advameg, Inc. <http://www.city-data.com/city/Compton-California.html> (accessed March 10, 2011).

compensate for its smaller numbers and newer status, the Bloods gang became exceptionally violent, thus earning many national headlines in news reports. Compton also received national exposure as the birthplace of Gansta Rap, a new genre of music that exploded into the entertainment world with the album *Straight Outta Compton* in 1988 by the band N.W.A.³ The album, which sold over three million copies, was full of racially charged, violent, and anti-police lyrics that indelibly imprinted Compton with a reputation for the same sort of mentality.

For the purposes of this paper, one of the most striking characteristics of the city of Compton is the character of its religious culture. The Hispanic community is almost universally Catholic, especially since so many are first- or second-generation immigrants, making the overall population of Compton sixty-nine percent Catholic.⁴ The majority of the African American population in the city is tied to either some type of Baptist church or some type of Pentecostal church. Despite these predominant religious affiliations, the overall spiritual culture of the city is decidedly secular. Christopher Kaiser describes this sort of secularism “not as the decline of religion but as a redefinition of its role in such a way that religious beliefs are dissociated from the secular processes of world-structuring, and secular values are alienated from the sphere of religion. It is the emptying of objective time, space and matter of spiritual significance and the relegation of the divine to private, inner experience.”⁵ There are countless stories about this sort of religious

³ N.W.A., *Straight Outta Compton*, Ruthless Records, 1988.

⁴ <http://www.city-data.com/city/Compton-California.html> (accessed March 10, 2011).

⁵ Christopher B Kaiser, “From Biblical Secularity to Modern Secularism: Historical Aspects and Stages,” in *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, eds.

secularism from those doing frontline ministry in Compton, from drug dealers being members at local churches to public indifference regarding minister's having mistresses.

Because of this secular religious culture, there are very few churches in Compton making an impact on the city. There is one large Catholic church which is virtually entirely Hispanic and there are three large African American churches. These churches have some programs that serve the people of Compton. There are perhaps one hundred and seventy-five smaller churches, but few of these are making inroads into the spiritual heart of the city.⁶ Lesslie Newbigin asks a crucial question about churches like these: "The question that has to be asked about every congregation is not: How big is it? How fast is it growing? How rich is it? It is: What difference is it making to that bit of the world in which it is placed? Is it actually functioning as a first-fruit, a sign and instrument of God's new creation for that bit of the world?"⁷

The Vision for the Compton Initiative

The cultural devastation in the neighboring city of Compton and its largely impotent churches continued completely unnoticed by the leadership of Emmanuel for decades. An occasional person would begin to attend Emmanuel from Compton, but besides that there was no other connection to the city. As Pastor Ken said in a sermon in the early months of The Compton Initiative, "The Los Angeles River is a wider expanse

George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 82-83.

⁶ Bob Combs, City Specialist for Campus Crusade for Christ in Compton, email message to author, November 15, 2010.

⁷Lesslie Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry in Today's World* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1977), 87-88.

than the Pacific Ocean.” Indeed, Emmanuel had sent a number of missionary teams across oceans to serve, but the idea of reaching out to Compton had never once crossed the minds of the leadership. Then three circumstances collided at once to change Emmanuel’s relationship to Compton.

The first circumstance was the renewal of the city of Paramount, in which Emmanuel played a crucial role. In 1980, the Rand Corporation declared that Paramount was the fourth worst city in America with a population of under fifty thousand people. This statement caught the attention of the church leadership, who then began a long-term partnership with the city government in order to love and serve the city. In the ensuing thirty years, Emmanuel painted over five hundred houses, provided volunteer coaches for the public school athletic teams, turned over the use of one of its buildings to house an afterschool program funded by the city, and served the city by whatever means possible.

In the years that followed, Paramount was named an “All-American City” by the National Civic League, and for its efforts Emmanuel received one of George H. W. Bush’s Thousand Points of Lights awards. In a videotaped message to the congregation aired at the 2005 Christmas Eve worship services, the City Manager of Paramount thanked Emmanuel for being the catalyst for change in the city. Reggie McNeal, in his book, *Missional Renaissance*, describes the kind of church that Emmanuel had become through its service to Paramount: “They look for ways to bless and to serve the communities where they are located. Much of their calendar space, financial resources, and organizational energy is spent on people who are not a part of their organization.”⁸

⁸ Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 7.

Altogether, the church's role in the renaissance of Paramount created an undercurrent of confidence in God's ability to use Emmanuel in a broader work of city transformation.

The second major circumstance that became tinder for the spark of vision for the work in Compton was that in 2002 a unique family from Compton began attending the Noon Service. They were Campus Crusade for Christ missionaries who had lived in Compton for a decade. Mike and Tonya Herman and their children were seasoned leaders with huge hearts for the city, and the primary reason they were worshipping in Paramount instead of Compton was that they wanted to be in a multicultural church and there were none in Compton. Pastor Ken would look out at them each Sunday while he was preaching and ask himself, "Why has God given us these people?" They represented a very personal connection to the city of Compton which Emmanuel had not had before, and later they would open doors to new avenues of service in Compton and eventually to Emmanuel's first church plant there.

The final circumstance that gave rise to the vision for work in Compton came in the middle of 2005 when Rick Warren declared that Saddleback Church was adopting the country of Rwanda in order to bring the kingdom of God there. This preposterous mission caught Pastor Ken's attention. Warren's ambitious, God-sized dream for Rwanda was the spark that ignited the fuel that had already been laid.

In the course of one week, the vision was launched. On Monday, the city of Compton simply did not register on Emmanuel's horizon. In prayer it came together for Pastor Ken that God had set up Emmanuel for a preposterous mission not to the far side of the world but right next door. On Sunday, October 23, 2005, to the complete surprise and shock to the church, the elders, and the staff, Pastor Ken took to the pulpit and

preached about God's heart for the city of Compton and how the Emmanuel was going to make a forty-year commitment to the spiritual, social, educational, financial and cultural rebirth of that city. That sermon was Emmanuel's equivalent of Acts 16:9, when Paul "had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'"

As the vision for the city of Compton unfolded, it was declared over and over that it would be a kingdom work, meaning it would be a work that brought the reign of God into the city of Compton. The work would not simply be spiritual in the sense of the conversion of souls and it would not simply be social in the sense of righting social ills. Rather, the work would be kingdom work that brought those two together.

The Program of the Compton Initiative

Starting on that first Sunday in 2005, the vision for the work in Compton grew and developed into an increasingly comprehensive plan. The essential nature of the work was that the people of Emmanuel would leave their comfort zone and go into Compton in order to bring the kingdom of God there. Emmanuel began leaning into the call to be an outwardly focused church. As Alan Hirsch articulates it, "As the people of a missionary God, we ought to engage the world the same way he does—by going out rather than just reaching out."⁹ That "going out" has taken on two major forms for the work in Compton.

The first form of this work was the official non-profit agency that Emmanuel created called The Compton Initiative. The Compton Initiative is the most visible manifestation of Emmanuel's commitment to the city. The Compton Initiative began to

⁹ Alan Hirsch, "Defining Missional," Leadership Journal.net, December 12, 2008, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2008/fall/17.20.html?start=1> (accessed April 18, 2010).

organized regular volunteer work days in the city of Compton, beginning in April of 2006. In partnership with city government, residents, schools and churches, both inside and outside Compton, these work days have included refurbishing houses, cleaning up parks and alleys, and painting entire public schools. Over 125,000 volunteer hours have been logged and over four hundred sites have been completed from March 2006 through February 2011.

The second form of the work in Compton is a church planting movement. Knowing that no city can be renewed without the deep spiritual work of Christians within the city itself, Emmanuel began working towards raising up church planters to go into the city. Within a year of declaring that Emmanuel was committing forty years to the redevelopment of the city of Compton, Pastor Ken also declared that Emmanuel would plant one hundred churches in that city and that each one would be a kingdom-oriented church with an impact on its community. Not long afterwards, families began moving into Compton with this goal of church planting, and in 2010 Emmanuel officially launched two churches there.¹⁰

The Hopes for the Compton Initiative

The phrase “the kingdom of God” is used by Jesus eighty times in the Gospels, and many have asserted that it was the central tenet of all of his teachings. Indeed, the first words out of his mouth in the Gospel of Mark are, “The time has come. The

¹⁰ Though not officially part of The Compton Initiative non-profit agency, the church planting work has always been considered integral to The Compton Initiative and thus for the church. This paper will use “The Compton Initiative” to encompass all the work being done by Emmanuel in Compton.

kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15). In its simplest form, the hope for The Compton Initiative is to see the kingdom of God come in Compton.

It is this hope for God’s kingdom to come that fuels the mission of The Compton Initiative, which motivates its leaders and supporters, and which sustains this forty-year commitment. David Bosch, in his book, *Transforming Mission*, captures the fullness of this kingdom vision when he writes about God’s mission:

Mission means the announcement of Christ’s lordship over all reality and an invitation to submit to it; through his preaching Paul wishes to evoke the confession “Jesus is Lord!” (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11). The good news is that the reign of God, present in Jesus Christ, has brought us all together under judgment and has in the same act brought us all together under grace. And yet, this does not mean that the gospel is an invitation to mystical introspection or to the salvation of individual souls, climbing out of a lost world into the safety of the church. Rather, it is the proclamation of a new state of affairs that God has initiated in Christ, one that concerns the nations and all of creation and that climaxes in the celebration of God’s final glory. So the apostle is commissioned to enlarge already in this world the domain of God’s coming world.¹¹

This “new state of affairs” is the hope of The Compton Initiative. It is to see the reign of Jesus Christ infiltrate each heart, every level of society, and every aspect of the culture of the city of Compton. Another biblical word for this hope is *shalom*. According to Timothy Keller in his book, *Counterfeit Gods*, *Shalom* is, “The webbing together of God, humanity, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight... *Shalom* means ‘universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight’... *Shalom*, in other words, is the way things ought to be.”¹² To see the flourishing of the city of Compton is the hope of those involved in The Compton Initiative.

¹¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 148.

¹² Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex and Power and the Only Hope that Matters* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 10.

It is these visions of the future of Compton that have called for the enduring commitment of the leaders of this movement. Pastor Ken often paints the following picture of the city: he is eighty-four years old and walking peacefully through a lush green park in the city of Compton at nine o'clock in the evening and his great granddaughter is holding on to his pinky as they greet people of every background. That is the visual picture that has captured many because it is a picture of what it will look like when the kingdom has come to Compton. It is out of this vision that Pastor Ken and the other leaders have their authority. Indeed, as McNeal writes, "Leaders lead from the future. That is the domain of leaders."¹³

In the days of Jesus there was an in-breaking of the kingdom of God, and that has been the case with The Compton Initiative as well. In Luke 11:20, Jesus says "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you," clearly testifying that God's rule and reign was indeed beginning to manifest itself there in first century Galilee. The same sort of testimonials can be heard today in and around Compton. For example, the principal of Whaley Middle School in Compton spoke to a group of pastors on the day her entire school was painted by The Compton Initiative. She said, "Sometimes it looks like Compton is a lost community. To be found by all of this love and attention and caring – it makes you inside your heart feel like you're somebody. You are no longer forgotten. And not only are you not forgotten, but you are the ones that have been blessed."¹⁴ That sense of being remembered and being found captures a

¹³ McNeal, *Revolution in Leadership*, 82.

¹⁴ Renee Cobb, principal of Whaley Middle School, Compton, CA, interview by author, Compton, CA, April 25, 2009.

bit of the *shalom* that The Compton Initiative hopes to bring because it is a foretaste of the kingdom of God that is coming in its fullness one day when Christ returns.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHALLENGES CREATED BY EMMANUEL'S MISSION

As Erwin McManus writes in his book, *Unstoppable Force*, “Great leaders create great problems. If you’re not willing to create problems, you’re not willing to lead.”¹ When Pastor Ken unveiled the vision of The Compton Initiative, it created a series of enormous problems. The pastoral leadership struggled with a number of problems immediately including what to do, where to start, how to fund this movement, how to get the church on board, how to sustain it over the decades, and how to organize the efforts. As it turned out, these were not the major challenges. Rather, they were just the immediate, visible ones. The real challenges went far deeper.

The Challenge to Define What it Means to be a Missional Christian

Because of the major hinge-point moments that Emmanuel had been through over the past eight-five years, the church did not completely freeze up when the vision for Compton was revealed. There was some jarring and jostling, but the long heritage of embracing mission created an undercurrent of hopefulness and willingness to risk.

¹ Erwin McManus, *Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2001), 192.

Because the work started slowly, there was time to manage the crisis caused by the immediate concerns and questions. What soon arose, however, were the deeper issues.

As the leadership team of the church discussed how long-term change would come to Compton, it became very clear that a new kind of Christian would be needed to accomplish this vision. In particular, the team realized it needed the kind of person who would willingly take Compton into their hearts, serve there, and even consider moving there for the sake of the kingdom of God. The team started using various phrases to describe this new kind of Christian. Words like “missionary” and “disciple” and “missional” were used, but each time a label was given, there had to be many disclaimers and qualifications as to what it meant.

While reading several books, attending seminars, and having multiple day-long meetings, the pastoral team took over a year to hone its definition of this new kind of missional Christian and to turn it into a one-page statement. The team decided to use the word “disciple” instead of the term “missional Christian” because of the biblical antecedent, but the words have become interchangeable since. This statement was spelled out to the congregation in weekly sermons for the entire year of 2008. It was published regularly in the Sunday bulletin. It was posted on the church website right next to the church’s statement of beliefs. Figure 1 outlines Emmanuel’s definition of what it means to be a missional Christian.

A Disciple Submits

1. *To Jesus*

Jesus is Lord. When we happily embrace his Lordship in our lives, we grant him the right to tell us what we will and will not say, what we will and will not do. His leadership is both demanding and life-giving, transforming us into people who think, act and speak like Him.

2. *To the Body of Christ*

A follower of Jesus is not an island. He or she chooses to obligate themselves to their brothers and sisters in Christ. We willingly submit to the influence, wisdom and words of other Christ-followers.

3. *To a person disciplining them*

We entrust ourselves to the care and direction of someone who deeply loves the triune God (Father, Son and Spirit), the mission of God, the body of Christ, and us. Thus we gladly grant this person the right to speak truthfully to us about who we are and who we need to become.

A Disciple Deeply Connects to Jesus

1. *Through His Words*

Jesus taught. His words inform our understanding of reality and our role in the world. His words are eternal life and the spiritual food for our souls. His words hold the ultimate authority for what we believe and how we should live.

2. *Through His Way of Life*

Jesus modeled for us a way of life, not merely a way of thinking. Being a disciple of Jesus means doing the things he did, not just knowing the things he taught.

3. *Through His Death and Resurrection*

The message of Jesus' death and resurrection is the power of God for salvation. Jesus was crucified on the cross to atone for our sin. He was raised from the dead to validate his identity and defeat death. We cherish and are defined by these realities.

A Disciple Deeply Connects to People

1. *Through Hospitality*

Hospitality is kindness shown to people – people we might naturally know, people we have just met and people whose life experiences are very different from our own. The primary expression of this kindness is fellowship around a meal in a home and providing for material needs. We demonstrate hospitality when we regularly and intentionally invite into our lives all kinds of people.

2. *Through Intentionality*

We consciously engage the people around us – family members, co-workers, neighbors, friends, people at the grocery store, etc. We take relational initiative with people we don't know or who we have just met. We are proactive in inviting people into our lives. We are increasingly purposeful in the questions we ask and the love we show.

3. *Through Time Spent*

In our fast-paced and self-seeking world there is no substitute for setting aside significant amounts of time to simply be with and invest in people.

A Disciple Deeply Connects to Mission

1. *By Doing Justice*

Loving vulnerable people is the activity of those who follow Jesus. We steward all our resources – education, wealth, relationships, spiritual gifts, and experience – towards care for the “least of these.”

2. *By Witnessing*

Followers of Jesus bear witness to the reality of Kingdom of God through their activity and their words. We testify to the presence of Jesus as we act *and* speak of his saving work on the cross. Both are necessary.

3. *By Financial Generosity*

Followers of Christ faithfully bring a tithe (10% of income) and joyfully give an offering (as much money as possible) to the work of the Kingdom of God.

A Disciple finds and makes other disciples of Jesus

1. *By teaching the path of submission.*

2. *By deeply connecting them to Jesus, people and mission.*

3. *By helping them find and make other disciples of Jesus.*

Figure 1. Definition of missional Christian

The Challenge to Create a Church of Missional Christians

After defining what a missional Christian is, the pastoral team discovered that it was a far greater challenge to create them. One of the books the team read together by Alan Hirsch articulated exactly what they faced: “I found out the hard way that if we don’t disciple people, the culture sure will.”² American culture, and particularly the southern California culture, inundates the lives of the people of Emmanuel and resists every tenet of the missional definition that was so carefully spelled out by the pastoral team. Individualism, relativism, and consumerism fill not just the airwaves but the classrooms and the living rooms of those who call Emmanuel their church and Christ their Lord. At the end of his exhaustive research, sociologist Christian Smith summarizes the impact of American culture on emerging adults, and his insights apply far more broadly to those raised in this culture:

Emerging adults are determined to be free. But they do not know what is worth doing with their freedom. They work very hard to stand on their own two feet. But they do not really know where they ought to go and why, once they are standing. They lack larger visions of what is true and real and good, in both the private and the public realms. And so, it seems to us, a small set of predefined default imperatives quickly rush in to fill that normative and moral vacuum. One of those is mass consumerism’s slavish obsessions with private material comfort and possessions, the achieving of which nearly every emerging adult views as a key purpose in life.³

Smith essentially argues that individualism progresses to relativism and then to consumerism, which describes a freefall from the values that Jesus taught. Creating

² Alan Hirsch and Leonard Sweet, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 111.

³ Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 294.

missional Christians out of those infused with this sort of mind-bending and soul-bending culture would be a monumental task.

To make that task of changing people's core convictions and character more difficult, the church also has to contend with the reality that many people would rather leave than change. "Often, members will leave a church when its direction turns missional. Like the Copernican Revolution, some people are dismayed to find out that the universe no longer revolves around them," writes Lois Swagerty.⁴ In the first years of Emmanuel's commitment to Compton many people left the church. None would directly say it was because of Compton, but word came back to the leaders second or third hand, and often it was the discomfort and fear of Compton that surfaced as the real issue. Emmanuel has not been alone in this journey. Dave Bartlett, pastor of Orchid Hill Church, stated what Emmanuel and many others experienced: "We went through a big turmoil before we even knew what to call it. The target was the youth ministry. When you start to reach messed up kids, it can cause messiness in the church. I was under the deception that if I worked hard enough and loved enough and cared enough, everyone would come on board to see the missional vision."⁵ Not everyone came on board with the vision at Emmanuel, but by God's grace the vast majority did.

As the vision at Emmanuel crystallized and as it tilted in a more expressly missional direction, it started to affect the culture of the church. As Newbigin writes,

⁴ Lois Swagerty, "Taking the Church Missional: What does it Cost the Leader?" Leadership Network, http://leadnet.org/resources/download/taking_your_church_missional_what_does_it_cost_the_leader/ (accessed November 30, 2010).

⁵ Ibid.

“Mission changes not only the world but also the church.”⁶ Instead of the church culture primarily being about serving the congregants, it has become about serving those outside. The goal has been to “structure our lives around being a sent community instead of a vendor of services.”⁷ Emmanuel has realized that it is the very culture of the church that needs to change for there to be any hope of creating missional Christians, and yet to change that culture often caused departures to the suburbs instead of departures into Compton.

The crux of this challenge is to create deep change in a manner that draws people in rather than pushing them away, and that is a particularly difficult thing to do in a church that has an eighty-five-year history. The leadership team said early on that rather than trying to turn the direction of the existing church it would be far easier to start a church from scratch with this newly articulated missional nature and with its focus on Compton. Emmanuel’s leadership has faced much tension because it is committed both to Compton and to the long-timers in the congregation. One helpful resource in the process has been leveraging the church’s history to turn the corner towards Compton. In the midst of the push into Compton, the leadership began to recycle one of the key catch phrases from Rev. Korver from the 1971 hinge-point in Emmanuel’s history: “Through tradition into mission.” By showing how the vision for Compton was merely an extension of the story of the church, many hearts were more open to sticking around long

⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 64.

⁷ George Hunsberger, "Birthing Mission Faithfulness: Accents in a North American Movement," *International Review of Christian Mission* (92, 2006), 149, quoted in Stutzman, "Preaching in the Missional Church," 5.

enough to give the new vision a chance. That was one benefit of the church's eighty-five-year history.

The journey towards a church culture that makes missional Christians has not been a fast one, and it has been a real challenge to know how quickly to move. Since deep change does not necessarily mean fast change, one major goal for Emmanuel has been to have people stay on board with the process long enough that they can ingest the newly articulated missional vision in safe quantities. For some that has meant large doses – particularly for the new Christians and the mature Christians. For those who have been loyal to the church for decades but not necessarily invested in its mission, the doses have been much more incremental. As one pastor counsels, “Take baby steps. Don’t blow your church up all at once. Your church will never be missional if you don’t have anyone left.”⁸

The challenge of creating a church full of missional Christians is complicated by the theological issue of reconciling the benefit of the Gospel with the cost of the Gospel. Jesus said “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (Jn 10:10) and also “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23). On one side of the equation are love, joy, and peace, not to mention eternal life. On the other side are sacrifice, persecution, and submission. Like the human and divine natures of Christ, the cost and benefit of the Gospel are intertwined and inseparable. The great challenge comes, however, not in merely balancing both sides theologically but doing so winsomely in a culture that favors only the side of the benefits.

⁸ Winfield Bevens, “Being Missional May Kill Your Church,” Resurgence, <http://assets.the-resurgence.com/2010/10/10/being-missional-may-kill-your-church> (accessed November 30, 2010).

Since the American culture in general is so skewed towards valuing comfort, local church culture naturally leans heavily in that direction as well. While not wrong in and of themselves, “felt need” sermon series and small groups based on affinity have become the norm. As a whole, church culture has become risk-averse, complete with a “risk management” section in the employee handbook (which Emmanuel has as well). Safety and security have often become the goals of a church culture heavily steeped in the benefit side of the Gospel equation. In light of the asymmetry caused by the culture, there has to be a renewed emphasis on the cost of the Gospel. McManus asks, “How could we ever think the Christian faith would be safe when its central metaphor is an instrument of death? It is not a coincidence that baptism is a water grave depicting death and resurrection. It is no less significant that the ongoing ordinance of the Lord’s Supper is a reminder of sacrifice. How did we ever develop a safe theology from such a dangerous faith?”⁹

At Emmanuel, one of the antidotes to what McManus calls “safe theology” has been setting high expectations of commitment and sacrifice for those who are new. Of course, setting initial expectations does not work for those who have been in the church for decades, but it does help those who are just entering this community to know what it will cost them before they become involved. In Pastor Ken’s letter to new people, which is posted in the “Welcome” section of the church website, he writes,

If you join us, you will undoubtedly hear of our deep commitment to ministry in the city. For the past 30 years, God has allowed us to be a tool (among many) that helped Paramount become a beautiful city. We have now made a 40 year commitment to serve the city of Compton. If you join us, we will call upon you

⁹ McManus, *Unstoppable Force*, 33.

to love your city (wherever you live) and our city, which we now call Paramount/Compton.¹⁰

The majority of people new to Emmanuel visit the webpage first, so this is one helpful way to let them know up front who Emmanuel is and that the church expects commitment. There are many other ways these initial expectations are set, as well. For example, Emmanuel's membership class is called a "Partner in Mission" class and those who attend sign a covenant based on the commitments that rise from the church's definition of a missional Christian.

In facing the challenge of creating missional Christians out of mere church attendees, Emmanuel is facing the challenge of measuring every single program and process in terms of how they serve the mission of the church. Ed Stetzer writes about how each individual church must crack its own missional code and find ways to launch into the work God has called it to do. He states that doing so means building God's mission into every aspect of the church: "You can build a church and not make or multiply disciples. Those who break the code are incredibly committed about making disciples. They may not be the best disciplers, but they are committed to developing processes, raising up leaders, and building organizational structures that produce true disciples."¹¹ This holistic, church-wide approach to creating a culture of disciple-making is the primary goal for Emmanuel. Although the end product for Emmanuel is the renewal of the city of Compton and not necessarily foreign missions, McManus captures well the natural implications of building a church that creates missional Christians when

¹⁰ Ken Korver, "Our Pastor," Emmanuel Reformed Church. <http://www.erc.la/our-pastor> (Accessed March 10, 2010).

¹¹ Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary to Your Community* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2006), 75.

he writes that “One of the most asked questions about our congregation is, ‘How are we able to mobilize so many people to overseas missions?’ It’s really pretty easy to explain. If your church is full of members, you get an occasional missionary. If your church is full of missionaries, the rest is just about geography.”¹² By creating a church of missional Christians, the leadership of Emmanuel believes that the city of Compton will necessarily be changed.

The Challenge to Define, Embrace, and Leverage the Role of Preaching in Making Missional Christians

While the entirety of Emmanuel’s culture must become missional in order to create missional Christians, one crucial aspect that requires great focus and clarity is the role of preaching. William Hull, whose book, *Choose the Life: Exploring a Life that Embraces Discipleship*, was a crucial resource for writing Emmanuel’s definition of a missional Christian, writes that “unless the sermon becomes an instrument for implementing those changes mandated by the imperatives of the gospel, then the very nature of the congregation will subtly shift from being a community of purpose to being an audience of consumers.”¹³ The challenge for the preacher is to stand against the tide of American culture which desires people to be an “audience of consumers” and instead to propel them into the very mission of Jesus.

¹² Erwin McManus, *Seizing Your Divine Moment: Daring to Live a Life of Adventure* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 166.

¹³ William Hull, *Choose the Life: Exploring a Life that Embraces Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004); William Hull, *Strategic Preaching: The Role of the Pulpit in Pastoral Leadership* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006), 12.

The first challenge facing Emmanuel with regards to its preaching has been to define preaching in such a way as to connect it to the overall mission of the church. Preaching is difficult enough to define in and of itself, regardless of how it connects to mission. Ian Pitt-Watson famously wrote, “I don’t understand preaching, but I believe in it deeply.”¹⁴ To add to the already unwieldy nature of defining preaching, Emmanuel’s preaching team realized that they needed an explicit connection between preaching and mission in order to arrive at the point where the pulpit could be leveraged maximally for the overall mission of the church.

Countless books on preaching, many of which are excellent in their own right, simply miss the connection between preaching and mission. Books like Fred Craddock’s *Preaching* and John Stott’s *Between Two Worlds* necessarily focus on the “how to” of preparing and delivering sermons, while books like Bryan Chapell’s *Christ-Centered Preaching* and Robert Smith, Jr.’s *Doctrine that Dances* mostly frame preaching in a particular theological light.¹⁵ Neither type of book is particularly good at connecting preaching to the mission of God. In fact, even in these excellent books there can be implications that preaching is largely about passing on good thoughts to the congregants rather than transforming the world. Chapell inadvertently gives an example of this when he writes, “More experienced preachers recognize that they have this week, and the next, and the next to communicate God’s truths. It is better to convey one thought that can be

¹⁴ Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 19.

¹⁵ Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985); Stott, John R.W. *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982); Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005); Robert Smith Jr., *Doctrine that Dances: Bring Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008).

held than a dozen that will slip from grasp,” as if preaching were all about “truths” and “thoughts.”¹⁶ This overall lack of material creates a real challenge when it comes to defining preaching for mission.

The process of defining preaching in missional terms has another inherent challenge to it besides the difficulty of the task proper. The latent challenge is that as preaching becomes more missional in nature, criticism inevitably follows, thus making it very difficult for the congregation to embrace it. Preaching towards mission can so easily unnerve people in the pews if they sit there with the core convictions of the culture in their heart and mind. Instead of criticizing the mission, which may be viewed as unholy, it can be easier to criticize the preaching. In particular, for those who have been inculcated with the cultural emphasis on consuming, it is often a short step to want to consume knowledge. From this vantage point, the sermon should be primarily about knowledge. However, when the imperatives of the Gospel are applied and not merely taught, discomfort and potentially criticism are the result because “people accustomed to ‘being fed’ are generally loath to move from passivity to activity.”¹⁷ Warren articulates this when he says that “folks may start to think that you’re not preaching for them. Formerly, preaching was about exegeting the passage and teaching the details of the text. Now it’s more about action.”¹⁸

Making preaching more missional inevitably moves the focus from enumerating details of the text to living out the text, and this shift can be disconcerting for the

¹⁶ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 48.

¹⁷ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 48.

¹⁸ Jeff Warren, interviewed in Swagerty, “Taking the Church Missional.”

congregation. This shift is inevitable not because the missional preacher devalues details in the text but, rather, because there is only limited time for the message and the preacher must focus on the scripture's innate call to action. Therefore, there is less time for the sort of professorial preaching that so many have come to expect in a Sunday worship service. Warren puts it this way:

When you move away from a more exegetical approach to preaching, members who've been believers for a long time feel as if you've become less biblical. Now we spend more time on the application of the text with interviews, stories and videos. In a missional church it's critical to see how the text is being lived out in the world. It's a real shift, and I've discovered it's a precarious thing. Clearly the content and interpretation of the Word of God is critical but in a missional church you never stop at knowledge alone. It's more important to show how to live it out.¹⁹

Preaching for mission must walk the precarious line between spending enough time in the text to allow it to speak for itself and boldly showing how the text can be and must be lived out by the people hearing the message.

The challenge of embracing missional preaching arises not only from the congregation but also from the preacher. There are a number of obstacles inhibiting the pastor from embracing preaching for mission. One is that most seminaries do not equip pastors to preach for mission. As a seminary professor said in 2005, "Fuller [Seminary] does an excellent job preparing White males to minister to suburban, Boomer Presbyterian congregations in the 1970s."²⁰ Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner call this experience "future shock" and write that "future shock occurs when you are

¹⁹ Warren, quoted in Swagerty, "Taking the Church Missional."

²⁰ Keith Matthews, from "Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix" class lecture at Fuller Theological Seminary, November 9, 2005.

confronted by the fact that the world you were educated to believe in doesn't exist."²¹ On two occasions in the past few years seminary professors have been visiting preachers at Emmanuel and both were unnerved by and unprepared for the urban, diverse, blue-collar setting and the congregation's strong bent towards mission. Those who preach regularly at Emmanuel still face that challenge because seminary prepared them very little for the kind of preaching required by Emmanuel's context.

Another factor that inhibits pastors from embracing missional preaching is the high cost that they must pay themselves. Missional preaching requires that "You actually have to do what you want to see happen. Leaders have to live the change they seek. This is not easy; it requires ruthless self-management."²² To preach missionally requires the pastor to live missionally, and to live missionally necessitates sacrifice. "Living on mission" means constantly submitting to God's agenda and not to the agenda of the self. Inevitably, submitting to God's agenda results in being sent into the world by God. The difficulty this presents to the preacher is that it is no longer enough to stand up on Sunday and be an expert in the text or in presenting the text. Now, the sermon does not hold together unless the preacher embodies the text, lives the text, and carries the text into mission throughout the week. This is what Brian McLaren calls "orthopraxy (right practice of the gospel)" as distinguished from "orthodoxy (right thinking and opinion about the gospel)."²³

²¹ Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1969), 14.

²² McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 158.

²³ Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 35.

The real challenge here is that preaching simply cannot be missional unless the preacher is missional. Since preachers ultimately can only preach out of who they are, there are real limits to how missionally they can preach. Parker Palmer, addressing this issue from the perspective of being a teacher, captures this reality for preachers as well. He writes, “We teach who we are. Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life.”²⁴ As the inner life of the preacher adheres more closely to the heart of God and the mission of God, that preacher’s sermons necessarily will become more missional. As Jesus said, “The mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Lk 6:45).

Besides the challenges of defining and embracing missional preaching, there is also the challenge of discerning how to leverage it for maximum impact for the kingdom of God. Very little has been written regarding the planning of individual sermons, sermon series, and year-long stretches of preaching that intentionally form the ethos of a church around the mission of God. There is also a dearth of material on integrating the church’s pulpit and programs into one cohesive missional thrust. Yet in order to make the most out of preaching for mission these aspects of preaching must be addressed, understood, and maximized. The ramifications of embracing this new kind of preaching will be significant, fundamentally altering how churches approach mission. Tizon points out the natural implications:

²⁴ Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of A Teacher’s Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 2.

Missional preaching cannot be solely relegated to specially designated Missions Sundays and holidays; mission must be what permeates every Sunday. Otherwise it sends a subliminal message that normal Sundays are primarily for the internal concerns of the household of faith. To be missional calls for a reversal of priorities: instead of one or two Missions Sundays, we should have one or two “Church Sundays,” where the service intentionally focuses inward!²⁵

The challenges inherent in defining, embracing, and leveraging missional preaching necessitate a comprehensive understanding of what it means for a church to be missional and for its preaching to be missional. That is the focus of Part Two.

²⁵ Tizon, *Preaching As If The World Matters*, p. 3.

PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MISSIONAL PREACHING

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MISSION

In order most effectively to use the pulpit to help create the kind of missional Christians who will live out Emmanuel's vision for a renewed Compton, there must be a sound theology and practice for its preaching ministry. The ministry of preaching falls within the realm of ecclesiology, so in order to arrive at an understanding of preaching for mission there must first be an understanding of the theology of the church. In particular, this theology must articulate the connection between the church and mission.

Recapturing Mission as Essential

In theology and in practice, mission has traditionally been subservient to the church in most ways. Mission has been a part of the church's life, often represented in the local church as a line item on its budget. Mission has been seen as an initiative of the church to reach the world. Missiology has been a subset of ecclesiology.

Since the Willengen Conference in 1952, a groundswell of theological reflection on mission has extracted it from ecclesiology and placed it in theology proper. In his seminal work, Bosch states

Mission [is] understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It [is] thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit, [is] expanding to include yet another ‘movement’: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.¹

God sent his son into the world, sent his Spirit into the world, and sent his Church into the world. Mission lies at the very heart of who God is, not at the periphery. Thus, it is fair to say that God is a missionary God.

For the Church

This theme of mission runs through the very heart of the Bible. Stott summarizes five major parts of the Bible around the theme of mission:

The God of the Old Testament is a missionary God, calling one family in order to bless all the families of the earth. The Christ of the Gospels is a missionary Christ; he sent the church out to witness. The Spirit of the Acts is a missionary Spirit; he drove the church out from Jerusalem to Rome. The church of the epistles is a missionary church, a worldwide community with a worldwide vocation. The end of the Revelation is a missionary End, a countless throng from every nation. So I think we have to say the religion of the Bible is a missionary religion. The evidence is overwhelming and irrefutable.²

From Genesis through Revelation, mission is essential to the biblical story. In his extensive work on the subject, Christopher Wright writes that “the whole bible renders to us the story of God’s mission through God’s people in their engagement with God’s world for the sake of the whole of God’s creation.”³

¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

² John Stott, "The Whole Christian," *Proceedings of the International Conference of Christian Medical Students*, ed. Lee Moy Ng (London: ICCMS and Christian Medical Fellowship, 1980), 46.

³ Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 51.

Since mission both lies at the heart of God and runs through the center of Scriptures, it is therefore essential to an understanding of the Church. After his overview of mission in the Bible, Stott underscores just how essential mission is to the Church. He says, “Mission lies at the heart of God and therefore at the very heart of the church. A church without mission is no longer a church. It is contradicting an essential part of its identity.”⁴ G. K. Berkouwer agrees that the Church cannot be the Church without this movement into the world: “the Church, at least theoretically, has always known that her separation does not signify a standstill, but a movement . . . Therefore, apart from this movement, the Church is not to be thought of as the Church of Jesus Christ.”⁵ The Church without mission is not the Church. Emil Brunner paints these truths with a dramatic brush: “the Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning. If there is no burning there is no fire. If there is no mission there is no church.”⁶

Since mission lies at the very heart of who God is, then it also lies at the heart of the Church. Mission is not an add-on, an afterthought or even a part of what the Church does. It is much larger than that, much more central. The reason for the centrality of mission to the nature of the church is that mission is an attribute of God. Stetzer blogs that “Mission is not, therefore, primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. Mission is a movement of God to the world, the church being the instrument for

⁴ Stott, “The Whole Christian,” 46.

⁵ G. K. Berkouwer, *The Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 392-393.

⁶ Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London: SCM Press, 1931), 108.

mission.”⁷ Since God is a missionary God, it is natural that his people are a missionary people. It is their very nature to be sent, and thus they are God’s representatives in the world. Jesus puts it this way in John 15:16: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit.” According to Jesus, God’s people do not get to choose whether or not to be on mission. Rather, they must “go and bear fruit.” Since mission is not a subset of the church but integral to it, it is nonsensical to speak of the church choosing whether or not to embrace mission. Hirsch puts it this way: “the church is the instrument of God’s mission in the world. As things stand, many people see it the other way around. They believe mission is an instrument of the church; a means by which the church is grown. Although we frequently say ‘the church has a mission,’ according to missional theology a more correct statement would be ‘the mission has a church.’”⁸

The most succinct statement of this “sentness” of the church in Scripture comes from the mouth of Jesus in John 20:21 when he says to the gathered disciples, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” Jesus makes the simplest of equations for his followers to understand: The Father sends Jesus, so Jesus sends his church. McNeal writes that “because God is on mission, the people of God are too. God is a sending God. Just as he sent his Son and his Holy Spirit to the world, he is sending his people into the

⁷ Ed Stetzer, “Meanings of Missional – Part 3,” The Lifeway Research Blog, entry posted Wednesday August 29, 2007, <http://www.edstetzer.com/2007/08/thursday-is-for-theology-of-mi.html> (accessed April 18, 2010).

⁸ Alan Hirsch, “Defining Missional,” LeadershipJournal.net, December 12, 2008, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2008/fall/17.20.html?start=1> (accessed April 18, 2010).

world.”⁹ God’s people are caught up in his purposes in the world, his mission. Since the Savior of the church and the Spirit of the church are both sent, it is only logical that the church itself would be sent as well.

The sending of the church is a corporate sending. It is not mean the sending of a group of individuals, but rather the sending of a united community. The “you” in John 20:21 is plural in the Greek because Jesus is sending the group of disciples, which is the earliest form of the church, into the world. This group of disciples becomes “a community, a gathered people, brought together by a common calling and vocation to be a sent people.”¹⁰ These disciples, cowering behind locked doors, are sent on mission by Jesus right from the start, even before Pentecost. The filling of the Spirit at Pentecost only redoubles the sending, as the disciples spill into the streets and into the world doing the very sort of things that Jesus had done, bringing the kingdom of God wherever they went. God, out of his character, initiates the mission, and the church then responds by participating in it. Wright claims that “It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world but that God has a church for his mission in the world.”¹¹ From this theological standpoint it is the church, not the individual, which is the missionary. This is the corporate vocation of the church, and as such it “has to rediscover again and again its vocation, its corporate vocation as the witnessing community taken out of the world, set apart for God, but set apart in order to be again sent to the world.”¹²

⁹ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 20-21.

¹⁰ Hunsberger, “Missional Vocation,” 81.

¹¹ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 62.

¹² Suzanne DeDietrich, *The Witnessing Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), 16.

Whereas the origin of mission is God's own self, the nature of mission is to bring his kingdom to earth. When Jesus inaugurates his ministry in Matthew 4:17, he says "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near," showing that God's perfect reign and rule were breaking into the world more fully than ever before. Indeed, Jesus went on to teach his followers to pray "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10), inviting his followers to join in this process of seeing more of the heavenly kingdom realized on earth. At the end of the book of Revelation the apostle John gets a glimpse into what that heavenly kingdom looks like, and thus what it is that Christians seek to bring to earth: it is a place where there is complete physical, emotional, spiritual, and communal health (Rev 21:1-6).

Jesus did not teach his followers to pray for his church to be established on the earth, but rather that his kingdom would be established on earth. That is an important distinction, because although the church is one manifestation of the kingdom, and perhaps the greatest, it is not synonymous with it. Orlando Costas argues that "the church, which is *not* the Kingdom, is nevertheless its most *visible expression* and its most *faithful interpreter* in our age . . . as the community of believers from all times and places, the church both *embodies* the Kingdom in its life and *witnesses* to its presence and future in its mission."¹³ The kingdom extends beyond the church because God's work in the world extends beyond the church. Newbigin asserts that it is always the Spirit of God who is leading the church forward into God's kingdom work in the world: "The reign of

¹³ Orlando Costas, *The Integrity of Mission: The Inner Life and Outreach of the Church* (New York: Harpercollins, 1979), 8, quoted in Eldin Villafane, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 25. Italics from Costas.

God that the church proclaims is indeed present in the life of the church, but it is not the church's possession. It goes before us, summoning us to follow."¹⁴

The kingdom is present where the reign of the King is breaking through. A church can be said to be missional when it participates in God's kingdom mission in order "to set things right in a broken, sinful world, to redeem it, and to restore it to what God has always intended for the world."¹⁵ It is the role of the church to fulfill this mission now, doing the very works of Christ in his physical absence. This is Paul's image from 1 Corinthians 12, namely, that Christians are the very body of Christ in the world – his hands and feet, so to speak. The mission of this body of Christ is not any different than Christ's mission when he was bodily on mission here. Since Christ "went around doing good" (Acts 10:38), the church responds to the lead of its Savior and does the same. Through its witness and works, the church lives on mission because that "Mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation and call people into a reconciled covenantal relationship with God."¹⁶

For Preaching

The theology of preaching falls under the umbrella of the theology of the church and thus preaching derives its purpose from the purpose of the church. As a ministry of the church, preaching is subsumed in the church's mission, and since the church is

¹⁴ Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 64.

¹⁵ Lois Y. Barrett, Darrell Guder, and Walter Hobbs, *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), quoted in McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 21.

¹⁶ Charles Van Engen, "'Mission' Defined and Described" in *Missionshift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, edited by David Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer, (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 24.

preceded by and subsumed in God's mission, then so is preaching. Indeed, "Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission," and, therefore, so was its preaching.¹⁷ That is why the purpose of preaching is to extend God's mission. John Piper says it simply: "The mission of preaching is the mission of God."¹⁸ For the sake of God's mission, the preacher embraces mission. Newbigin describes this movement as originating in the God's action and then thrusting outward:

True preaching of Christ springs out of action, and leads into action - namely, the action of the congregation in following Christ who is the one who bears the sin of the world. If the preacher and congregation are on that road, involved together in bearing the sin and sorrow and pain of the world - in the neighbourhood and in the wider world of which the neighbourhood is part - then the words of the sermon will be part of that whole action by which the Church is in the world as a sign and first-fruit and agent of the Kingdom.¹⁹

Mission is essential to preaching not only because mission is central to a theology of the church, but also because mission is central to Scripture, and preaching always has been closely related to the Scripture. The words that are preached in the Bible are words from God, from the prophets' "Hear the word of the Lord" (e.g., 2 Kgs 7:1) to Peter who commands those in the position of preacher that "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God" (1 Pt 4:11). When Paul commands "Preach the Word" (2 Tm 4:2), he reminds Timothy and preachers through the ages that the content of the sermon is inextricably tied to Scripture. The scriptures that are preached are the same scriptures that give prominence to the mission of God, as discussed earlier. Wright goes

¹⁷ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 62.

¹⁸ John Piper, "Preaching as Worship," Bernard H. Rom Lectures in Preaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL, November 3, 1994.

¹⁹ Lesslie Newbigin, *Preaching Christ Today*, The Eighteenth Joseph Smith Memorial Lecture at Overdale College, Birmingham, England, 1979, <http://www.newbigin.net/assets/pdf/79pct.pdf> (accessed February 6, 2011).

so far as to say that “Mission is what the Bible is all about; we could as meaningfully talk of the missional basis of the Bible as of the biblical basis of mission.”²⁰ Therefore, as preachers handle the text they are dealing with God’s purposes and plans for bringing his reign and rule into this world, which therefore makes the sermon inherently missional. Seen from this vantage point, it would require almost intentional disregard in order to avoid a missional thrust in preaching.

One of the other reasons for the centrality of mission in preaching is that Scripture itself requires action and not just thought. Because of its missional nature, Scripture inherently creates movement. Therefore, preaching a passage of Scripture is not simply getting right what it says but getting right what it does. David Buttrick writes that “true ‘biblical preaching’ will want to be faithful not only to a message, but to an *intention*. The question, ‘What is the passage trying to do?’ may well mark the beginning of homiletical obedience.”²¹ Fred Craddock summarizes his core convictions about faithful preaching when he asks, “Does the sermon say and do what the biblical text says and does?”²² Each individual passage of Scripture therefore has not only information but an application, not only a meaning but a mission. Each sermon, then, propels God’s people forward, sending them forth.

Preaching for mission does not mean that in the sermon people hear only of God’s mission. The two sides of the Gospel, the benefit and the cost, are both still made plain.

²⁰ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 29.

²¹ David Buttrick, “Interpretation and Preaching,” *Interpretation* 25, no. 1 (January 1981), 58, quoted in Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1989), 85.

²² Craddock, *Preaching*, 28.

There is still comfort, there is still assurance, there is still instruction. However, there is more than these things because the church is not merely a “vendor of services” but rather a “mission outpost,” as Guder and Rev. Korver would say. Newbigin articulates the balance of comfort and cost this way:

To preach Christ as Saviour and Lord means that people go out from the church not merely comforted with the assurance that they are saved, that all is well. . . but rather re-enlisted in the company of those who follow Christ as witnesses and signs and agents of the rule of God in the life of the world. It means that they are liberated from concern about their own salvation in order to be totally at Christ's service for his work of salvation for the world.²³

Preaching for mission joyfully focuses on the benefits of grace, knowing that these benefits then liberate God’s people to join in him in his mission to the world. Preaching for mission means that the sermon constitutes the marching orders for the people of God, propelling them into the world with purpose.

Recapturing mission as essential for preaching also means that the sermon must focus extensively on preparing people to live on mission in the world. The sermon not only delivers the mandate to go into the world but also should prepare people for how to live out the mandate once outside the gathered community of believers. Since God’s people are a “sent people” then the sermon should prepare them for their sending. In light of this, “If the church exists for God’s mission, her gatherings should revolve around preparation for that mission. If we are a sent people, then preaching in our gathering should serve the purpose of equipping the people of God for further and deeper engagement in our cooperative mission with God in and to the world.”²⁴ Just like taking a

²³ Newbigin, “Preaching Christ Today.”

²⁴ Adam Ellis, “Speaking a Missional Gospel,” Post-Restorationist Perspectives Blog, entry posted September 14, 2009, <http://postrestorationist.blogspot.com/2009/09/speaking-missional-gospel-part-4.html>

trip, not only are directions needed, but some preparations are required. Besides the plane tickets, clothes must be laid out and plans made for what to do upon arrival.

To prepare people to live on mission is to prepare them to live in the kingdom of God. As mentioned earlier, the kingdom is not the church – it is wider and farther reaching than the gathered community of believers, although it is there as well. The kingdom is the central teaching of Jesus, or as one pastor writes, “The kingdom of God is Jesus’ big idea.”²⁵ This kingdom is a combination of both justice and witness, mercy and evangelism.

The church in America has often separated evangelism and social needs ministry and then prioritized them in the order preferred, but in the kingdom of God these are united. Salvation and justice walk hand in hand in the kingdom since the mission of God in this world is to bring his reign over all creation. That reign is over individual souls as well as over societal structures and organizations. It is this kingdom that the preacher proclaims. John Bright writes that “We have not two gospels, social and personal, which vie for the limelight. We have *one* gospel, the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and it is *both*. We have simply nothing else to preach.”²⁶

This full vision of the kingdom is exactly what forms the content of missional preaching. Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian in Manhattan articulates in his definition of preaching this twin emphasis of the kingdom as bringing both salvation and a new and just way of life: “At the heart of Redeemer’s ministry and its philosophy of

(accessed April 21, 2010).

²⁵ Eric Carpenter, *Days of the Kingdom*, unpublished manuscript.

²⁶ John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), 224.

preaching to post-modern audiences is the conviction that 'the gospel' is not just a way to be saved from the penalty of sin but is the fundamental dynamic for living the whole Christian life – individually and corporately, privately and publicly.”²⁷ In the preaching of this holistic view of the kingdom, the reality of it dawns in new ways. Not only does the preaching announce the presence of the kingdom, it also brings the kingdom through the work of the church. Newbigin says that “The preaching of the word cannot be understood in isolation from the life and work of the congregation. They are all part of one reality, namely, the presence of the reign of God in Jesus Christ and therefore in his people.”²⁸ It is the reign of God that the preacher proclaims and, in that proclamation, helps to create. Newbigin emphasizes that this kind of preaching, in response to God’s prevenient action, impacts the real world:

True preaching of Christ springs out of action, and leads into action - namely, the action of the congregation in following Christ who is the one who bears the sin of the world. If preacher and congregation are on that road, involved together in bearing the sin and sorrow and pain of the world - in the neighbourhood and in the wider world of which the neighbourhood is part - then the words of the sermon will be part of that whole action by which the Church is in the world as a sign and first-fruit and agent of the Kingdom.²⁹

Establishing the Three Priorities: Doxological, Communal, Missional

When looking intently at the essential nature of mission for the church and its preaching it can be easy to overlook other crucial elements of the church. Just because mission is inherent to the church and essential to its nature, that does not exclude or

²⁷ Tim Keller “Preaching in a Post-Modern City,” The Movement: Global City Church Planting Newsletter (June, 2004), http://www.redeemer2.com/themovement/issues/2004/june/postmodernity_1_p1.html (accessed December 3, 2010).

²⁸ Newbigin, *Preaching Christ Today*.

²⁹ Ibid.

override the necessity of the church also to focus on the worship of God and on the development of the community of believers. Mission is just one of the three priorities of the church, complementing community and worship.

These three priorities of focusing upward toward God, outward in service, and inward in community have deep roots in Scripture. They could be summarized by the Great Commandment, the Great Commission and the New Commandment – loving God, making disciples, and loving one another. The passage in Acts 2:42-47, often cited as the quintessential picture of the New Testament church at its best, holds these three elements together. The early church focused upward on God in that “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (2:42) and “to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (2:42), and they spent time “praising God” (2:47). They focused inward on the community of believers in that “All the believers were together and had everything in common” (2:44), “everyday they continued to meet together” (2:46), and “they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (2:46). They focused outward in their mission to the world in that many “signs and wonders” were done (2:42), “They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need” (2:45), and “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (2:47). The weaving together of these three priorities characterized the early church and all three remain crucial today for the church and its preaching.

In response to these passages and others, E Stanley Ott began using the terms doxological, communal and missional to characterize the threefold purpose of the church. He says, “The church by nature has three priorities, doxological, communal and missional. Doxological (as we worship God), communal (*koinonia* – our fellowship) and

missional (*missio dei* – the mission of God).”³⁰ These three priorities form the essential nature of the church because the church reflects the nature of the Trinity. The Trinity is inherently doxological, communal, and missional; therefore, so is the church. Together they form a balanced approach for what it means to be church, and therefore a balanced approach to its preaching.

Priorities for the Church

The Trinity exists in a state of worship, the Son glorifying the Father and the Father glorifying the Son (Jn 17:1) – therefore, the church is doxological. Miroslav Volf articulates how the cross opened the Trinity to humanity, creating the potential for people to connect deeply to God, whereas before they were only enemies:

On the cross the dancing circle of self-giving and mutually indwelling divine persons opens up for the enemy; in the agony of the passion the movement stops for a brief moment and a fissure appears so that sinful humanity can join in (see John 17:21). We, the others—we, the enemies—are embraced by the divine persons who love us with the same love with which they love each other and therefore make space for us within their own eternal embrace.³¹

This embrace of God pictured by Volf displays the heart of the doxological purpose of the church because the persons of the Trinity have caught up human beings in their eternal embrace. Humanity is, so to speak, invited into the doxological dance. In this

³⁰ E. Stanley Ott, “Breaking the Silence: Grow the Church Deep and Wide,” Presbyterian Church USA Consultation on Evangelism, delivered at Stony Point, NY, November 10-12, 2008.

³¹ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 129.

dance and this embrace the church fulfills its chief end, “to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.”³²

The Trinity exists in community as Father, Son and Spirit, and this communal nature is reflected in the essential nature of the church. As Stanley Grenz writes, “Throughout eternity, therefore, God is the community of love – Father, Son and Spirit distinct yet united through the love they share . . . As we exist in love, we reflect what God is like.”³³ Just as the Trinity forms its own community the church also forms its own community. Being communal in nature is as essential to the church as it is to the Trinity, and there exists a spiritual unity throughout the entire body of believers. Hans Kung describes this unit as “a spiritual entity. It is one and the same God who gathers the scattered from all places and all ages and makes them into one people of God . . . The Church *is* one and therefore *should* be one.”³⁴ Kung’s italics help to emphasize that it is the nature of the church that defines its life and ministry.

Finally, the Trinity moves in mission. The Father sends the Son and sends the Spirit – and this missional nature lies at the heart of the church. The essential nature of mission has been covered in some detail earlier, demonstrating how it derives from the nature of God and is inherent to God’s vision for the church as portrayed in Scripture. Christopher Cocksforth brings this theology full circle, passionately arguing for mission at the center of what it means to be church, and yet at the same time uncompromisingly

³² Westminster Shorter Catechism, <http://www.reformed.org/documents/WSC.html>, Question 1 (accessed, March 10, 2010).

³³ Stanley Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A New Agenda For the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 186.

³⁴ Hans Kung, *The Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 353-354.

holding to the other priorities as well. He starts with a theology of God, moves into a theology of sending, and ties it all together with the church being a worshipping community on mission. He writes,

Just as we are invited to step into the worship of the Trinity in which the Son glorifies the Father in the Spirit, so we are called to share in the mission of the Trinity in which the Father sends the Son by the power of the Spirit to redeem the world. The word “mission” is derived from the Latin verb for sending. The Church is missionary because it is sent by the God who sends his Son. The Church does not have a choice about being involved in mission any more than it has a choice about being involved in worship. Worship and mission belong to the very being of the Church. We cannot be otherwise than a worshipping community and a missionary people because we have been adopted into the life of God. God’s life is a life of worship overflowing into a life of mission.³⁵

Wayne Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology*, articulates the necessity of all three of these priorities for the church in his introduction to his section on the church and then builds his theology of the church around them. He writes, “We can understand the purposes of the church in terms of ministry to God, ministry to believers, and ministry to the world.”³⁶ Without using the words, Grudem clearly is stating that the church is called to a balance of being doxological, communal, and missional. Various other theologians and even whole denominations have articulated this vision for the church as well. For example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as part of its official constitution, defines a congregation’s purpose as “to worship God, to nurture its members, and to reach out in witness and service to the world.”³⁷ Pastor Chuck Miller, writing to the

³⁵ Christopher Cocksworth, *Holy, Holy, Holy: Worshipping the Trinitarian God*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1997).

³⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 867.

³⁷ *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2008), 9.11.

mainstream of American evangelicalism, articulates the balance of these three purposes for individual Christians within the church:

Priority #1, ongoing commitment to Jesus Christ. This is lived out in our alone time of abiding with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and with God's Word. The next circle is loving one another – Priority #2, ongoing commitment to the body of Christ. The commitment is lived out in our loving one another in our immediate family as well as in the larger body of Christ. The third circle is bearing witness – Priority#3, ongoing commitment to the work of Christ in the world. This is lived out in the homes, neighborhoods, schools, and marketplaces of our lives.³⁸

This balanced view of the nature of the church can cause conflict with the emphasis on mission discussed earlier. One of the great challenges created by laying such a sturdy theological foundation of mission for both the church and its preaching is that it becomes difficult to properly handle the reality that mission is only one of the three great priorities of the people of God. Because mission has been overlooked so frequently in American church culture, the temptation is to push the pendulum in the other direction by making mission the only purpose of the church. An overemphasis on mission, while corrective in the short run, does not serve the church well in the long run. Grudem writes that “We should beware of any attempts to reduce the purpose of the church to only one of these three and to say that is should be our primary focus. In fact, any such attempts to make one of these purposes primary will always result in some neglect of the other two.”³⁹

This balance of the purposes for the church and its preaching are what create a solid foundation for ministry, and a number of authors who focus in the missional

³⁸ Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 94.

³⁹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 868.

movement have drawn similar conclusions, even while sounding the clarion call to mission. Writing to congregations who are specifically trying to become more missional, Craig Van Gelder reminds them to remain in balance: “Each congregation is a community of missional people of God gathered doxologically: that is, they are in communion with God and with one another, and are united in worship and mission.”⁴⁰ Van Gelder does not devaluing mission at all – in fact, his book insists on it – but, rather, he argues for a balanced theology of worship, community, and mission. Stressing the paramount importance of mission and then balancing it with worship and community helps to propel the church in mission while not unhinging it from a balanced foundation. Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad, again writing in order to propel believers into mission, articulate the balance this way: “As we take up the challenge to become disciples of Jesus – and to train those in our care to do the same – we need to model our lives after the Master. Jesus lived out his life in three relationships: Up – with his Father; In – with his chosen followers; Out – with the hurting world around him.”⁴¹

This balanced theology inevitably gets worked out in very practical ways in local congregations. In particular, the mission statements of local congregations embody this sort of balanced theology. For example, Northwoods Church in Keller, Texas states that its purpose is to see transformed people who are “experiencing an interactive relationship with God, developing transparent connections with other Christ followers, and using our

⁴⁰ Craig Van Gelder, *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 190.

⁴¹ Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad, *The Passionate Church: The Art of Life-Changing Discipleship* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2005), 81-82.

talents, gifts, experiences and resources to make a glocal (global+local) impact.”⁴² David Fitch, the theologian-pastor of Church on the Vine in Chicago, articulates their commitment as a church to be “Transformational: When we gather for worship, or in confession during the week, may our encounter with God in Christ truly shape who we are . . . Communal: Let us be an authentic community that journeys together, bearing one another's burdens and speaking truth in love. Missional: we participate in what God is doing to redeem the world to himself.”⁴³ For Horizons Church in Lost Creek, West Virginia their mission is “Worship, Connect, Serve;”⁴⁴ for Overlake Christian Church in Redmond, Washington their mission is “Love God, Love People, Love the World;”⁴⁵ for Otter Creek Church in Brentwood, Tennessee their mission is “Reaching Up, Reaching In, Reaching Out.”⁴⁶ The list of congregations that embrace this doxological, communal, and missional theology of church is enormous.

Priorities for Preaching

Theologically speaking, preaching traditionally falls under ecclesiology. However, there is a paucity of material that addresses how preaching embraces the doxological, communal, and missional priorities of the church. Most of the writing about

⁴² Northwood Church, Keller, TX, “Who We Are” page, http://northwoodchurch.org/who_we_are.php (accessed December 22, 2010).

⁴³ David Fitch, “Why Go To Church,” Misseo Dei Blog, entry posted August 30, 2008, http://revwilly-missioidei.blogspot.com/2008_08_01_archive.html (accessed December 22, 2010).

⁴⁴ Horizons Church, Lost Creek, VA, webpage, http://www.horizonschurch.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=131 (accessed December 22, 2010).

⁴⁵ Overlake Christian Church, Redmond, WA, webpage, <http://www.occ.org/> (accessed December 22, 2010).

⁴⁶ Otter Creek Church, Brentwood, TN, webpage, http://www.ottercreek.org/about_mission.php (accessed December 22, 2010).

the purposes of preaching has focused instead on its connection to the text of Scripture, its relation to culture, and the role of the preacher. However, the three priorities do show up in the writings of several important authors. Usually authors stress just one of the priorities, however, by weaving them together with other authors a healthy balance can be reached.

Chapell approaches texts doxologically. His book, *Christ-Centered Preaching* goes into great detail about this approach. He summarizes his argument from the book in an interview with Preaching.com, saying that

when I talk about Christ-centered preaching, I advise students to always come with two lenses in their glasses as they look at scripture. These two lenses are composed of two questions. The first question is: what does this text reveal about the nature of humankind that requires the deliverance of God? What does it tell me about the character of mankind? The second question is: what does this text tell me about the nature of God who provides for the deliverance of human kind? In essence, what does this tell me about the nature of God?⁴⁷

The value of this approach is that it helps preaching grasp the doxological purpose of preaching, namely, to connect people to God. In the words of Hendricks, “The point of the sermon is to help people meet God, to have an encounter with God. Somewhere during that message, I want every person to have the experience of hearing God saying something to him or her personally.”⁴⁸

Others, like David Fitch, argue persuasively that the purpose of preaching is primarily communal. Preaching is communal in the sense that it is listening to the congregation and speaking on behalf of the congregation, and it is communal in the sense

⁴⁷ Bryan Chapell, quoted in Michael Duduit’s “What is expository preaching? An interview with Bryan Chapell,” Preaching.com, <http://www.preaching.com/resources/articles/11565737/page-3/> (accessed February 6, 2011).

⁴⁸ William Hendricks, *Exit Interviews: Revealing Stories of Why People Are Leaving the Church*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), 282.

that the primary purpose of the sermon is to fashion the congregation into the people of God. He writes that “Preaching for the missional church is a preaching among the church, out of the community, interpreting what God is doing among us and calling us to live into the reality of that.”⁴⁹ He goes on to say that the missional preacher “fashions our imagination through unfurling Scripture via the Holy Spirit allowing us to see what God is doing here and around us in our surrounding communities. This preaching is communal, always informed out of community relationships.”⁵⁰ Note how the priority here is the celebration of what God is doing in the community and the spiritual fashioning of community.

The emphases of Chapell and Fitch are instructive and helpful. Balanced with the previous work on the essential nature of mission in preaching, these form a helpful foundation for understanding how preaching functions in the church. Together the priorities are like the three legs of a stool which give it balance.

Brian Russell has made some keen observations about the preaching task which show how this balanced theology is worked out. In his blog he writes about the issues facing missional preachers and seeks to help them be well-rounded in how they approach the message. Although he uses different wording than this paper, his threefold thrust is the same. The balance he proposes surfaces in particular in the questions that the preacher asks of the text:

⁴⁹ David Fitch, “Preaching for the Missional Church: One More Tidbit from Dallas Willard at the Ecclesia Network National Gathering,” Reclaiming the Mission Blog, entry posted February 19, 2010, <http://www.reclaimingthemission.com/907> (accessed February 20, 2010).

⁵⁰ David Fitch, “Can Missional Be Multi-Site: 3 Characteristics of Missional Preaching,” Reclaiming the Mission Blog, entry posted November 10, 2009, <http://www.reclaimingthemission.com/can-missional-be-multi-site-3-characteristics-of-missional-preaching> (accessed April 20, 2010).

1) Mission: . . . How does this text envision God’s work in the world? Where do God’s people fit into this mission? How do God’s people need to change to participate more effectively with God’s work? . . . 2) Character: . . . How do God’s people need to change in order to more profoundly reflect the character of God? . . . How would my life be enriched by aligning my character with Jesus’? 3) Community: . . . How do God’s people need to change in order to embody the portrait of community assumed by this text?⁵¹

Even though the sort of preaching that is being discussed in this paper is a balanced type of preaching that rests on the three-legged stool of worship, community, and mission, the phrase that is most useful for this type of preaching remains “missional preaching.” Mission is what is lacking the most. Mission is what gets left out. Therefore, the phrase “missional preaching” is the term used hereafter to refer to preaching that emphasizes mission, but not at the expense of worship and community.

Drafting Holistic Definitions

The word “missional” has a relatively short history, but it has become pregnant in meaning of late. The Oxford English Dictionary records the first instance of the word “missional” in 1907 as a synonym for “missionary” when describing Christians “whose missional activities brought over whole districts and even nationalities to their creed.”⁵² In the past few decades, the word has primarily been used when describing the core nature of individual Christians or the Church at large. In terms of that core nature, “missional” has appropriated deeper meaning by specifically relating the church to the aspect of the character of God associated with mission. Traditionally this has been called the *missio dei*. *Missio dei* lies behind what it means to be a “missional” church like a

⁵¹ Brian Russell, “Missional Preaching,” RealMinistries.org blog, entry posted June 21, 2007, <http://realmealministries.org/WordPress/?p=345> (accessed June 27, 2009).

⁵² *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oed.com/>, s.v. “Missional.”

face lies behind the image on a mirror. As Newbigin writes, “It seems to me to be of great importance to insist that mission is not first of all an action of ours. It is an action of God.”⁵³ According to Newbigin, “missional” is derivative. It derives from God’s essential nature. As a general definition of “missional,” Van Engen summarizes well: “With the term missional I emphasize the essential nature and vocation of the church as God’s called and sent people.”⁵⁴

Defining Missional Church

A number of key leaders in the missional church movement define “missional” in ways that differ from each other only in emphasis. Their definitions form a sort of constellation around the central themes of being part of God’s mission on earth. Stetzer, in a brief video interview, defines what it means to be the missional church when he says it is “To live sent. To identify with and join God in his mission.”⁵⁵ McNeal’s definition is remarkably similar, clarifying that the mission is “redemptive” and “in the world”: “My answer is that the missional church is the *people of God partnering with God in his redemptive mission in the world.*”⁵⁶ Hirsh, in his very similar definition, emphasizes in his definition that the missional church is purposefully organized around mission, writing that a missional church is “a community of God’s people that defines itself and organizes

⁵³ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 134.

⁵⁴ Van Engen, “‘Mission’ Defined and Described,” 24.

⁵⁵ Ed Stetzer, “What is a Missional Church?” The Lifeway Research Blog, entry posted February 3, 2010, <http://www.edstetzer.com/2010/02/what-is-a-missional-church.html> (accessed December 12, 2010).

⁵⁶ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 24.

its life around the purpose of being an agent of God's mission to the world. In other words, the Church's true and authentic organizing principle is mission.”⁵⁷

Each of these definitions emphasizes the missional piece of the church’s triadic nature of being doxological, communal, and missional, but none deny the other two elements of the church’s core identity. Ultimately, since all congregations are representatives of the Church universal, they are each doxological, communal, and missional in nature. This is the DNA of the Church universal. Clearly some congregations only manifest those attributes in minimal ways. That is why Hunsberger, in the seminal work on the subject, defines what it means to be “church” and then clarifies how it is different from what is so often in the case in local congregations: “Churches are called to be bodies of people sent on a mission rather than the storefronts for vendors of religious services and goods in North American culture.”⁵⁸ In many local embodiments of God’s people, the DNA has been suppressed, or perhaps some alien DNA has been inserted that favors self over Christ, individualism over community, or comfort over mission. It is not that the original DNA is absent. Instead, it is as if the original DNA has been either hijacked or muted.

With their emphasis on mission, McNeal, Hirsch, and Stetzer have described what every local congregation should be, according to Scripture, and yet what so few are. In some ways, there is no need for them to use “missional” to qualify how they define what it means to be the Church. Their definitions could easily be said simply to define “church.” Because the vast majority of congregations fail to look very missional, it is

⁵⁷ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 82.

⁵⁸ Hunsberger, “Missional Vocation,” 108.

important to make the distinction. For example, the ELCA definition of church discussed earlier is very balanced, and indeed very missional, and yet many of its own practitioners would freely state that there are many, many ELCA churches that are not missional. The same would go for many denominations.

Therefore the real work in defining a missional church is not in the actual definition. McNeal, Hirsh, and Stetzer all have workable, helpful definitions. The real trouble with defining what it means for a church to be missional lies in measuring the level of its actual obedience to its mission. In some ways the real issue is the intentionality with which individual congregations embrace who they have said they are. In that sense, a missional church is one that, not merely by definition but by action, embodies what it means to be a church.

For this paper, “missional church” will be defined in the simplest of terms: God’s called and sent people. This definition contains the essential doxological, communal and missional elements necessary for a full definition of church. They are “called” because they are drawn to God. Being “called” comes first because in so many scriptures it is first and foremost, for example, “We love because God first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19), and “You did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit” (Jn 15:16). The definition then proceeds to say that they are “sent” because mission is at the heart of God, as discussed earlier. Finally, they are a “people,” not just individuals, pointing towards the communal nature of the church. All three words are qualified by being “God’s” in the sense that it is God who calls them, God who forms them into a

people, and God who sends them. The definition, “God’s called and sent people,” is identical to the definitions of a number of pastors and authors, most notably Van Engen.⁵⁹

Defining Missional Preaching

The ministry of preaching falls within what it means to be God’s called and sent people, because “The church is the assembly of believers, and preaching is bound up in its mission and existence.”⁶⁰ Preaching has always been a ministry that is a subset of the overall ministry of the church. It does not stand alone or outside of the rest of the church’s ministry, but rather, as an integral part of it. Thus, the mission of preaching is the mission of the church.

Parallel to what it means to be a missional church, missional preaching is inherently balanced between the three priorities. Preaching is doxological in that it points people towards God, through Christ. It is communal in that it points those present toward each other in authentic community. It is missional in that it points people out into the world. Defining “missional preaching” takes into account these three priorities while still allowing for emphasis on the missional aspect. In its fullness, missional preaching is a message from God’s word that reveals who Jesus is and enables his people to revel in him; that celebrates the contributions of God’s people gathered in that locale and shapes them into a holy community; and that proclaims God’s kingdom and propels his people into the world to partner with him in bringing it to earth.

⁵⁹ Van Engen, “‘Mission’ Defined and Described,” 24.

⁶⁰ John William Beauden, *Paul’s Theology of Preaching* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 5.

Just as the definition of “missional church” is essentially the same as “church,” the definition of “missional preaching” is the same as “preaching.” Preaching in general is doxological, communal, and missional; however, because the pendulum has swung so far away from mission, preaching now must be qualified as “missional” just as church must be qualified as “missional.” The sort of preaching described in this paper is properly called “missional preaching” because there has been a lack of engagement with mission from the pulpit. Thus, the term “missional preaching” is a corrective, bringing the focus back to the missional element of the triad of purposes of preaching in general. The doxological and communal nature of preaching are not being dismissed or even sidelined, but instead, mission is being brought back into its proper place within the triad.

CHAPTER 5

THEOLOGY OF THE MINISTRY OF MISSIONAL PREACHING

Defined in the previous chapter, missional preaching is a message from God's word that is doxological (it reveals who Jesus is and enables his people to revel in him), communal (it celebrates the work of God in the people gathered in that locale and shapes them into a holy community), and missional (it proclaims God's kingdom and propels his people into the world to partner with him in bringing it to earth). This definition requires theological and practical explanation and exploration of how the parts relate to one another. Bosch has commented on the inherent tension in the purposes of the church and its preaching: "The church *gathers* to praise God, to enjoy fellowship and receive spiritual sustenance, and *disperses* to serve God wherever its members are. It is called to hold in redemptive tension its dual orientation."¹ The purpose of this chapter is to explore each of the major components of this paper's definition of missional preaching.

Preceding a consideration of the three elements of missional preaching is the front end of the proposed definition, namely that missional preaching is "a message from God's word." Missional preaching is first and foremost a message from God's word, in keeping with the preaching that is demonstrated in the Scripture itself. When Jesus

¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 386.

preached to the people gathered at Simon Peter's house in Capernaum, Mark recorded that "he preached the word to them" (Mk 2:2). The Gospels capture Jesus speaking of Old Testament passages often, bringing them to light and showing their connection to the people in his day. In fact, Jesus dealt with at least one Old Testament passage in every significant teaching throughout the entire Gospel of Matthew excepting the parables. Peter followed Jesus' lead, writing that it was Scripture that was preached to the believers at the genesis of their Christian faith and ending his quote from the book of Isaiah with "this was the word that was preached to you" (1 Pt 1:23-25). Paul commands Timothy to take the same approach when he writes, "Preach the word" (2 Tm 4:1). None of these passages explicitly articulates the exact relationship between the preaching event and Scripture; however, together they demonstrate that there is indeed a necessary relationship between the two. Preaching cannot be separated from Scripture, but instead is intricately intertwined with what God has already said in the Bible. One of the strands of that connection is the doxological purpose of preaching.

Doxological: Revealing and Reveling

In the doxological sense, missional preaching is a message from God's word that reveals who Jesus is and enables his people to revel in him. As the scriptures are preached missionally, there is always a revelation of Jesus Christ. That is because the Old and New Testaments, in all their parts, point to Jesus throughout. Jesus himself said that he came to fulfill "the law and the prophets" (Mt 5:17), and on the road to Emmaus he started with "Moses and all the Prophets" (Lk 24:27) and showed himself to the disciples from the Old Testament. Paul says that the law was given as a "guardian" to

lead us to Christ (Gal 3:23-24) and that “no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ” (1 Cor 1:20). Keller points out that in every aspect, Christ is shown through the entirety of Scripture because only Christ can resolve its major themes, only Christ can receive its law, only Christ can complete its stories, and only Christ can fulfill its symbols.² Revealing Christ through Scripture in the sermon is the essence of preaching, according to Chapell: “Christ-centered preaching is not merely evangelistic, nor is it confined to a few gospel accounts. It perceives the whole of Scripture as revelatory of God’s redemptive plan and sees every passage within this context.”³ Keller, making this theology of preaching practical in his training of preachers, writes that “every text must be asked, ‘what does this tell me about the salvation we have in Christ?’ to be understood.”⁴

Preaching that is doxological specifically seeks to show Jesus Christ in the scriptures because the scriptures are not merely monotheistic, but Christocentric. Jesus unapologetically placed himself as the centerpiece of God’s word. When speaking to a group of teachers he said, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (Jn 5:39-40). The purpose of the scriptures, according to this passage, was to reveal Jesus (“testify”) and then draw people to himself (“come to me”). Paul followed this line of reasoning when he wrote to the Colossians about his own preaching ministry there that “God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles

² Timothy Keller, “Preaching Christ in a Post-Modern World,” class syllabus for Reformed Theological Seminary Doctorate of Ministry Program, January 2002, 35.

³ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 40.

⁴ Keller, “Preaching Christ in a Post-Modern World,” 10.

the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). Paul, along with Jesus, centers his preaching and teaching of the scriptures squarely on Christ himself. Scripture itself testifies to Jesus to draw people to him, and missional preaching, by making known Christ, seeks to reveal him to those who listen in the hopes that they would come close to him.

The second half of the doxological purpose of preaching connects this revelation of Christ to the people’s reveling in Christ. By revealing Jesus in every sermon, the preacher seeks to do what Jesus and Paul did, namely, to enable the hearers to revel in God through Jesus Christ. The missional sermon is not mere fact-finding or truth-telling but, rather, is winsome, invitational, and worshipful. It enables the hearers to bask in the presence of God, relationally connecting with him in heart, mind, body, and soul. This is doxological preaching – preaching that catches up the congregation in the worship of God, in that eternal dance of the Trinity. Luke 10:21 is the only verse in the synoptic Gospels that tells of Jesus being joyful, and the reason given is that he is reveling in his Father’s presence is because of how the Father chooses to reveal himself “not to the wise and learned” but “to little children.” For Jesus, there is a sequential connection between revealing and reveling. The former opens the door for the latter. Revealing and reveling are meant to go together as partners in this doxological dance. In his sermon in John 15, Jesus again shows the connection. His preaching reveals the Father’s love and the Father’s expectations of the disciples: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love” (Jn 15:9-10). Jesus is preaching

to help create in the disciples a sense of immediacy of God's presence, which is what it means to revel in the revelation.

Though using different terminology, Paul continues the same theme in his writings. He uses the phrase "in Christ" eighty-one times to point towards this new identity in which the Christian now stands, and over and over he writes that his preaching was meant to enable the Christians fully to embrace and revel in that new core identity. The missional preacher seeks to do the same, not merely inviting the hearers into mental assent to the truths of the gospel but into a whole new world of connection with God in Christ. This world that missional preaching invites people into is more than a thoughtful interaction with a static set of propositional truths. Although thoughts and truths have their place in it, this new world is largely an experiential realm where people revel in the Christ they meet there. Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk write that "preaching and teaching invite the people of God to engage Scripture as a living word that confronts them with questions and draws them into a distinctive world."⁵ This "engaging" and "drawing" describes the sort of experience that missional preaching creates by pointing the people towards Christ in the text of the Scripture. That is why, Keller writes, "there is just one goal for the sermon – lift up Christ and his salvation . . . Nothing could have a greater effect, for Jesus said, 'when I am lifted up I will draw all men to myself' (John 12:32). The preacher aims to be a vehicle for that 'drawing.'"⁶ In the doxological sense of missional preaching, Christ is revealed in the sermon, and as a result, people are drawn close to him.

⁵ Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 12-13.

⁶ Keller, "Preaching Christ in a Post-Modern World," 13.

Communal: Celebrating and Shaping

Missional preaching also brings a message from God's word that celebrates the work of God in the people gathered in that locale and shapes them into a holy community. This is the communal aspect of missional preaching. It celebrates the contributions of God's people by embracing multiple voices in the preaching process. Those voices speak at every point, from determining what text should be preached, interpreting it, applying it, and preaching it. In Peter's sermon in Acts 10, the invitation to preach in the first place was generated by God's work in the community, originating with Cornelius and delivered by three others. The community impacted the theme of the message as well, although unintentionally. As they gathered in Cornelius' house to hear Peter, their Gentile culture in conjunction with the Holy Spirit set the theme of the sermon to that of God's inclusion of all peoples in his kingdom. Because this Greek community was his context, "Peter began to speak: 'I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right'" (Acts 10:34-35). Besides the invitation to preach and the theme of the sermon, this passage shows how the community also helps interpret God's word. When Peter says "I now realize" he shows that the context of this group of Gentile God-fearers added an interpretive grid through which Peter could correctly understand and preach the word God had previously given him.

Recognizing the context of the community is a crucial way for the preaching to celebrate the community. The context is valued both by making the message relevant to the community and by ascertaining where God is at work in the community. Tizon emphasizes the broader issue of relevance by drawing the parallel of Jesus speaking to

the disciples while others listened in: “Like the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus spoke directly to the Twelve but within earshot of everyone else present (Matt. 5:1-2), so too is missional preaching in that it addresses God’s people while never losing sight of the world surrounding them.”⁷ Certainly Peter at Cornelius’s house never lost sight of his context, either. Indeed, he starts off naming it clearly in his opening line: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile” (Acts 10:28).

It is not merely recognizing and being relevant to the context that makes preaching missional; it is also seeing that context through spiritual eyes in order to discern where God is at work in that setting. Although three times earlier in Acts 10 Peter missed what God was trying to say to him about the inclusion of all peoples, soon enough upon his arrival at Cornelius’s house Peter discerned that God was powerfully drawing these non-Jewish people to himself. Roxburgh summarizes the kind of ministry that Peter participated in at Cornelius’s house: “it’s discovering what God is up to in the neighborhoods and communities in which we live, and seeking to join with God in those places.”⁸ Paul also demonstrates this sensitivity to local culture in his preaching. For example, he quoted pagan poets and local idols in his sermon in Athens (Acts 17:23, 28) and quoted Hebrew scriptures and called the congregation “Fellow children of Abraham” in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:26). Paul is not just being relevant; he is celebrating how God is at work in each locality where he preaches and thereby affirming the community’s contribution.

⁷ Tizon, *Preaching As If The World Matters*.

⁸ Alan Roxburgh, “Missional Map-Making: an interview with Alan Roxburgh,” <http://www.pursuantgroup.com/leadnet/advance/feb10s1a.htm> (accessed April 9, 2010).

There is a tension inherent in celebrating the community's contribution in the sermon because on one hand, the text remains central and on the other, the context is essential to understanding the text. Text and context both must be valued, although the text holds priority. Newbigin insists on this for the missional preacher:

It is always required of us that we listen sensitively to both the desires and the needs of people, and that we try to understand their situation. But neither these desires and needs, nor any analysis of the situation made on the basis of some principles drawn from other sources than Scripture, can be the starting point for mission. The starting point is God's revelation of himself as it is witnessed to us in Scripture.⁹

This emphasis on the text is apparent in Paul's sermons mentioned above in Pisidian Antioch and Athens. Although he clearly values the local community and speaks contextually to it in the sermons in Acts 13 and 17, Paul still preaches the scriptures. In Acts 13, in the Jewish context, those scriptures are freely quoted. In Acts 17, there are no direct references to Scripture, but almost two dozen times in his message Paul lifts phrases from Bible passages to weave together a message that is foundationally biblical in its theme and even its diction.

In the church in Syrian Antioch, not only the preaching event celebrated the contributions of the community but so did the preaching team itself. Luke records that there was a whole team of "prophets and teachers" (Acts 13:1) at the church in Syrian Antioch which is another picture of preaching that is communal. Instead of there being only one preacher now there is a team of preachers, each having found and developed their gifts, because "For the church to be truly missional, the gifts of all members must be

⁹ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 153.

released, including the gifts of preaching.”¹⁰ One of the interesting notes about the team in Syrian Antioch is that it almost certainly was a diverse team, reflecting the fact that Syrian Antioch was a diverse city. The city was separated into Greek, Latin, Jewish, Syrian, and African sections, mirroring the racial divide in the city. In contrast to the divisions within the city, the church was multiethnic and so was its preaching team (Acts 11:20). The preaching team consisted of two Jewish leaders, an African with a Latin name (Lucius, from Cyrene, in Africa), a foster-brother of Herod Antipas who had a Greek rendition of an old Jewish name (Manaen), and a man nicknamed Niger, meaning black. In a divided city, the church united across race, and its preaching team reflected that united yet diverse cultural context, giving credence to its proclamation of Jesus as Lord in that place.

In missional preaching the text holds priority, but the text belongs to the community and can only be preached in an actual cultural context, which the community knows and understands. The letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor in the beginning of the book of Revelation paint a picture of this sort of interrelation. Although not formal sermons, these letters encapsulate a message from Christ to his people gathered in local communities, modeling the communal aspect of missional preaching. Each mini-sermon celebrates unique aspects of the community of believers in the city to which it is addressed and challenges unique aspects of that community. The mention of the poverty in Smyrna, the Nicolaitans in Pergamum, and the salve in Laodicea show that Jesus’ words to those congregations clearly derive from a thorough understanding of the

¹⁰ Ervin R. Stutzman, “Preaching in the Missional Church,” Preaching.org, http://www.preaching.org/features/display_feature/33 (accessed June 27, 2009).

locality. Newbigin summarizes this missional interplay between text and preacher and congregation:

The words of the sermon will interpret the works of the congregation, and the works of the congregation will illustrate and validate the words of the sermon. The words spoken in the pulpit will not be empty words, but part of the continuing obedience of the whole congregation. You have to write the sermon yourself, but in a real sense the congregation must be with you as you write it. What you prepare, and what you speak as part of the action of worship, will become part of the whole action of the congregation.¹¹

The missional preaching is not a solitary activity. Instead, he or she weaves the themes of the text into and out of the life of congregation. Tizon states that, barring direct communication from Jesus, “A community of authentic relationships provides the proper context for interpretation.”¹² Out of those authentic relationships the preacher celebrates the stories from the congregation that bring clarity to the text. Those stories bring clarity by revealing fresh ways of looking at the text and by showing how the text is being lived out by the congregation.

The second half of the communal priority of missional preaching is that it shapes the character of God’s people into a holy community. The communal purpose of missional preaching is not simply to celebrate the community or to mine the insights of the community, but to challenge the community and to grow the character of the community. Tizon writes that “Preaching – how ever way we choose to do it – is indispensable in shaping God’s people to conform to the image of their missional God.”¹³

¹¹ Newbigin, *Preaching Christ Today*.

¹² Tizon, *Preaching As If The World Matters*, 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*

The vision for this new kind of community that is being formed is intimately attached to the preaching of that community. Peter characterizes this community as “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession” (1 Pet 2:9). Besides deriving this vision for community from Scripture (most notably, Ex 19:5-6) Peter’s inspired picture proceeds directly from Scripture being preached. The first chapter of 1 Peter ends quoting a passage from Isaiah about the power of God’s word, and then Peter writes, “And this is the word that was preached to you. Therefore . . .” (1 Pet 1:25-2:1). The “therefore” points the people directly into the new kind of character they are to embody as a result of the preaching, which entails ridding themselves of ungodliness (2:1) and growing in their salvation (2:2) so that they “like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house” (2:4). From there, Peter reclaims the images God gave Moses in Exodus 19:5-6 of this new kind of people who are being shaped together into the image of God. The “therefore” that leads to this new kind of community is attached on the other end to the preaching of God’s word.

Preaching shapes community. Preaching has a norming function, helping to craft and create this new community through casting vision for what it can be, challenging it where it falls short, and inviting it into deeper connections within the body of Christ. Lois Barrett puts it this way: “If Christian faith makes any difference in behavior, then the church in conformity with Christ is called to an alternative set of behaviors, an alternative ethic, an alternative kind of relationship, in dialogue with the surrounding

cultures. Its difference is itself a witness to the gospel.”¹⁴ While stressing the communal nature of this vision, Barrett’s insight highlights that this new community remains doxological in that it grows “in conformity to Christ” and is also missional in that it is “in dialogue with the surrounding cultures” and is “a witness to the gospel. The three priorities are always interrelated and always present, even when one is being highlighted.

Several other New Testament passages point towards this emphasis of preaching as shaping the character of the Christian community. In Ephesians 4 Paul expounds on the purpose of the fivefold ministry of the church. At least three of these five (apostle, prophet, teacher) employ preaching as an essential element of their ministries. Paul articulates the ultimate purpose of these ministries as equipping the people for the ultimate end of building a holy community. He writes, “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:11-13). Paul seeks more than mature individuals; he calls for “the body of Christ” and “we all” to become mature. His vision at this point is a communal vision, and there is no question that preaching is one of the means to the end of shaping that community. Again, in Colossians 1:29 Paul speaks directly to the role of preaching in the formation of this community of mature believers: “He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.” Often, preachers get caught up in the

¹⁴ Lois Barrett, “Missional Witness: The Church as an Apostle to the World” in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 119.

mechanics of the message and lose sight of this ultimate goal of preaching for community transformation. Douglas Nason speaks to this issue, harking back to the impulse of Paul, when he says, “The goal is not to love preaching and to love crafting sermons but to love people and to love crafting lives.”¹⁵

Paul’s vision for preaching to bring communal maturity is the same as that of Jesus. Paul uses the Greek word τέλειός for “mature” which is precisely the same word that Jesus uses in the Sermon on the Mount, translated as “perfect” in the New International Version, when he says “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). Jesus’ command is in the second person plural – he is preaching to the entire community, seeking to shape them into a radical group of disciples who model out the character of God in their daily lives. Jesus delivers this command at the midpoint of the Sermon on the Mount, arguably the most influential sermon ever preached. The thrust, context, and position of this potent directive reveal the centrality of forming people into God’s holy community is to his preaching. In his paper to the Evangelical Homiletics Society, Scott Gibson summarizes the role of preaching in community formation: “Preaching is discipleship. . . When you see yourself as a discipler, you will rethink how you preach and what you preach.”¹⁶

Missional: Proclaiming and Propelling

The final element of the definition of missional preaching is the properly missional nature of it: that it brings a message from God’s word which proclaims the

¹⁵ Doug Nason, interview by author, Pasadena, CA, March 25, 2009.

¹⁶ Scott M. Gibson, “All I Want is a Practical Theology of Preaching,” Evangelical Homiletics Society, <http://www.ehomiletics.com/papers/08/Gibson.pdf> (accessed December 23, 2010).

kingdom of God and propels his people into the world to partner with him in bringing it to earth. There are two elements to this priority: proclaiming and propelling.

The proclamation of God's kingdom not only includes teaching about it, but more importantly, simply announcing it. When Jesus began his ministry, he went about "proclaiming the good news of God" by saying that "The kingdom of God has come near" (Mk 1:14, 15). Jesus sent his disciples to do the same when "he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:2). This proclamation intentionally reveals the present reality of God's kingdom on the earth, showing the many places where God is working and ruling in the world. In other words, "missional preaching witnesses to God's action behalf of the world."¹⁷ This witnessing winsomely paints a picture of spiritual reality so that God's people can see it, believe it, and yearn for it. In his description of the eighteenth century revivalist preaching of Jonathan Edwards, Keller gets at how preaching does not simply convey truth but rather, through the proclamation of the kingdom, helps create a new world. Keller writes that Edwards

insisted that the purpose of the sermon was not simply to get an emotional response nor simply to impart information. The purpose of the sermon was not just to make the truth plain but to make it *real*. The aim of the sermon was to give the hearers a 'sense of the heart,' an experience of the spiritual reality of truth. With that view in mind, the preacher was not only supposed to dispense data, nor only to arouse the feelings, but rather was to inflame the imagination.¹⁸

The kind of world-creating preaching that Keller describes is found often in the scriptures. For example, when Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount by blessing the poor in spirit and the meek, proclaiming that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3),

¹⁷ Pablo A. Jimenez, "Missional Preaching," in *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching*, ed. Paul Scott Wilson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 276.

¹⁸ Keller, "Preaching the Gospel in a Post-Modern World," 10.

he calls into being a whole new way of viewing life. Not only does he contradict the status quo of the world, he begins to make real this new order, leaving the poor in spirit more blessed at the end of his sermon than they were before.

This point must not be missed: the proclamation of the kingdom both shows the kingdom and brings the kingdom. The prophet Jeremiah's preaching showcases these two effects of preaching. At the beginning of his preaching ministry, God casts vision for Jeremiah about how his sermons would create a new reality: "Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer 1:9-10). J.R. Rozko, one of the preachers at Life on the Vine Church in Chicago, puts proclamation in a most contemporary way when he blogs that "preaching in missional churches seeks to proclaim biblical truth. Now, don't miss this. I don't mean 'proclaim biblical truth' in the fundamentalist, 'The Bible says it, so that's the end of discussion and you're stupid if you don't see it' sort of way that's maddeningly common, but in the, 'In faith, we proclaim this to be true about God and life in God's Kingdom,' sort of way."¹⁹ Missional preachers proclaim God's kingdom both as a coming kingdom and as already present, and by drawing attention to it, they make it more real than it was before. The proclamation of it this kingdom peels back the curtains of heaven so that spiritual realities are made manifest and the congregation is invited to step into them. As John Dally puts it, "The essential thing is that a proclamation is made, that an alternative world is announced every time the preacher opens her mouth – a world to which the listeners can give their

¹⁹ J. R. Rozko, "Missional Preaching Part 2: Preaching as the Proclamation of Biblical Truth," LifeAsaMission blog, entry posted February 12, 2010, <http://lifeasamission.com/blog/2010/02/missional-preaching-part-2-preaching-as-the-proclamation-of-biblical-truth> (accessed December 23, 2010).

allegiance or withhold it.”²⁰ Announcing the kingdom reveals and reinforces its reality and inherently inviting people to take hold of it and live in it.

One other characteristic of the proclamation of the kingdom is that the stakes are high. Giving allegiance to the alternative world of God’s reign is immensely costly because the kingdom that Jesus preached is diametrically opposed to the kingdoms of this world. For example, in a sermon to the large crowds following him, Jesus says, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:26). Bosch points out how these kinds of announcements make sense only in light of Jesus’ unswerving conviction that a whole new way of life was breaking into the world in the present:

Two features in Jesus’ preaching of God’s reign are of particular importance . . . First, God’s reign is not understood as exclusively future but as both future and already present . . . Something totally new is happening; the eruption of a new era, of a new order of life. The hope of deliverance is not a distant song about a far-away future. The future has invaded the present . . . The missionary nature of Jesus’ ministry is also revealed in a second fundamental characteristic of his kingdom ministry: it launches an all-out attack on evil in all its manifestations.²¹

The “all-out attack” that Bosch describes here is the natural implication of missional preaching because the proclamation of the kingdom thrusts the listeners into the cosmic battle for the redemption of the world. Since the kingdom has broken into this present world, there is no more passive waiting for it to arrive. The future has arrived, God is on the move in the present, and missional preaching is a battle cry to enter the fray.

²⁰ John Addison Dally, *Choosing The Kingdom: Missional Preaching for the Household of God*, (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008), 118.

²¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 32.

Dally exposes how preaching must change in order to carry the weight of this burden. The tired, mechanical approach of sermon delivery that moves from exegesis to illustration to application no longer works in a missional church because it cannot bear up under the mission-laden content required in preaching that God's kingdom is at hand. Instead, Dally advocates for a more vibrant rhythm of proclamation, implication and invitation.²² The sermon proclaims that God's kingdom that is at hand, and therefore God's people are implicated because in this new realm they see God's heart for them to change in character and to adopt his mission for the world. The sermon also gives an invitation to join God in his quest to redeem the world, provoking a response from God's people.

The second half of the expressly missional priority of preaching has to do with the implications of proclaiming the kingdom of God; namely, that missional preaching propels God's people into the world to partner with him in bringing the kingdom of heaven to earth. Isaiah combines both the proclaiming and propelling aspects of missional preaching in his prophecy about the ministry of the coming messiah. He writes,

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion –

²² Dally, *Choosing the Kingdom*, 117.

to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes . . .
They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations. (Is 61:1-4)

This prophecy speaks of a messiah who is sent on mission (“he has sent me”) both to proclaim (mentioned three times) the inbreaking of God’s new order of things and to work to install this new way of life through binding up, comforting, providing and bestowing. The result of this ministry was that the very ones to whom he preached, the broken and needy ones, would then “rebuild the ancient ruins” and “renew the ruined cities.” The missional preaching foretold of this messiah moved from proclaiming the kingdom into propelling God’s people to partner with him in bringing it to earth.

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy in every sense, showing himself to be this missional messiah. In fact, he inaugurated his preaching ministry with a sermon based on this very text. After reading the Isaiah 61 text from the scroll and sitting down in the synagogue to preach, Luke 4:21 says, “He began by saying to them ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” As Isaiah prophesied, Jesus championed the proclamation of the kingdom of God, he matched his proclamation with his ministry, and he did so in order to draw others into partnership with him in God’s plan to restore the world to rights. The kingdom of heaven that he preached was not merely future; indeed, Jesus said that this kingdom was being fulfilled “today.” As N. T. Wright puts it,

The whole point of what Jesus was up to was that he was doing, close up, in the present, what he was promising long-terms, in the future. And what he was promising for that future, and doing in that present, was not saving souls for a disembodied eternity but rescuing people from the corruption and decay of the way the world presently is so they could enjoy, already in the present, that

renewal of creation which is God's ultimate purpose—and so they could thus become colleagues and partners in that larger project.²³

The kingdom that Jesus proclaimed was both present and as future, and he worked in the present to make it more and more of a reality. In a simple summary of how Jesus worked for the kingdom in the present, Luke records that “he went around doing good” (Acts 10:38).

Wright thoughtfully adds that Jesus was not only doing this himself, but rather that an important part of his work in the present was to enable people to “become colleagues and partners in that larger project.” Jesus was not just proclaiming the kingdom and bringing the kingdom; he was drawing others into this kingdom work with him. Indeed, Jesus commissioned the disciples to do the same work that he did in bringing this kingdom to earth, saying that “whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing” (Jn 14:12). In John 20:21 Jesus is at his clearest in stating the missional aim of his ministry: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” In the words of Christopher Wright, “*God* is on a mission, and we, in that wonderful phrase of Paul, are ‘co-workers with God’ (1 Cor 3:9).”²⁴ Jesus sends his people out into the world, propelling them into all its glory and shame, in order to partner with him there in establishing his reign over all the earth. The goal of missional preaching is the same. It is “to lead the congregation as a whole in a mission to the community as a whole, to claim its whole public life, as well as the lives of all its people, for God’s rule.”²⁵

²³ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 191-192.

²⁴ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 531.

²⁵ Newbigin, *The Gospel in Pluralistic Society*, 238.

The proclamation and propelling nature of the missional priority of preaching go hand in hand. Proclamation is the announcing of God's reign and rule in the world in such vivid and invitational means that it naturally propels his followers into action. Fitch puts it this way:

Preaching is the proclamation of God's Story into and over our lives and inviting people into it. So there must necessarily be a response at the end of the sermon. Such a response should be here and now, after the hearing, that requires – by the Holy Spirit – a commitment to obedience, an act of submission, a confession of sin, an affirmation of God's truth in my life, a profound act of gratitude that owns our participation in God's grace. These moments shape the believer profoundly for life in Christ and His Mission.²⁶

Every sermon integrates both theology and praxis, both proclamation and propelling. They are intertwined from the start. No missional sermon would be complete with a declaration of a new world order that did not invite participation, and no missional sermon would be complete with a bald-faced command to go and do something without the underlying redemptive move of God announced as both the motive and the means for the doing.

Summary Comments

All three elements of missional preaching – the doxological focus on revealing and reveling, the communal focus on celebrating and shaping, and the missional focus on proclaiming and propelling – always call for change. In the doxological sense that means turning away from reveling in the self and reveling in the revealed Christ instead. In the communal sense it means turning away from being mere individuals and being shaped into a holy community. In a missional sense it means a turning away from selfish

²⁶ David Fitch, "Can Missional Be Multi-Site: 3 Characteristics of Missional Preaching."

isolation and a turning towards the world to love and serve. As Tizon says, “The ultimate goal of missional preaching is personal and community change.”²⁷ Russell agrees with that emphasis on change, using the biblical word “conversion” for it and connecting it back to the three priorities of the church: “the outcome of missional preaching is *conversion*. The Bible seeks to convert women and men to God’s mission. This involves the triad of mission, holiness, and community.”²⁸ That call for conversion confronts every force of evil, every structure in society, and every individual idolatry that seeks to withstand the rule of God in Christ. “Public announcements of God’s actions in the world are a call to conversion, to turning around, to giving up idolatries, and to placing one’s loyalty in the one true God and God’s reign.”²⁹

The call for change in response to hearing God’s word extends far beyond the application step at the end of a sermon. James teaches “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says,” implying that there is a deception that occurs when the words are heard and not acted upon (Jas 1:22). Keller says that far before the sermon is delivered this is an issue because even the beginning phases of the preacher’s preparation of the sermon require a focus on the real life implications of the text.

When studying God’s Word you really don’t understand a text unless you understand how the Lord wants you to obey it. Unless you understand how a part of God’s Word is meant to affect you and how you are supposed to live your life out in service to it, then you don’t yet understand it. So you can’t say first, “I’m learning the meaning of the text” and then move to question “How can I apply this text to our lives?” If I don’t know how to use a text in my life, I don’t know

²⁷ Al Tizon, telephone interview by the author, May 10, 2010.

²⁸ Russell, “Missional Preaching.”

²⁹ Barrett, “Missional Witness,” 137.

its meaning yet. Therefore, the difference between meaning and application is ultimately meaningless. If you don't know how this text is supposed to be used in the listener's life, then you don't understand it yet. So you can't say, "First I'm going to figure out the meaning and then I'm going to apply it." You've got to have application on your mind from the very beginning of your exegesis.³⁰

In missional preaching, application is not tacked on at the end of a message. Rather, the missional preacher assumes from the beginning of his or her study that the text requires change on behalf of the congregation because the text is given to the body of Christ to be obeyed. As Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law." Revelation without obedience unravels the essence of preaching.

One final element of missional preaching that cannot be avoided is that inherent to being a preacher is to be sent ahead of others on mission. The missional preacher is not allowed to function merely as a mouthpiece for God, standing off to the side and dispensing advice from the safety of the shadows. Instead of being bystanders, missional preachers most often are the banner-carriers in the cosmic battle for the redemption of this world. They lead the charge. The prophets knew this first hand. After an introduction by way of apocalyptic vision, God's opening words to Ezekiel are "I am sending you" (Ez 2:3). When he was still young, God spoke to Jeremiah, "You must go to everyone I send you to" (Jer 1:7). Isaiah, so caught up in the vision of God's holiness that it seems he almost had no choice, volunteered to be sent: "Here am I. Send me!" (Is 6:8). Paul knew this, as well, because he had experienced it himself. Later in his life he writes to the Romans, "How can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how

³⁰ Tim Keller, "Preaching to the Heart," Oak Hill College, November 19, 2008, Quicktime audio file, <http://www.oakhill.ac.uk/commentary/audio/keller/index.html> (accessed June 25, 2010).

can anyone preach unless they are sent?" (Rom 10:14-15). Jesus had a profound understanding of himself as one who was sent: in the gospel of John alone, Jesus refers to himself forty times as being sent from his Father. Altogether, these passages remind missional preachers that, although they are sending the congregation into the world, they have been sent first.

PART THREE

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MISSIONAL PREACHING
AT EMMANUEL

CHAPTER 6
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE ATTEMPTS AT MISSIONAL PREACHING
AT EMMANUEL

Part Three contains two chapters that seek to flesh out the actual ministry of missional preaching in a local context. The present chapter reflects on Emmanuel's journey into missional preaching. The final chapter seeks to spell out an intentional strategy for how the theology of missional preaching will get worked out at Emmanuel proceeding forward.

Only recently have the pastors of Emmanuel engaged in dialogue regarding missional preaching. Before, its pastors would preach without giving much theological reflection to the purpose of preaching. Besides attention to the mechanistic elements of preaching taught at seminary, little input or evaluation went into the preaching process. That is not to say, however, that the preaching at Emmanuel has not been missional; it is only to say that it had not been intentionally so.

Reflection on the Planning Process

The ministry of preaching at Emmanuel has been unintentionally missional for decades. As soon as Rev. Korver arrived in 1971 he began to integrate missional themes into his messages. Through those messages, Emmanuel began to understand itself as a “mission outpost into the twenty-first century,” as Rev. Korver was fond of saying.

Those missional themes continued and intensified in the 1990s in response to the changing demographics of Paramount and the racial tensions in Los Angeles. In 1992, during the riots that followed the Rodney King police brutality trial, Paramount was covered in smoke. Although none of the looting or violence touched the city (the city authorities had blocked the major roads into the city with school busses to keep the rioters out), local residents were stunned by the crisis and there was an immediate push to move the church further from the city. Beginning in 1993, Rev. Korver and Pastor Ken preached for an entire year about the identity of the church as one that would stay in the city and serve the city, harping on themes of the kingdom of God coming in Paramount. Following that year, for another long series of months, Pastor Ken preached on discipleship, harping on the theme of shaping the character of the Christian community and constantly promoting the use Greg Ogden *Discipleship Essentials*. Finally, there was a season in 1996 and 1997 when Pastor Ken preached often about the need for the church to have a multiethnic worship service, and those messages helped propel the congregation (or at least a significant part of it) to join in the process of launching the multiethnic Noon Service in February 1997. Without knowing it, the pastors of Emmanuel had modeled the very kind of missional preaching that Tizon calls for when he writes that

missional preaching cannot be solely relegated to specially designated Missions Sundays and holidays; mission must be what permeates every Sunday. Otherwise it sends a subliminal message that normal Sundays are primarily for the internal concerns of the household of faith. To be missional calls for a reversal of priorities: instead of one or two Missions Sundays, we should have one or two “Church Sundays,” where the service intentionally focuses inward!¹

The week-in and week-out proclamation of the kingdom of God and the push outward towards serving the community continued in the pulpit all the more in the first decade of the twenty-first century, fulfilling Rev. Korver’s vision of Emmanuel being a mission outpost. In particular, the advent of The Compton Initiative in 2005 had a marked impact on the sermons. Because of the enormous scope of the work in Compton it became necessary to speak of this on a regular basis and not only on what Tizon called “Missions Sundays.” The call to renew Compton became a regular theme for sermons. For example, early on in the push towards Compton, the pastors preached a series on the virtues to be added to faith from 2 Peter 1:5-8. On June 10, 2007 when Pastor Ken preached on “adding love” (2 Pt 1:7) he preached not only about loving individuals but also about loving the whole community of Compton. After the service, an African American man in his fifties came up for prayer and, weeping, said “I destroyed Compton. I destroyed Compton. I want to be part of rebuilding Compton now.” He began volunteering in Compton soon afterwards. This kind of missional preaching has become increasingly common at Emmanuel – preaching that proclaims a new kingdom and that naturally results in people into stepping into action.

Besides the expressly missional themes of proclaiming the kingdom and propelling God’s people into the community to serve, the sermons at Emmanuel have

¹ Tizon, *Preaching As If The World Matters*, 3.

also been doxological and communal in nature. These later two elements tended to be more common in the preaching of the American church in general and as such their significance at Emmanuel was not as striking or countercultural as the specifically missional themes. What needs to be stressed, however, is that the preaching ministry at Emmanuel remained unarticulated until just recently. Because of the inherent bent of the pastors of Emmanuel, they intuitively preached missionally all along, at least in a piecemeal manner, but of late this has become a strategic component of the preaching ministry.

Macro Sermon Planning: Shaping the Preaching Year

In the spring of 2006 the pastoral team began to reformulate the mission statement of the church, and that process had a significant impact on the preaching at Emmanuel. Over the course of a year, the church's mission statement became "to deeply connect a diversity of people to Jesus, people, and God's mission," which directly parallels the doxological, communal, and missional nature of the church articulated in chapter 4. By the middle of 2007 the pastoral team realized that the preaching schedule needed to reflect the thrust of this new mission statement. After giving input, the pastoral team granted the author a week-long study leave to sketch out a preaching plan for the entire year of 2008 that would incorporate the church's new threefold emphasis on Jesus, people, and God's mission. For the first time, the preaching of Emmanuel started to become intentionally reflective of the doxological, communal, and missional nature of preaching that was articulated in this paper.

That study leave and the ensuing process with the pastoral team produced a one-year plan to preach through the entire books of Luke and Acts. At one chapter a week, the combined fifty-two chapters of those two books would carry Emmanuel through an entire year of sermons. Daily devotionals and weekly small group curriculum based on the chapter for the week would be paired with the preaching, and these additional resources would enable the whole church to delve into Luke and Acts at multiple levels. The pastoral team called that year “Discipleship Journey 2008” or simply DJ08. In terms of the preaching, every sermon was sketched out in advance to articulate how it would focus on the Jesus, people or mission aspect of the church’s new mission statement.

Starting with DJ08, Emmanuel began to approach sermon planning on the macro level, looking at a year at a time. By working on the macro level, the preaching started to become more theologically balanced and therefore more intentionally missional. Gone were the days of being missional merely by intuition. Sermon planning no longer depended on a whim, a good idea, or a set of circumstances. Now there was a plan, an intentional scope and sequence that reflected the core convictions of the church.

Other churches have leveraged this approach to planning, and Emmanuel has been able to learn from them. Bryan Wilkerson at Grace Chapel used year-long series to bring deep change to his congregation. He blended together the theological insights about the slow process of spiritual formation from Dallas Willard’s *Renovation of the Heart* with the practical preaching insights about the need for “incremental preaching” from Hull to form a preaching plan the worked on a single theme for an entire year.² Although he

² Hull, *Strategic Preaching*, 79. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2002).

used language different than the doxological, communal, and missional language of this paper, his emphases were precisely the same. Over a three-year period he preached on “Transformation: Cultivating a Heart for God”; “One Another: Becoming the Body of Christ”; and “Doing Good: Becoming the Hands and Feet of Jesus.”³ Wilkerson’s work has modeled for Emmanuel the kind of intentional, theologically balanced, macro-level planning that empowers preaching to have real and lasting effect.

Now that Emmanuel has a more articulate vision of what it means for preaching to be missional, this mechanism of year-long planning has the potential to develop effectively. Over the course of a year, Emmanuel can become intentional about the revealing and reveling elements of the doxological purpose, the celebratory and shaping elements of the communal purpose, and the proclamation and propelling elements of the missional purpose. With the help of the implementation plan found in Chapter 7, this increasingly balanced theology will help the preaching diet of the church to become healthy and robust.

Strategic Sermon Planning: Designing Sermon Series

As Emmanuel experimented with preaching missionally, a helpful middle ground emerged between the year-long plan and the individual sermon. That middle ground was the sermon series, which would usually last between four and six weeks. Of course, sermon series were not new to Emmanuel, but leveraging them to accomplish the threefold purpose of the church was a new idea.

³ Bryan Wilkerson, *Preaching with VIM, Not Just Vigor*, PreachingToday.com, March 22, 2010, under “Sharpen Your Skills,” <http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/2010/march/preachvimnotvigor.html> (accessed January 26, 2011).

Before, sermon series were not strategic. A series was merely a way to string together Sundays so that the pastor could know what he was speaking about next and so that the congregation could have a sense of anticipation of what lay ahead. Series were not different than individual sermons in terms of their intentionality. The only real difference was that series were longer in scope. The de facto purpose behind a series was to stay scriptural without repeating any other recent series. However, since DJ08, the role of sermon series at Emmanuel has changed in three ways.

The first way series have changed is that they have gradually moved to becoming more balanced in their emphasis. In 2009, the written sermon plan for the year specified on it whether a series' primary emphasis was on Jesus, people, or mission (or a combination). This small step helped bring balance to the overall emphasis of the preaching during that year and served as a corrective to leaning more heavily on one leg of that stool than the other two. In particular, by tracking which priority a series highlighted and then planning for the next series to bring balance, mission became more prominent than it would have been before. Otherwise, like the American Church in general, Emmanuel would have prioritized the doxological and communal purposes.

The second way that the use of sermon series changed the effectiveness of preaching at Emmanuel was by creating a clearer sense of momentum for each series. Instead of disconnected individual sermons huddled together, the preaching team started to see how each series had its own scope and sequence and its own strategic purpose. Over the past few years Emmanuel has stumbled onto what Hull articulated about series accomplishing bigger and longer term goals than what a single sermons: "Usually my strategic objectives for one sermon are but a small part of what I hope to accomplish by

preaching several sermons over several weeks or even months . . . Meaningful congregational momentum is almost always the result of incremental preaching, hence, a successful strategy is more often the result of many sermons rather than of a few.”⁴ This “incremental preaching” allows for time and space to press an issue long and hard, knowing both that it may take six weeks to effect the kind of change that is sought and also that it is acceptable to push hard because a new series is coming next that will bring balance to the focus of the current series.

The third way that sermon series have changed is that now they are planned strategically so that other elements of the worship services can dovetail together with the sermon, combining to have a greater overall impact. Before baptisms and communion were haphazardly scheduled. Now sermon series are built around the celebration of the sacraments, creating a powerful interplay between the various elements of the worship service. One of the other advantages to this aspect of planning is that it gives appropriate lead time to Emmanuel’s musicians to write music for series which then amplify the messages. The motivation to write songs has increased because the musicians know it can be used more than once in the series. For example, the series in DJ08 on Acts 1-10 was titled “Get Out of the Box” and focused on how the early church extended itself beyond its comfort zone to reach out to others in their community. Bob Olson, the Director of Celebration Arts, wrote the following lyrics which augmented the kingdom call of these missional messages:

Outside these walls may I be bold for You
Outside these walls make my devotion true
May I heal the sick may I help the Poor

⁴ Hull, *Strategic Preaching*, 78-79.

Unashamed to say that I love You Lord
Outside these walls

Outside these walls stretch out your hand to heal
Outside these walls show that Your love is real
Use our hands to serve when the need is there
Give us hearts of love to show that You care
Outside these walls

May Your kingdom come, may Your will be done
May Your kingdom come, may Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven
May Your kingdom come, may Your will be done
Outside these walls⁵

Musical pieces like this have made a significant impact on the congregation by allowing the theology of mission to be sung, and working on series in advance has enabled songs like these to be written. Before, the musicians did not have the time and warning as they do now to be able to write music.

Micro Sermon Planning: Crafting and Delivering Individual Sermons

The individual sermon holds primary importance in the shift towards missional preaching. There have been three approaches to the sermons at Emmanuel that have taken major steps towards this paper's view of missional preaching. None of them are unique to Emmanuel. These approaches are not even unique to this era of Emmanuel's preaching except in the fact that they are becoming increasingly articulate, intentional, and strategic in how they play themselves out in Emmanuel overall participation in the mission of God.

The first aspect of preaching that is becoming more missional is how the preaching team look at the text. This is the most essential because, as the apostle Paul

⁵ "Outside These Walls" by Robert Olson, Emmanuel, June 8, 2008.

told Timothy, there is nothing to preach besides God’s word (2 Tm 4:2). Stetzer writes, “Allow the text to set the agenda,” to emphasize how it is God’s word and not a human word that has the potency to effect change in the hearers.⁶ Allowing the text to set the agenda is not unique for missional preaching as opposed to other kinds of preaching except in the sense that the missional preacher sees the scriptures themselves as inherently missional, and therefore their agenda is always missional. No scriptural text stands alone, containing nothing more than a few principles for a healthy marriage or a prosperous business. As the preacher looks at the text with missional eyes and with a missional heart, the missional mandate in the text emerges more clearly, and that becomes the agenda for the sermon. Hull encourages the preacher to “find the movement of the text, let the sermon move with it, and soon the congregation may begin to move where God is going as well.”⁷ This missional hermeneutic, as Hunsberger calls it, surfaces the places in the assigned text that connect to God’s overall missional story.⁸ Those points of contact help the preacher use that text to speak to God’s mission in the church’s local context. As was dealt with in chapter 4 explicitly, God’s essential nature is missional as are his scriptures, and therefore with a missional hermeneutic in place, the sermon necessarily follows suit.

More and more consistently, the preaching team at Emmanuel has been coming to the text with that missional hermeneutic and it has had a dramatic effect on the sermons.

⁶ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 271.

⁷ Hull, *Strategic Preaching*, 42.

⁸ George Hunsberger, “Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping the Conversation,” *The Gospel and Our Culture Network*, January 28, 2009, <http://www.gocn.org/resources/articles/proposals-missional-hermeneutic-mapping-conversation> (accessed June 27, 2009).

With these new missional lenses the preaching team is newly finding both the explicitly missional nature of texts as well as seeing the particular text in light of the whole of God's mission in scripture. When mission infiltrates the preparation phase of preaching it inevitably becomes expressed in the delivery phase. This aspect of crafting individual sermons, though falling under the broad umbrella of missional preaching, is technically doxological. The preacher wrestles with the text, listening for God to reveal a word for the congregation. Although that word inevitably will be preached in a way that connects it with God's heart for mission, it is the revelatory nature and therefore doxological.

The second way in which individual sermons have become more expressly missional at Emmanuel is by their use of story. Over the past five years, Emmanuel has become increasingly marked by the weekly telling of stories of congregants who are deeply connecting to Jesus, people, and God's mission. As the pastoral team tried to create a new culture of discipleship it realized that "the stories you choose to tell inform the emerging culture. Stories that are rooted in the life of the congregation breathe life into the congregation. Great leaders are great storytellers. Great churches have great stories. Great stories create a great future."⁹ Like Jesus' parables, stories hold a special power in them to capture not only the imagination of the people, but their hearts.

Whereas the agenda of the text primarily falls under the doxological area of the sermon's purpose, the use of stories primarily falls under the umbrella of the communal purpose. Because the stories come from the congregation, they are a celebration of what God is doing in the people. Because the stories show ordinary Christians stepping into God's kingdom life, they help shape the community of faith by showing what authentic

⁹ McManus, *Unstoppable Force*, 122.

Christian life looks like. Of course, stories also help God's people revel in the truths of his word by demonstrating his power and goodness in human lives; and they also help propel people into action by showing the simple, pragmatic steps that others have taken to join God in mission. Borden speaks to how stories empower missional preaching in these ways:

Vision is primarily communicated through stories, specifically the stories of the people in the church that are living the vision out. This is true because story not only communicates information but also volition and emotion. When I tell someone a story as opposed to an illustration, they not only understand the point but they see how other people have lived it out. It touches them at an emotive and volitional level. Every time I make a point, I need a positive story of how average, ordinary Christians have lived this out. Use story after story of real life people.¹⁰

What this has ended up looking like for Emmanuel is that each week the preachers tell stories from the congregation of how real people are living out the text of scripture. The most significant services that display this emphasis on stories are the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter services. On these high holy days there are always multiple stories told by people in the congregation, expressly for the purposes of celebrating what God is doing in Emmanuel's midst and showing how the text is being lived out in people's lives.

Stories have been particularly impactful when it has come to casting vision for the renewal of Compton. Time and time again, individuals have shared their experiences in the city. This email, from a middle-aged White woman regarding her experience on a service project in Compton, was read during a sermon on Jesus' commissioning of the twelve apostles in Mark 3:

¹⁰ Paul Borden, "*Leading and Preaching: What Happens in the Pulpit When a Chaplain Becomes a Leader*," PreachingToday.com, June 1, 2000. <http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/themes/uptothechallenge/200006.10.html> (accessed October 10, 2008).

There is a very palpable sense of drawing close to the very source of life and creation, as we join with our brothers and sisters to march forward against the darkness, hopelessness and fear that are trying to encompass the souls of every man, woman and child in Compton. I'm sure that sounds overly dramatic – but, as I drive up to whatever school campus is our “base” for the day – my heart pounds with great anticipation – because I am joining an army of saints that will joyfully shine the light of Jesus to push back the darkness and bring back the hope.¹¹

Stories like these capture the hearts and minds of God's people, celebrating the little steps into his kingdom by an individual and then, unobtrusively, inviting others to do the same. This is what McLaren meant when he said that “a story can't be argued with or dismissed like a proposition. A story is just sneaky. It doesn't teach by induction or deduction. It teaches by abduction. It abducts your attention and it won't let you go until you have done some thinking for yourself.”¹² The preachers at Emmanuel have increasingly sought to abduct people with stories in order to capture their hearts and souls with the kingdom vision God has revealed for the city of Compton.

The final way that individual sermons have become more intentionally missional is by laying out specific action steps to be taken by the people. This clarity about what strategic action should result from a sermon falls primarily under the expressly missional purpose of preaching. Hull highlights the critical nature of being strategic about the practical steps to be taken as a result of the sermon:

Strategic preaching is the kind of Christian proclamation that is *designed to guide a congregation in the fulfillment of its mission*. On this understanding, one primary purpose of a sermon is to lead its hearers from Point A to Point B, that is, from where they are now to where the imperatives of the gospel call them to be. In short, the sermon is to *help God's future happen* in the lives of its hearers. Strategic preaching is a call to be pulled forward by God's unfinished agenda of

¹¹ Dawn Kehret, email to the author, June 1, 2009.

¹² Brian McLaren, Leadership Network Conference, 1998, quoted in Steve Rabey, *In Search of Authentic Faith*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 98.

this world. It invites us to live out of that vision Jesus called the kingdom of God, indeed to claim the life of the “new age” here and now “on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10).¹³

A single sermon’s purpose falls within the overall purpose of the series and the overall purpose of the year, and yet it still must be particularized to the assigned text and the immediate congregational context. This one area is perhaps Pastor Ken’s greatest strength in preaching, because his unusually strong leadership gift never allows him to finish a sermon without clearly and forcefully showing the people how they need to respond. As with any preacher, on occasion Pastor Ken’s messages may wander or lack depth but each Sunday he always manages to answer what Hull states is the most essential question of a strategic sermon: “Where do we want God’s people to go in the foreseeable future in response to the appeal of this message?”¹⁴

The preachers at Emmanuel have sought to create real action as a result of sermons in multiple ways. One of the most obvious and hands-on approaches has been the response cards to fill out. Making lists of unbelievers to pray for, signing up to join a small group, and committing to specific levels of financial support have been common steps at the end of sermons. Interacting with people immediately following the sermon has been another manifestation of a specific action step. These interactions include altar calls for conversion or healing prayer, invitations to turn to the people nearby and pray about the message, discussion questions for lunch after the service, and sending people to stations to process an issue with leaders there. There have also been many times when the preacher has allowed for moments of silent reflection and prayer followed by a

¹³ Hull, *Strategic Preaching*, 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

benediction that sends people out with the command to do what they told God they would do. These mechanisms are representative of the kind of pragmatic ways that Emmanuel has sought to leverage sermons to put flesh and blood on the message, getting people involved in the next step of partnering with God in his local kingdom work.

Reflection on Preaching as One Component of a Church-wide

Constellation of Ministry

One of the crucial aspects of planning sermons, series, and an entire year's worth of messages has been working in tandem with the broader church staff to accomplish large, church-wide goals. The unity of vision and the teamwork required for those goals to be met has often been elusive in the past. Before The Compton Initiative movement in 2005 there was little overlap between what happened on a Sunday and what happened during the rest of the week at Emmanuel. In fact, there was one pastor's meeting soon after the launch of The Compton Initiative when Pastor Ken, facing some opposition to his vision for Compton, said that none of the other pastors or ministries would need to be involved in the work in Compton at all. That statement was a reflection of what had been a "silo approach" to ministry where each ministry ran itself like its own grain silo, completely independently of the others. As the work in Compton grew and the need for radical disciples surfaced, it became obvious to everyone that the church was headed towards a new era of cooperation, whether it wanted to or not. The magnitude of the task necessitated teamwork and multiple reinforcing layers of vision, recruitment, and implementation. However, changing a church culture, particularly one that is over eighty

years old, has not been an easy process. Emmanuel is still in the throes of that culture change.

During DJ08, the pastoral team experimented with several ways of reinforcing the message from the pulpit in other areas of church life, attempting to spread the priorities of deeply connecting to Jesus, people, and God's mission throughout the congregation.

Besides the aforementioned daily devotionals and small group Bible studies based on the sermon messages, three books were chosen for the year for supplemental reading. Peter Scazzero's *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* dealt with the theme of deeply connecting to Jesus.¹⁵ Michael Henderson's *Making Disciples One Conversation at a Time* dealt with the theme of deeply connecting to people.¹⁶ Robert Lupton's *Compassion, Justice, and the Christian Life* dealt with the theme of deeply connecting to God's mission.¹⁷ Since these books fit so nicely into the doxological, communal, and missional nature of missional preaching it was easy to quote from the books on a regular basis in sermons which helped the messages have strength and depth and which also reinforced the practice of reading missional literature. For DJ09 and DJ10 there were similar efforts to provide supplement missional literature to the congregation, although for these two years the books were always connected to a particular sermon series in order to augment the particular message of that series. It has been a challenge to find books that follow the

¹⁵ Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Unleash A Revolution In Your Life In Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006).

¹⁶ Michael Henderson, *Making Disciples One Conversation at a Time* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Robert Lupton, *Compassion, Justice, and the Christian Life: Rethinking Ministry to the Poor* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007).

themes of the messages instead of trying to build message series around the books, but with enough effort and forethought it has been largely possible.

Besides supplying reading material and content for individuals and small groups, the pastoral team needed help in providing simple and strategic ways to enable people to take missional steps in response to messages. In particular, when it came to calling people to join small groups and propelling people into service, the preaching team found it needed more effective ways to help people make and keep commitments. The goal has become to enable people both to sign the dotted line and cross the finish line. Paul Borden's article about the connection between leadership and preaching was a timely resource for the pastoral team as they worked through practical steps of making sermons produce results. In that article Borden addressed the practical issue of execution:

Lay mobilization occurs as the vision is communicated. It happens as individuals are allowed to figure out how their own individual responsibilities relate to their gifts and to where the community is going. Churches that get past the 20/80 rule have a system in place capable of taking people from the pew to actual engagement once the preacher gets done preaching about lay mobilization . . . The more exciting the vision, the more necessary it is to provide a system that says "When you get done hearing me challenge you to become part of our vision, we've got people in the back of the church who are going to help you do X, Y, and Z. So sign up here." It's not just the preaching that accomplishes this task. There must also be a system in place so the person is not left hanging when the sermon is done.¹⁸

Simple and practical measures were taken in order to help the sermons accomplish their missional goals. For example, a set of connection booths were set up in front of the sanctuary so people could get information and sign up for everything from small groups to Compton work days. Another example has been changing when ushers take the offering at Christmas Eve and Easter services so that it now comes after the sermon.

¹⁸ Borden, *Leading and Preaching*.

That timing allows the preacher to challenge people to write down their commitments which they then put into the offering plate. Those commitments double as a pledge to God and as a sign up for whatever group or event that will help them make good on that pledge. These are some of the practical, systematic steps that the preaching team has taken to insure that the sermon is not only missional in content but in application.

Along the way of putting the theology of missional preaching into practice, the pastoral team stumbled into the insight that its sermons would also be more effective if there were more overlap between Sunday messages and the programmatic aspect of church life during the week. Instead of delivering stand alone sermons, the pastors realized that their sermons needed to be webbed more tightly into the constellation of ministries of Emmanuel. Alan Nelson summarized what the pastoral team was discovering in a short article that was passed around the leadership circles of the church early in 2009. In it he wrote that

a growing number of churches are realizing that focusing on a single message theme for all participants yields a better chance of residual impact. The goal is to be more like a laser, not a floodlight, because laser beams have the ability to penetrate deeply, going beneath the surface. Consider doing short- or long-term themes around a single weekly focal point. When the adult message, children's Sunday school, youth group lesson, and adult small group studies focus on a single weekly point, the chance of distracting, contrasting themes decreases and the chance of family interactions increases. Redundancy is an enduring learning fundamental.¹⁹

This article and some of the experimentation of DJ08 and DJ09 led to reading Dave Ferguson's *The Big Idea* and learning about Community Christian Church's system of aligning the multiple messages across the spectrum of their ministries to bring clarity and

¹⁹ Alan Nelson, "Laser Beam Preaching," Rev.org, <http://www.rev.org/article.asp?ID=2674> (accessed February 21, 2009).

potency to what they communicated.²⁰ One of the taglines for Ferguson’s book is “Focus the Message [to] Multiply the Impact,” which describes how churches can expand the overall impact of a sermon series by making sure that all programmatic elements of the church follow in line with the message of the sermon.

Emmanuel attempted its first Big Idea series in September 2010 and it proved to be a helpful way for preaching to become more missional, not only in terms of content but in terms of results. The series was intentionally planned to come just before the large Compton work day in October and was called “Up From the Rubble,” based on the book of Nehemiah and his task of rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem. The series tried to balance the doxological, communal, and missional elements of what it means to be the church, but what made the series particularly effective was that for the first time the Sunday school classes for children, the Life Groups for sixth through twelfth graders, the elective Bible study class, and all the adult small groups focused on Nehemiah for the six weeks of the study. By reinforcing the Sunday messages, common ground was established to families and friends to talk about the scriptural passages and where God was leading the church.

If there is anything that characterizes a missional sermon, it is that it results in some form of action. Simple tools like the Big Idea, actionable steps at the end of sermons, and reading Christian literature in conjunction with sermon series have been the means by which sermon series at Emmanuel have moved from being merely theoretical to being practical. Creating practical means to implement messages has been as

²⁰ David Ferguson, Eric Bramlett, and Jon Ferguson, *The Big Idea: Aligning the Ministries of Your Church Through Creative Collaboration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007).

important to the missional preaching at Emmanuel as sound and balanced theology of mission in the first place.

Reflection on the Preaching Team

Since the time when Emmanuel became a multi-staff church it has had multiple preachers, although for years Rev. Korver was the main preacher. As Rev. Korver transitioned from the head pastor role and raised up Pastor Ken to take that position, Pastor Ken began to preach more often. Since preaching is not one of Pastor Ken's top three spiritual gifts, he has made room in the pulpit for others who are gifted in that area to preach often as well. The result was not an actual preaching team but, rather, a loose schedule that employed multiple preachers on it. But the spark for a preaching team was there. Then, as Pastor Ken brought on more staff who were more closely aligned with the vision for creating a more intentionally missional church, it became clear that more focus needed to be given to the interrelation of the preachers.

In January 2010 Emmanuel converted its video venue into a live venue which had a dramatic impact on the preaching team. The cessation of the video venue meant there were two simultaneous worship services, each needing preacher every Sunday. Emmanuel had a preexisting commitment to preach essentially the same message each week in all its services, so that single change began the formation of a team of preachers. Since January 2010 the preachers have had to work together in order to generate the outline of the sermon and to share stories and action steps. There are five very different pastors who regularly preach in the English rotation which creates a unique matrix of strengths, weaknesses, styles, and experiences when any two of them are paired together

for a Sunday. When the Spanish speaking pastors are added the mix it becomes even more complex. In some ways, the differences amongst the preachers are an obstacle because it can be hard to get on the same page for the sermon, and yet the consensus from the congregation is that the diversity of the preaching team is a gift because it reflects the diversity in the body of Christ that is Emmanuel.

J. R. Rozko lays out a helpful set of priorities for missional preaching teams for churches like Emmanuel. He blogged that “in missional communities, one of the central aims would be for a team of teachers, whose giftedness is affirmed by the congregation, to share responsibility not only for preaching and teaching, but for giving their time and attention to identifying and equipping other gifted teachers in the body.”²¹ At Emmanuel there is affirmation by the congregation of those who preach, there is an increasingly shared responsibility for preaching, and there is the beginning of the process of identifying and equipping other gifted teachers. The team is at the beginning phases of becoming more equipped to preach better itself, and at the same time there has been some movement towards identifying and equipping others not on that team. In terms of the teams own growth, a semiannual evaluation is in its embryonic stages and the preaching team leader gives limited feedback on a regular basis and provides periodic input in the form of articles and insights about missional preaching. Altogether, there has been unsystematic equipping of the team and that is a major area for growth in coming years

²¹ J. R. Rozko, “Missional Preaching Part 1: Preaching as a Communal Activity,” LifeAsaMission blog, entry posted February 9, 2010, <http://lifeasamission.com/blog/2010/02/missional-preaching-part-1-preaching-as-a-communal-activity/> (accessed April 9, 2010).

because, “The key to the formation of missional communities is their leadership.”²² The preaching role is certainly one of the most significant leadership roles in the church, so the development of the preaching gifts can help unlock greater leadership potential for the missional church.

Because Emmanuel’s mission is to birth one hundred church plants in Compton there has been an increased awareness of the importance of identifying and equipping other gifted preachers. One hundred new churches will require many, many preachers who are able to leverage the pulpit so that God’s word impacts God’s people with God’s mission. There are more than two hundred churches in Compton, but anecdotal evidence suggests that they rarely preach in a way that could be described as missional. One of the major needs in that city is for those who preach God’s word to do so with his heart for mission and with the necessary training to empower that mission to become a reality in those local congregations. The difficulty, however, is that “to train missional preachers will require a reorientation and new ways of educating the people of God. The skill of missional preaching cannot readily be taught in the classroom; it must be honed in the trenches.”²³ As Stutzman points out, there is not a book to read or a video seminar to watch that will accomplish the job, but rather the arduous process of weekly preparation, execution, and evaluation of sermons in a communal context.

When Emmanuel’s first church plant in Compton launched in January 2010, I undertook to train the preachers for that mission outpost using some of the concepts of

²² Alan Roxburgh, “Missional Leadership: Equipping God’s People for Mission” in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 183.

²³ Ervin R. Stutzman, “Preaching in the Missional Church,” Preaching.org, http://www.preaching.org/features/display_feature/33 (accessed June 27, 2009).

this paper as the framework for the class. A spiritual gift inventory and the assessment of the lead church planter identified that five of the key lay leaders of that church plant had the gift of teaching and preaching. These five took part in the preaching class, which was set in a home and was based almost entirely on preaching and receiving feedback as opposed to lecture and note-taking. Every other week for six months the group met and preached and evaluated. Two other such classes have been held since then for other groups of preachers in training.

CHAPTER 7

DEVELOPING A MISSIONAL PREACHING STRATEGY

As the earlier chapters of this paper demonstrated, Emmanuel has been on a long journey of embodying what it means to be a missional as a church. As Chapter 6 demonstrated, Emmanuel has more recently begun to embrace preaching that is missional as well. For Emmanuel, following just behind the process of becoming increasingly missional has been the process of articulating what it means to be missional. For some churches, that process is inverted, but not at Emmanuel. Emmanuel has felt the call of Jesus into the community for quite some time, and only after following him there has the church begun to put into words what it has been doing. The articulation of the emphases on Jesus, people, God's mission in 2006 sparked a new era of clarity in terms of the church's purpose. Another, far more extensive process of evaluating mission, vision and values was begun in 2010 which has been aimed to catch up with the church's impulse to plant churches in the city. Again, it is after the missional process began that there has been articulation of that process (since Emmanuel planted two churches in Compton already in 2010).

The same sort of process is now unfolding with the ministry of missional preaching. The pastoral team has taken remarkable strides into preaching that is

missional and now the team is trying to articulate the why's and how's of doing so. The purpose of this chapter is to outline a strategy to guide with clarity the preaching ministry of Emmanuel as the church proceeds to follow Jesus in mission. This strategy derives from the theological foundations laid in Chapters 4 and 5 and from the reflection in Chapter 6 on how Emmanuel's pastors have begun to embrace a praxis of missional preaching.

Strategizing the Planning Process for Missional Preaching

Since the commencement DJ08, the pastoral team has recognized the enormous benefit to the church of having an intentional and strategic plan for its preaching. The team has embraced that "The primary purpose of strategic preaching is to set a congregation in motion toward its intended goal."¹ In order to achieve the goal of creating a missional church full of missional Christians, the preaching must become both well-planned and strategic. At Emmanuel, there are three modes of planning that have arisen in the past few years as being most helpful. First, there is the year-long plan, then there is the middle ground of the sermon series, and finally there is the plan for each individual sermon. What follows is an articulation of each of these three planning modes and how they will be utilized at Emmanuel.

Macro Sermon Planning: Shaping and Evaluating a Year to Embody the Three Priorities

Although DJ08 was planned for an entire year, the following two years of sermons were planned only by quarter. Upon the reflection from Chapter 6, it is apparent that the longer the plan for preaching the better the result. This sort of preaching

¹ Hull, *Strategic Preaching*, 30.

schedule is not easy to come by because it requires a great deal of forethought, prayer, and discernment regarding both the present state of the church and community and the upcoming needs of the church and the community. However, the benefits of an intentional and balanced sermon schedule outweigh these obstacles, and therefore in order to proceed forward with the church's mission, the preaching ministry of Emmanuel will henceforth follow the ensuing plan.

The first part of laying the year-long preaching plan derives from a shared understanding of the missional purposes of the church and its preaching. To that end, this paper will be shared with the preaching team. A distillation of chapters 3 and 4 will be provided to the broader leadership of the church, most notably the elders and deacons and the department heads. Again, the reason behind this is to help all of the stakeholders to be on the same page in terms of a theological basis for the ministry of missional preaching within the context of the theological underpinning of the missional church.

The second part of the year-long preaching plan is a season of gathering input from the key stakeholders. This will happen in the late spring of the year so that a plan can be devised and ready for implementation for the ministry year, which generally runs from September through May. Pastor Ken will play a prominent role in shaping the overall vision for the year. Two meetings will be set up with Pastor Ken; the first will initiate the process and to stimulate the flow of ideas; the second meeting two weeks later to gather his insights and vision.

About the same time, a survey, represented in Figure 2, will be distributed to the department heads and the active elders and deacons. The purpose of the survey is to gain broader perspective from key spiritual leaders on the needs and opportunities in the

church and in the community that the Holy Spirit may be seeking to address so that the preaching ministry can follow the Spirit's lead in mission. That survey will seek to ascertain how the church and its preaching has fulfilled those purposes in the past year in order to discern any adjustments that need to be made in the coming year to compensate for being unbalanced in the previous year. Then the survey will seek insights regarding the needs and opportunities in the church and in the community that are on the horizon. Finally, it will seek ideas on specific sermon series to speak to these needs and opportunities.

Emmanuel exists to deeply connect all kinds of people to Jesus, people and God's mission. As we begin to plan out the sermon series for the upcoming ministry year, would you assist us by answering these questions:

1. How has Emmanuel done at accomplishing these themes in the last year:
 - Deeply connecting people to Jesus (Circle one)
poorly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 well
 - Deeply connecting people to people (Circle one)
poorly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 well
 - Deeply connecting people to God's mission (Circle one)
poorly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 well
 - Comments:
2. How has Emmanuel done at preaching on these themes in the last year:
 - Deeply connecting people to Jesus (Circle one)
poorly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 well
 - Deeply connecting people to people (Circle one)
poorly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 well
 - Deeply connecting people to God's mission (Circle one)
poorly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 well
 - Comments:
3. What are some of the needs and opportunities in the church you sense the Holy Spirit may be calling us to address in the coming year?
4. What are some of the needs and opportunities in the community you sense the Holy Spirit may be calling us to address in the coming year?
5. Are there particular books of the Bible, biblical themes, or topical issues that you think may best address where the church is and where the community is? Feel free to add comments about any ideas you share.

Figure 2. Survey for discerning direction for year-long planning process

The third part of the year-long planning process is for the pastoral team to discern what the Spirit is saying so far in this process. This discernment step starts with the leader of the preaching ministry summarizing the results from the survey and integrating them into the insights from Pastor Ken and then presenting them to the pastoral team. The purpose of that team meeting is to discern what biblical themes, Bible books, and topical issues need to be addressed over the coming year. This meeting will produce the overarching vision for the year plus the majority of the series ideas in embryonic form.

The fourth part of the year-long planning process is for the leader of the preaching ministry to set aside time off campus to distill the overall vision and series ideas into a draft plan. That plan will outline the entire year, including series titles, series emphases, and a description of the purpose of each series, its scriptural focus and how it fits with the series around it. The series emphases are the Emmanuel shorthand for which of the three priorities (doxological, communal, and missional) that are addressed by that series. Table 4 represents the kind of outline that will be produced during this phase. Table 4 covers only four months of the year, but the year plan will cover all twelve months.

Table 4. Overview of a portion of a year-long sermon series plan

Sunday	Series	Series Emphasis	Series Purpose
9-Jan	New Year New Life	Jesus	The purpose of this series is to introduce the four month theme of transformation by looking at the life of Peter. The series will initiate the whole New Testament reading plan, but will focus on the Gospels of Mark and John and on the writings of Peter. God's people will be invited to experience transformation like Peter did.
16-Jan	New Year New Life		
23-Jan	New Year New Life		
30-Jan	New Year New Life		
6-Feb	Inside Out	Jesus/Mission	The purpose of this series is to articulate a practical theology of transformation. We will continue reading through the entire New Testament with and emphasis on the theology passages, especially in Paul's writings. Spiritual formation will be heavy in the front of the series and community transformation will become the focus towards the end of the series.
13-Feb	Inside Out		
20-Feb	Inside Out		
27-Feb	Inside Out		
6-Mar	Inside Out	Jesus/Mission	The purpose of this series is to teach on evangelism, tying it specifically to our own experience of being redeemed by Christ and then tying it to how we are caught up in the mission of God to share the Gospel with others. This series will lead us through the rest of the New Testament and will emphasize practical evangelism skills along with a theology of evangelism that is broad in scope, covering the individual experience of conversion to the communal experience of transformation, to the
13-Mar	The Power of the Gospel		
20-Mar	The Power of the Gospel		
27-Mar	The Power of the Gospel		
3-Apr	The Power of the Gospel		
10-Apr	The Power of the Gospel		
17-Apr	The Power of the Gospel		

The fifth and final part of the year-long planning phase is the feedback and editing phase. In this phase, the pastoral team makes adjustments to the outline and also moves into the series planning phase, particularly focusing on the Big Idea series. After adjustments are made to the outline, it is sent to the wider church leadership so that they have a sense of direction for the coming year. After the year-long planning is finished the work on expanding the purposes and plans for individual series continues in earnest.

Strategic Sermon Planning: Designing and Evaluating Series

Whereas the above outline includes an overview of all the series in the year, the next level of planning requires clarity at the individual series level. The process of bringing clarity to each series happens in just two phases.

The first phase is when the leader of the preaching team sets time aside ten weeks in advance of the sermon series to flesh out the series. Bearing in mind the threefold purpose of the church and its preaching, this process unfolds as an articulation of how each sermon in the series will not only hold together as part of the series but will embody

those larger purposes. An outline of each sermon series will be written up, assigning individual texts and sermon titles and designating which emphases of Emmanuel’s mission will be the focus for each sermon in the series. Table 5 demonstrates the basic form of this series outline, summarizing three individual series that all tie together in one larger series.

Table 5. Three sermon series outlines with sermon emphases

Sunday	Series	Series Emphasis	Sermon	Sermon Emphasis
9-Jan	New Year New Life		Change your name (Jn 1:42)	Jesus
16-Jan	New Year New Life	Jesus	Change your heart (Jn 18, 21)	Jesus
23-Jan	New Year New Life		Change your life (Mk 10)	Jesus Mission
30-Jan	New Year New Life		Change your past (1 Pet 1:18)	Jesus People Mission
6-Feb	Inside Out		Transformation comes from love (1 Jn 3:1-3)	Jesus
13-Feb	Inside Out		Vision for Transformation (Rom 12:1-3)	Jesus Mission
20-Feb	Inside Out	Jesus/Mission	Transformation is a process (2 Cor 3:16-18)	Jesus
27-Feb	Inside Out		Transformation comes through you (Lk 4:14-21)	People Mission
6-Mar	Inside Out		Transformation comes to regions (1 Thess 1:1-10)	Mission
13-Mar	The Power of the Gospel		Does your mind grasp it: Power of uniqueness (Acts 4:12)	Jesus
20-Mar	The Power of the Gospel		Does your heart get it: Power of Salvation (Phil 1 & 3)	Jesus People
27-Mar	The Power of the Gospel	Jesus/Mission	Do your hands show it: Power of life well-lived (Mt 5:16)	Jesus Mission
3-Apr	The Power of the Gospel		Does your mouth share it: Power of verbal witness (Col 4:5-6)	Jesus People Mission
10-Apr	The Power of the Gospel		Does your church embody it: Power of true community (Rev 2-3)	People Mission
17-Apr	The Power of the Gospel		Does your Savior guarantee it: Power of Christ Coming (Rev 19)	Jesus Mission

Besides producing an outline, in this phase the leader of the preaching team will also write a paragraph describing each series to expand on the content of that series and to show how it fits in the overall vision for the year. Other details of each sermon in the series will be summarized and distributed in order to facilitate the process of planning worship services. In particular, preachers will be assigned and general direction for each sermon will be laid out. Figure 3 shows an abbreviated detail sheet for a sermon series. These detail sheets are then attached to the sermon outline sheet, giving everyone connected to the worship service clarity as to where the series and its sermons are going.

The next four weeks are about the transformation of the apostle Peter. The purpose is to look at how God changed one man and how he aims to change each of us. We'll be looking at the theme of transformation through the lens of one man's life. This series launches our four month season of reading through the New Testament. The sermons are as follows:

Title:	Change Your Name
Date:	Sunday, January 9, 2010
Theme:	Peter's (and our) core identity being altered by Jesus
Scripture:	John 1:35-42
Preacher:	Todd 9 and CP; Bill 10:30 and Noon
Notes:	Communion Sunday
Key Ideas:	A person's name in the scriptures is their very essence (think of how many times God speaks of his name dwelling with the people, or putting his name on people, or us praying in his name) so to change a person's name is to change their very being, the very fiber of their soul. That's what happened to Peter. That's what God wants for each of us.

Figure 3. Example of details of sermon series New Year New Life

The second phase of planning strategic sermon series is the preaching team meeting. All of the preachers assigned to work on any sermon of a particular series will gather to discuss the sermon series and how the individual sermons tie together with each other and with the overall purposes of the church.

The one exception of series planning involves the Big Idea series. Emmanuel is committed to having Big Idea series during the largest attendance seasons of the year, which generally occur in September, January, and post-Easter. The Big Idea series attempt to enable the church to gain momentum by having all the ministries and groups of the church participate at some level in the series. Therefore, the Big Idea series require a greater level of planning and cooperation than normal preaching series. The differences between a Big Idea series and a regular series are not essentially differences in nature, but rather differences in scope. Therefore, there is an additional meeting before the preaching team meeting in order to bring in the adult, children, and student groups leaders in order to bring greater clarity to the series and to brainstorm the best ways to

enable it to achieve its purposes across the various platforms of the church. There is also more coordination as the series draws close, sharing and integrating resources especially between the preaching team and the team that leads the various ministries.

Micro Sermon Planning: Crafting and Evaluating Sermons that Work

Planning missional preaching peaks at the level of the individual sermon. In order to move in the direction of becoming more intentional about sermons being missional, Emmanuel is going to proceed by working off the definition of missional preaching in this paper. That definition derives from the doxological, communal and missional priorities of preaching, and asserts that missional preaching is a message from God's word that reveals who Jesus is and enables his people to revel in him; that celebrates the contributions of God's people gathered in that locale and shapes them into a holy community; and that proclaims God's kingdom and propels his people into the world to partner with him in bringing it to earth. The purpose of this section is to unpack that definition in practical terms for individual sermon preparation knowing how hard it is to find the balance between the different elements of that definition. As Stetzer writes, "The challenge is a balance of theological content and life application," and that challenge is even more difficult given the breadth of the extended definition of missional preaching in this paper.²

In the doxological sense, missional preaching is a message from God's word that reveals who Jesus Christ is and enables his people to revel in him. What that looks like in practical terms at Emmanuel is that foremost in the preparation of the sermon the

² Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, 270.

preacher looks to see where Jesus Christ is found in the passage. As Chapell and Keller point out, that does not mean manufacturing connections to Christ or allegorizing passages, but rather, seeing the assigned text in light of the overall story of redemption and revealing that to the congregation. At some point in every message, the preacher must connect the passage at hand to the overall story of redemption in Jesus Christ. Besides revealing Jesus Christ, the preacher has to ask how to best enable the congregation to connect with him, to revel in him. Mere statements of propositional truth stacked together will not suffice for a sermon, but rather there has to be what Keller calls “an experience of the spiritual reality of truth.”³ Practically speaking that means that each time before preaching the preacher has to wrestle with the question of how to enable the congregation to revel in Christ and then the preacher must serve as a midwife during the message to help that experience of the living God be birthed in the congregation.

In the communal sense, missional preaching is a message from God’s word that celebrates the contributions of God’s people at Emmanuel and that shapes them into a community that is more holy because they heard the Word preached. Practically speaking, that means discerning what the Holy Spirit has been doing in the people of the congregation in order to bring that to light by telling stories of the ordinary people on whom God’s favor rests. Stutzman writes that “the existential praxis of people, engaged in witness in daily life, provides much of the grounded resources for missional preaching.”⁴ In its most basic sense, this comes down to collecting stories. For those on the preaching team, it means focusing on sermon preparation outside of regular

³ Keller, “Preaching the Gospel in a Post-Modern World,” 10.

⁴ Stutzman, “Preaching in the Missional Church.”

preparation time. It means being open to hearing what God is doing not just in the study but throughout the day in interactions with people from the church and from the community. Those are the times when the stories are told that will exegete the assigned text in a way that inflames passion and vision on the congregation. Having eyes and ears open all week long becomes a crucial element of sermon preparation, as does serving others on the preaching team by sharing stories with each other.

In terms of shaping the character of the community, there are two practical steps to take. The first is asking the question each week, “How does God, through this passage, seek to shape the character of this local community so that individually and corporately we reflect his image more clearly?” Each element of that question is important, namely, starting with the text itself, localizing it to the immediate context, speaking both to individuals and to the congregation as a whole, and aiming at being more vibrant image-bearers of Christ. Besides asking and seeking to answer that question each week, a second important piece comes during the actual preaching moment. During the sermon, the preachers need to remember to speak to the congregation as a whole, and not just as individuals. American culture has become transfixed by the rights and authority of the individual, but Scripture speaks not only to the individual but to the congregation as a whole. While in the pulpit, the preacher needs to keep reminding himself of the simple step of using plural pronouns, stories of groups of people, and commands that affect the whole of God’s people and not just targeting individuals. There will always be a place for individual responsibility and response, but in order to shape a community in the image of Christ, there must be some communal responsibility and communal response as well.

In the properly missional sense, preaching is a message from God's word that proclaims the kingdom of God and propels his people into the world to partner with him in bringing that kingdom to earth. For practical purposes, to proclaim the kingdom of God means to declare the existence and presence of an alternative reality which stands opposed to the perceived and prevailing reality that the world and the senses offer. In this alternative reality, Christ reigns because "God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him" (Heb 2:8). Because of the glorious nature of this kingdom and its king, announcing the immanent reign of God inherently draws attention to its presence and invites all people to enter into it. Jesus himself often used phrases like, "Anyone who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mk 4:23), "Listen" (Mt 13:18), and "I tell you the truth" (Jn 6:26) to encourage people to open themselves to the new reality he was describing to them in hopes that they would actually step into it. At Emmanuel, those phrases and ones like them are becoming more and more common as a picture of how there is an increasing realization of the importance of proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Preaching that is missional also propels people into action. At Emmanuel that means mobilizing people so that they partner with God in bringing his kingdom to the cities of Paramount and Compton and to the surrounding areas. Convinced that "Sermons devoid of mission make for churches devoid of vitality, energy and sense of purpose,"⁵ Emmanuel's preachers have been pushing the people to get on board with God's mission throughout the church's eighty-five-year history. In practical terms, this has a number of implications. First and foremost, every sermon must have a clear

⁵ Tizon, *Preaching as if the World Matters*.

statement of strategy. As Hull puts it, “The sermon [should] be shaped on the basis of a clear, concise, and coherent statement of strategy: Where do we want God’s people to go in the foreseeable future in response to the appeal of this message?”⁶ Once that statement of strategy is declared, then there can be a number of implications that flow from it. Many times it will mean that a signup sheet and pencils need to be placed in the pews so that people can respond by pledging themselves to some course of action or joining some group. Many times it will mean setting up a post-sermon prayer time at the altar. Many times there will be an assignment given to the congregation that pushes them out into the world in some discernibly Christian manner. There are many other steps that the congregation could take as well besides those mentioned, but inevitably they will be steps towards a deeper engagement with Jesus, other people, and God’s mission. In particular, because of the strong missional drive inherent in the DNA of Emmanuel and its leadership, often times these practical steps will necessarily include serving the cities of Paramount and Compton and the surrounding areas. In order to get results from the strategic purpose of the sermon the preacher must make sure that there are viable means for the congregation to engage with the message and to take it outside of the sanctuary and into the world.

In order to keep the doxological, communal, and missional nature of preaching in the forefront of the preachers’ minds when preparing and delivering individual messages, six questions will become standard in the process of preaching for Emmanuel. Not every question will have a crystal clear answer every week, but in light of the strategic importance of weaving all the purposes of preaching into each sermon, these questions

⁶ Hull, *Strategic Preaching*, 77-78.

will be brought to the fore on a regular basis for the preachers. Of course, some sermons will lean more heavily towards one or two of the purposes, but together these questions form a basic framework for the missional hermeneutic for Emmanuel's preaching ministry. These questions distill the purposes of preaching into phrases that are short enough to be useful on a weekly basis for the preacher. They are listed in Figure 4.

1. Where is Jesus in this text? (Where does this passage connect to the life, teaching, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ?)
2. How can people meet him in this message? (How can I help the congregation truly experience God through this passage, enabling them to love him more deeply with heart, soul, mind, and strength?)
3. Who is the story for the week? (What has the Spirit been doing in the lives of people at Emmanuel that lines up with this passage, and what is the best way to tell that story?)
4. How is God shaping our character? (How does God, through this passage, seek to shape the character of this local community so that individually and corporately we reflect his image more clearly)
5. How can I proclaim the kingdom? (What is the alternative reality that this passage speaks to, and how can I winsomely announce it to the congregation?)
6. What do I want them to do? ("Where do we want God's people to go in the foreseeable future in response to the appeal of this message"⁷ and what practical means do I need to provide them to get there?)

Figure 4. The six questions missional preachers ask

These questions form a matrix both for preparation and for evaluation. In the regular preaching team meetings that are set up to discuss upcoming sermon series, these questions will be brought out and looked at again, providing regular encouragement to continue to work out the priorities of missional preaching at the level of the individual sermon.

⁷ Hull, *Strategic Preaching*, 77-78.

Expanding the Impact of Missional Preaching by Integrating Themes into the Church-Wide Constellation of Ministries

DJ08 initiated the effort to integrate sermon themes into the broader life and program of the church. As of the time of the writing of this paper, Emmanuel has begun to settle into a healthy rhythm of incorporating sermon series into church life, evidenced by the fact that every single sermon series since 2008 has had at least some degree of church-wide influence, even when groups were not in session. However, in order for missional preaching to continue to move forward at Emmanuel, these components need to be articulated, prioritized, and then regularly implemented in the life of the church. Since the primary components of extending the missional impact of the sermon were largely discussed in the reflection process of chapter 6, this section will seek to lay out how those elements will be prioritized and implemented going forward.

The simplest part of integrating the sermon into the broader church culture is the set of resources tied to the sermon that are inserted into the bulletin each week and posted online, namely the sermon outline and daily devotions for the week. At this point in the life of Emmanuel these are considered non-negotiable since their value has been proved over the past three years. In a survey of over six hundred congregants on August 10, 2008, over sixty-four percent reported that they used the daily devotionals tied to the sermons, and of those who used the daily devotionals seventy-seven percent reported that they were either “helpful” or “very helpful” in their spiritual growth. In terms of a resource that the leadership provided the congregation, the daily devotional clearly surpassed the others. For the foreseeable future, Emmanuel will continue to provide the daily devotionals and the sermon outlines.

The component of integrating sermon themes into adult group life has seen uneven results. Because there are so many different types of adult groups at Emmanuel, it has been difficult to insert sermon themes into them all. For example, the Growing Great Marriage ministry which constitutes seven to fifteen weekly small groups does not stop its marriage curriculum and pick up the sermon themes when a new series begins. However, now that small group curriculum written weekly and is provided in the bulletin each Sunday, a number of the more generic small groups in the church have begun to utilize it regularly. This has been a new attempt to insert the sermon themes into the group life of the church and it has shown some promise by the anecdotal results. However, because of the issue-centric nature of many of Emmanuel's adult small groups, sermon-based small groups have not been the norm. The next step proposed by this paper in this area is for the leadership team to consider making sermon-based small groups the primary adult small group option for the church. The advantage would be to allow the intentionally developed missional spectrum of topics planned by the pastoral team to then inform all of church life. In the process of writing this paper, this question has been brought to the leadership team and is currently under discussion.

For the children's and student ministry at Emmanuel, the Big Idea series are the main areas in which sermon themes have been integrated across program platforms. The first Big Idea series was considered a success by the Director of Children's and Student Ministries because of the increased level of interaction afforded families as a result of both adults and their children covering the same material on a weekly basis. As of the writing of this paper, Emmanuel is preaching through its second Big Idea series, which is focused on covering the entire New Testament in four months. Many, many of

Emmanuel's families have taken the challenge to read a verse a day together as part of gaining the big picture of the New Testament. Significantly, a large number of children and students are reading through the entire New Testament and having significant conversations not only with their volunteer group leaders but with their families regarding the reading. Because the readings are tied closely to the sermon themes, the missional vision of the church is being disseminated and digested broadly through this process. Moving forward from here, Emmanuel will seek to create at least two Big Idea sermon series a year in which whole families are given multiple touch points so that they can process the content together. Those series will begin in September and January during the annual fall and winter ministry kick offs.

One of the other elements of extending the reach of the sermon has been the addition of Christian literature in conjunction with a preaching series. During a number of different series, outside reading has proven to be very effective in supporting the Sunday messages, especially when the author's work dovetailed closely with the scriptures assigned for the sermons. However, it has become unrealistic to make additional reading a consistent piece of the missional preaching ministry because there is a narrow range of books that are accessible to the education level and spiritual maturity of the congregation. Books must be chosen with great care because they have to be readable in style and in length in addition to being on topic and insightful. During the course of writing this paper the author has concluded that supplemental reading will have to be an occasional added element to sermon series because of the aforementioned limitations. However, what can and will be done is asking the question of the broader

church leadership team as to whether anyone is aware of reading material that could supplement the series.

The final element of expanding the impact of sermons into the daily lives of congregants is the use of practical means to enable next steps as a result of the sermon. This component covers everything from signup sheets to prayer teams to welcome booths and a host of other means of leveraging the sermon to impact people by giving them action steps they can take. A wide array of these practical paths into mission has been employed. No single one of them has become the exclusive answer to making every sermon actionable, but together they have empowered a great deal of corporate response over time. The prominence of these practical pathways into living out the sermon will not diminish at Emmanuel. In fact, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, each preacher will now be encouraged to ask as part of their sermon preparation, “‘Where do we want God’s people to go in the foreseeable future in response to the appeal of this message’ and what practical means do I need to provide them to get there?’”⁸

Developing and Evaluating a Team that Embodies and Implements

Missional Preaching

There are three main components of developing and evaluating a team that embodies and implements missional preaching. The first is to develop the missional preaching skills of the main preaching team at Emmanuel. The second is to help those preachers work together more effectively as a team. The final is to identify and train new

⁸ Hull, *Strategic Preaching*, 77-78.

teams of missional preachers both for Emmanuel and especially for the myriad of church plants going into Compton.

In order to develop the missional preaching skills of the individuals on Emmanuel's preaching team there will be both training and evaluation. The training will be based on the content of this paper. The team will be assigned this paper as reading, which will be followed by a team discussion of the theological work herein regarding the threefold priorities of the church and the threefold priorities of its preaching. That conversation will be followed by a conversation specifically about this chapter and the implications for the team's preaching responsibilities. Those implications will include buying into the missional matrix of year-long planning, series planning, and the planning of individual sermons based on the six questions developed earlier in this chapter.

The evaluation component of developing the missional preaching skills of the individuals on the preaching team will encompass semiannual reviews of each of the preachers conducted by the leader of the preaching team. The purpose of those reviews is to create a coaching session that is both lavishly supportive of the preacher and intentionally focused on missional preaching. Feedback by the congregation, the preacher himself, and the team leader will be instrumental in directing those coaching sessions. The first section of the review will enable self-reflection by the preacher and input by the preaching team leader and will be followed by a review of the video of the sermon, highlighting several of the best moments of the message and inviting commentary or questions by the preacher. A basic flow of that part of the coaching session is summarized in figure 5.

<p>What do you think were the best moments in the sermon? Why?</p> <p>How well did you answer the six missional questions? Were there some you wanted to emphasize?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where is Jesus in this text? (Where does this passage connect to the life, teaching, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ?) 2. How can people meet him in this message? (How can I help the congregation truly experience God through this passage, enabling them to love him more deeply with heart, soul, mind, and strength?) 3. Who is the story for the week? (What has the Spirit been doing in the lives of people in this congregation that lines up with this passage, and what is the best way to tell that story?) 4. How is God shaping our character? (How does God, through this passage, seek to shape the character of this local community so that individually and corporately we reflect his image more clearly) 5. How can I proclaim the kingdom? (What is the alternative reality that this passage speaks to, and how can I winsomely announce it to the congregation?) 6. What do I want them to do? (“Where do we want God’s people to go in the foreseeable future in response to the appeal of this message”⁹ and what practical means do I need to provide them to get there?). <p>Are there specific areas of the message about which you would like feedback from me?</p> <p>Review of video highlights from the message, inviting commentary and questions by preacher.</p>

Figure 5. Self-reflection portion of preacher coaching session

Following the self-reflection portion of the coaching session there will be a chance for the leader of the preaching team to share insights gathered from the community regarding the message. The content of this portion of the coaching session will be generated by a survey of approximately a dozen congregants immediately following the delivery of the message. The leader of the preaching team will collect those surveys, compile them, and share the results with the preacher, giving objective feedback regarding the preaching. The questions asked to the congregants are open ended in order to give freedom of expression by the congregants, thus enabling the preacher to see whether what he intended to communicate was indeed received by the congregation. Because they are open ended, the questions do not directly correspond with the six question matrix of missional preaching, but the responses to them will give

⁹ Hull, *Strategic Preaching*, 77-78.

ample insight into whether the preaching answered those questions for the hearers. There will also be practical questions as part of the survey in order to enable the coaching session to cover some of the rudimentary elements of preaching and not merely the its missional theology. The nine questions on the survey are listed in figure 6.

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What do you think the preacher was trying to get across?2. What were the best insights into the text that the preacher gave you?3. What did you learn/experience about God and his kingdom through the sermon?4. Can you articulate if/how the sermon connected to the mission of Emmanuel (to deeply connect people to Jesus, people, and God's mission)?5. Think of the illustrations. What was the most helpful illustration and why? Was there an illustration that was unhelpful, and why?6. Do you have any idea of something you want to do next week specifically because of this sermon? If so, what?7. What about the delivery of the sermon helped you in understanding the message?8. Overall, what worked best for you in this sermon?9. Is there anything you'd like to say to the preacher that might help them get better? |
|---|

Figure 6. Congregational feedback for semiannual preacher evaluations

Besides growing individually as missional preachers, the team also needs to grow as a unit. The primary way for this to happen is implicit in the planning process covered in the earlier sections of this chapter because there are several stages at which teamwork is required in this new matrix for sermon preparation. The first is the input stage of planning the entire year, when each preacher contributes to the overall evaluation of where the preaching ministry has been in the past year and then helps envision where it needs to go in the coming year. During the planning phase of sermon series, especially on Big Idea series, the preachers will convene to lay out an intentional pathway to accomplish God's mission through that particular sermon series. Finally, on individual sermons, because there are multiple preachers delivering the message and one shared outline each Sunday, there is an increased responsibility to work together. These three

areas of functioning as a team, as opposed to functioning merely as individual preachers, are unfolding in increasing measure even as this paper is being written because the implementation of these practices has already begun.

The final aspect of developing and evaluating a team that embodies and implements missional preaching centers on the training of new missional preachers. New missional preachers are needed in several different contexts. For one, Emmanuel needs to continue to raise up new preachers for preaching to the whole congregation. As the church expands with new worship venues and as current pastors take on new responsibilities or perhaps leave to pastor elsewhere there is a need to develop new, and especially younger, preachers who can carry the baton of the mission of God into the pulpit. There is also the need to train missional preachers for the various subsets of congregants within Emmanuel. As of the writing of this paper there are eight groups in the church that have a weekly attendance between thirty and one hundred and twenty people; in each of these groups there is weekly preaching and teaching. By training the leaders of these ministries in missional preaching, the whole church will become increasingly permeated with God's mission. The final area of need is to train those who will be preaching at the church plants in Compton. Without mission in the DNA of those preachers, those churches will struggle immensely to impact their communities.

In order to accomplish the goal of training new missional preachers, the leader of the preaching team will implement preaching classes that embrace the principles of this paper. Three classes have been offered over the past two years, and the basic curriculum of those classes will remain the same. The one major change will be an additional session at the front end of the class dealing with expressly missional topics, including the

basic theology of mission covered in this paper and the six questions that represent the practical outworking of the definition of missional preaching. Then, during the majority of the class which is constituted by preaching and feedback and not by lecture, those concepts will become more prominent in the feedback portion of class sessions. Table 6 outlines the basic flow of this class.

Table 6. Missional preaching class outline for new preacher training

Week	Topic	Content
1	The Why of Missional Preaching	Theology of the mission God and his people The three priorities of the church and its preaching The six questions for the preacher's preparation
2	The How of Missional Preaching	How to study the text for a sermon How to structure the points of a sermon How to illustrate the points of a sermon How to deliver a sermon
3-10	Preaching Practicum	Two student sermons each week; extensive feedback

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The setting and history of Emmanuel in Paramount, California created the impetus for writing this paper. Throughout Emmanuel's history there had been hinge-point moments when the church swung outwards to embrace its community. The inception of The Compton Initiative in 2005 created another such monumental shift in the church's life. Because of the pervasive poverty and crime in the city of Compton, as well as its repugnant reputation, the leadership of Emmanuel realized that the comprehensive restoration of that city demanded Christians who embodied God's mission in a deeper way than was common in the church at the time. The leadership discerned that only Christians whose lives were deeply marked by mission and maturity would have the spiritual endurance to serve that city for the decades required to see it change, and only such Christians would have the willingness to move into the city to create change from the inside.

The community of this kind of Christian is called a missional church. The missional church is God's called and sent people – those who have been deeply connected to God through Jesus Christ, have been made into a people and not just a group of individuals, and then have been sent into the world to bring God's kingdom there. Theologically framed, that means that the missional church is doxological, communal and missional. At Emmanuel, those three priorities have been recently articulated in the mission statement of the church, which is to deeply connect people to Jesus, people, and God's mission.

Since being missional is one of the three essential elements of being a missional church, the phrase "missional church" is, in and of itself, a misnomer. These three

essential elements, as chapter 4 discussed, are inherent to a working definition of what it means to the church at all, making the descriptor “missional” redundant and unnecessary in the phrase “missional church.” However, since the missional priority has so frequently been disregarded by local congregations, it has been an appropriate corrective to use the term “missional Church” even though its definition is identical to the term “church.”

As Emmanuel has grown into being an intentionally missional church one of the particular areas of ministry that has drawn attention is the preaching ministry. Whereas preaching at Emmanuel is just one of the many ministries necessary to develop the kind of Christians who would live on mission to such a degree as to change the city of Compton, it is a significant one. One of the key reasons that preaching is so important in the missional church is that it is the primary tool for casting vision as to who God is, what his mission is, and what role the church plays in fulfilling that mission. Therefore, in order for Emmanuel to be truly missional, its preaching must be missional.

In the same way that the missional church is doxological, communal, and missional, so is its preaching. As discussed in chapter 5, missional preaching is a message from God’s word that is doxological in the sense that it reveals who Jesus is and enables his people to revel in him. Missional preaching is a message from God’s word that is communal in the sense that it celebrates the contributions of God’s people gathered in that locale and shapes them into a holy community. Missional preaching is a message from God’s word that is missional in the sense that it proclaims God’s kingdom and propels his people into the world to partner with him in bringing it to earth.

As discussed in chapter 6, Emmanuel has employed missional preaching for years. However, the preaching at Emmanuel had not been intentionally missional, and

only until the writing of this paper has the preaching ministry become articulate about its missional purposes. The advent of The Compton Initiative in 2005 pushed the preaching ministry in these new directions by necessity because the need was so great to cast vision for such a large and lengthy enterprise as the restoration of the city of Compton. So for several years the missional quotient of the preaching soared, but only now has it become articulated and intentionally balanced between the other two priorities of the church.

The purpose of this paper is to help enable Emmanuel to fulfill its mission of deeply connecting people to Jesus, people and God's mission by developing an understanding of missional preaching and strategizing its implementation. There are several key components to the implementation at Emmanuel of this newly articulated vision for missional preaching. First and foremost is the sharing of the journey of arriving at a working definition and plan for missional preaching. Since the rest of the preaching team has not had the privilege of taking extensive time aside to read, think, and write on this topic, it is now my responsibility to invite the rest of the team into what I have learned and written in a manner that is conducive to discussion, learning, and shared commitments. Having these thoughts in coherent and printed form will serve as a helpful springboard to those continued conversations. Concurrent with the processing of this material many other aspects of this paper will be implemented. Indeed, the learnings from this paper have effected real change in the preaching ministry already.

Besides sharing this material with the preaching team, a crucial element of the implementation of this understanding of missional preaching is the planning of the preaching schedule. Both for the year as a whole and for the series that make up that year, planning the preaching schedule presents one of the most practical ways to be

intentionally missional as a church. Starting in 2008, Emmanuel experimented with being intentionally missional in the sermon schedule. This paper has generated a matrix for that planning to unfold with design and rhythm, determining the flow of the year and of each series by calibrating the doxological, communal, and missional priorities of the church. Combined with the leadership's recent foray into redefining the mission, vision, and values of Emmanuel, this intentional approach to preaching will infuse the church with a healthy theological balance of God's purposes for the Church universal and also of his purposes for Emmanuel in particular.

At the fundamental level of individual sermon preparation, the work in this paper is already impacting the preaching ministry at Emmanuel. Throughout the course of this paper the preaching team has experimented with various elements of what it means to preach a missional message. This paper breaks down the practice of missional preaching into a set of six questions that parallel the six parts of the theology missional preaching. Of course, there is much more to preparing a missional message than simply answering these six questions, but they will provide a practical handhold for the preaching team as we proceed to preach by design and not by default. These six questions summarize the work of this paper. One of the major aims of this paper is to have these six questions addressed during the preparation of each sermon at Emmanuel. These questions and the theological priority they represent are displayed in table 7.

Table 7. The six questions for preparing missional messages

Priority	Purpose	Basic Question	Full Question
Doxological	Reveal	Where is Jesus in this text?	Where does this passage connect to the life, teaching, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ?
	Revel	How can people meet him in this message?	How can I help the congregation truly experience God through this passage, enabling them to love him more deeply with heart, soul, mind, and strength?
Communal	Celebrate	Who is the story for the week?	What has the Spirit been doing in the lives of people in this congregation that lines up with this passage, and what is the best way to tell that story?
	Shape	How is God shaping our character?	How does God, through this passage, seek to shape the character of this local community so that individually and corporately we reflect his image more clearly
Missional	Proclaim	How can I proclaim the kingdom?	What is the alternative reality that this passage speaks to, and how can I winsomely announce it to the congregation?
	Propel	What do I want them to do?	“Where do we want God’s people to go in the foreseeable future in response to the appeal of this message” and what practical means do I need to provide them to get there? ¹

The final element to be implemented is the identification and training of new preachers in this missional approach to preaching. Although I have taught three classes at Emmanuel for rising preachers, much remains to be done to develop the methodology of these classes. I need to develop a syllabus, including a clear statement of what missional preaching is and how it is taught, a set of required readings and additional readings, and a set of results that are expected from the class. Alongside the training of new preachers, as the leader of the preaching team I will also spearhead the evaluation of our current preachers using the missional rubric established in this paper.

¹ Hull, *Strategic Preaching*, 77-78.

Emmanuel has continued to open outwards towards the community over its eighty-five-year history. The immense and daunting vision for the renewal of the city of Compton is the next chapter in the church's history, and in order to make that vision a reality Emmanuel must become the missional church God intends it to be. As one part of that process, the preaching ministry will become missional.

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