

MISSION
POSSIBLE

*Refreshing the Church's
Commitment to the Great Commission.*

by Mark Sigmon

MISSION POSSIBLE

There are a few, inspiring people who can weave God's biblical and historical mission together with cultural relevancy. Even fewer can equip others to teach that effectively.

To equip others, and to do that concisely, takes a profound understanding of that biblical mission and the world we live in today, and a great understanding for the heart of our Lord.

Mark Sigmon has that understanding and it shows not only in this brief article but also in his new study guide, written for congregations like yours.

Mark writes:

In the US church, the mission needs our attention. A polarization is occurring. On the one end, many churches have gone into "survival mode," a fortress mentality that leaves missions outside the walls and often out of view. On the other end, a growing number of churches have left the fort to reach the nations and it has transformed their ministry. In the middle, thousands of churches—facing competing voices and shrinking finances—are fighting attacks of self-centeredness. But when a church returns to her "Missionary God" and His "Missionary Book" she will rediscover the strength to accomplish her mission.

As a friend of Global Disciples, Mark has allowed us to make this article available to you at no cost. He simply asks that we let him know who has downloaded the article so he can steward the influence and vision that God has given him.

Feel free to pass along the link below to other church leaders so they can download a copy as well.

And I recommend you take a closer look at Mark's study guide, *Journey To The Nations*. It can help you lead your Sunday School class, small groups, mission council, etc., to gain a greater vision for your greatest mission. As you prayerfully work through the 6 sessions and next steps, your renewed vision will help define priorities in your congregation. Priorities that match the heart of God.

Please visit Mark's website and order copies of *Journey To The Nations* for your study group. Mark also has a full manual that equips church mission leaders to structure their mission strategy for effectively living out the Great Commission locally and globally.

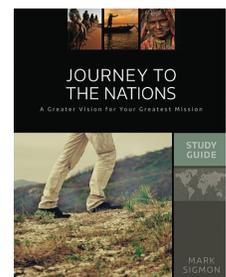
You can reach Mark through the following:

Globalimpactservices.org
mark@globalimpactservices.org
(616) 821-7117

'til the whole world knows,



Jerry Meadows
Global Disciples Church Relations
churchrelations@globaldisciples.org





MISSION POSSIBLE

“Your Mission, Should You Choose To Accept It...”

Even before Tom Cruise turned it into a movie franchise, Mission: Impossible was a popular TV series that sent Mr. Phelps and his hand-picked team on assignments of international importance. They toppled a Colombian drug lord, recovered stolen nuclear weapons, or freed a captured Israeli general. Without fail, the Mission Impossible team saved the world in one hour (minus the commercials). Every move they made fulfilled their mission and brought great satisfaction.

Do you long for the same thing in your one great mission? ***Just imagine that your congregation...***

- Knows the mission purposes of your church.*** Like Jim Phelps, they get the message and it never self-destructs too early. Your mission is clear and compelling.
- Sees their unique role.*** God has chosen each. They are a right person in the right place at the right time, with the full confidence in the Heavenly Commander.
- Believes all the resources are in place.*** Though your task is daunting and you must be resourceful, the Body of Christ has the right tools, team members, and tactical support.
- Thrives because each committed one knows how the mission pieces fit together.*** From this one mission they understand how their job is ministry, how church giving fits with recreational spending, how time in the yard fits with time in church at worship. It all counts.
- Is fulfilled because this mission meets their deepest desire for meaning and satisfaction.*** It also meets the needs of those around you and even around the world.

Can *one* thing be the *main* thing that gives direction to everything?

THE MISSION DEFINED

You want one ultimate, unifying purpose. That mission will not consume every moment of your life, but it consumes you and the best part of life. This is not your only duty, but it is your highest priority.

“The last fifteen years has been a time of more Muslims coming to Christ than ever before in history.”
p.5*

Where will you find that mission? Look deep into the Scriptures.

This is one grand story with one main character (not man), one plot line, and one conclusion. And it is all rooted in one grand mission: to “glorify God” in all we do.

What is God’s “glory”, and what does it mean to “glorify” Him?

- ***The “glory of God”*** is the verbal and visible display of the majesty and might of the invisible God. No one has seen the Father, but His “glory”—described as a cloud, smoke, fire, His name, His words, the Ark, great people, and ultimately Jesus Himself—is *His self-revelation and representation in this world.* In these words and works we encounter a glimpse of God’s presence and power.

- **To “glorify God”**, then, is to so speak and live that God’s person and purposes are more fully manifested in all we say and do. As we live “by the Book”, we declare and display His majesty and might for *all* to see. We can honor Him in private, but our mission is public. How liberating, how inspiring to know that somehow every word and deed (even the mundane, the routine: see I Cor. 10:31) can exalt the Lord!

This is the essential meaning of life. Whether you witness, show compassion, stand for justice, go to school, punch a time clock, manage a business, raise a family, or enjoy retirement, the ultimate goal is to make that conversation, that relationship, that job, that hobby, that ministry declare more of God’s greatness and purpose.

If we choose “the glory of God” as our highest priority, we are in good company. The Westminster Catechism—a brilliant summary of Scripture—first asks, “What is the chief end of man?” The answer: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” So the glory of God is the mission of God, right? Well, not quite...

THE “MORAL OF THE STORY”

With all due respect to the Catechism, we are still missing one piece. Like any great story, the Bible reveals one “*Moral of the Story*”. To find our ultimate mission we must find the final application. The “greatest Story ever told” calls us to the greatest mission ever imagined! The “glory of God” is indeed the heart of that mission, but the “**Global Glory of God**” is the full expression of it.

(

 Between 1960 and 2000 the world population doubled! How will the church respond?
p.1*
)
 You see, it is God’s intention that we magnify Him in all things, but our ultimate purpose is to exalt Him *among all people*. While it seems daunting enough just to glorify God throughout our own home, church, and community, He calls us to so much more. Our *first* priority is to take the Gospel to all nations and His glory to all people.

Like an Mission Impossible assignment, all else pales in light of this one. The mission begins in our own Jerusalem, but our destination is always the ends of the earth.

The “Global Glory of God”, then, is the verbal and visible display of the majesty and might of God in all things *in all the earth*. This is not “mission impossible” —it is “*mission incredible*”!

THE MISSION EXPLAINED

This global theme permeates the Bible, appearing repeatedly in final phrases like “*This happened so that the world would know Jehovah is the one true God.*” We can only conclude that God is calling us to live our lives for this one grand purpose: that He will be magnified in all the earth. Every part of Scripture points to this one truth.

INTRODUCTION. From the very start, mankind was given one mission: *Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.* (Gen. 1:28) This global mandate states, “Start in Eden with what you have, shape it into what pleases God, and send your offspring to the ends of the earth to do the same.” Even with man’s rebellion before the Flood (9:1,7) and at Babel, the mission never changed. At the Tower man said, *Come, let us... make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.* (11:4) But God said, *Come, let us go down and confuse their language... From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.* (11:7,11) God will fulfill His mission: He will fill the earth with His image bearers and His glory.

PENTATEUCH. Here God forms His missionary nation. Every event contributed to the mission. Note:

- The call of Abraham. God chose one man from whom would come one people, one Savior, and one way of salvation for all nations. So Abraham is blessed *so that all peoples on earth will be "blessed through Him.* (Gen.12:1-3)
- The Exodus. Why did Israel endure such horrible bondage for four hundred years? Here, God molded and guided His people so that all people—including the world's most pagan, influential culture—could know the one true and living God. [Pharaoh,] *I have raised you up for this very purpose... that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.* (Ex. 9:13-16)
- The Law. In her obedience and blessing Israel would become the envy of the nations, who would see Israel's glory and embrace Israel's God. Observe [the laws] *carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations.* (Deut. 4:6)

"Asia is the only continent where Christianity is not the largest religion and thus remains the greatest challenge for world evangelization." p.41*

OT HISTORY. Through Israel, God took His witness to the world. In the good times the people of God enjoyed the favor of God, reflecting the light of His glory to surrounding nations. In the bad times, either of their own making (rebellion) or of God's own choosing (trials), He strengthened them and often scattered them so they would testify in new ways and in new places. (Josh. 4:20-24; I Sam. 17:45-46; I Chron. 16)

WISDOM LITERATURE. This section describes the life of glory lived before God and others. The Psalms alone contain almost two hundred exhortations to glorify God among all nations: This is clearly a hymn-book of *missionary songs!* Note Psalm 2:8; 46:10; 67:1-7; 145:10-12.

OT PROPHECY. The prophets were the mouthpiece of God, calling Israel back to her global task and inviting all nations into His presence. God told Isaiah, *It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore [Israel]... I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.* (49:6)

THE GOSPELS. The four writers recount the life and work of Christ, whose *ultimate* purpose was to glorify the Father. (John 1:14; 17:4) His redemptive work freed us to do the same, and then He told us how. Christ's teaching on the "Kingdom" —*the rule and reign of God in all the earth*—permeates His entire message. A future, fuller reign will come, but with the King's arrival the Kingdom has come and its expansion is our mission. Note:

- Luke 24:45-48. In one of His final conversations, Jesus revealed the two keys to understanding the Scriptures. First, every truth points to the work of Christ. Second, every application points to the work of His followers: that *"repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations."*
- Matthew 28:18-20. Again in a final moment, Christ commissions us to *"make disciples."* But to understand the mission requires additional detail. It's like telling you to "eat", but without further instruction you are left to wonder if you should eat this piece of paper or that delicious steak. The full command is *"make disciples of all nations"* and the goal is full access. The church for every nation and the Gospel for every person is the goal for every Christian.

NT HISTORY. Acts records the birth, growth, and early ministry of the church as the new instrument for God's mission. Here we see Christianity's almost immediate rise from a local Jewish sect to a worldwide movement. At Pentecost there were *"God-fearing Jews from every nation"* (2.5): this was no accident. Note also the defining moments of the two main characters. Peter confessed, *"Now I realize how true it is that*

God... accepts men from every nation." (10:34-35) Then in 13:47, Paul embraced the words of Isaiah 49:6: he too would be a light for the nations, to the ends of the earth.

(Since the mid 1980's, there are now more Christians in the non-Western world than in the West p.4*

EPISTLES. Acts was written to establish the church *in* its global mission. Romans through Jude equip the church for that mission. These were missionary letters to missionary churches: we must never forget the context! Paul claimed he "*received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the nations*"

(Rom. 1:5), and rejoiced "*because your faith is being reported all over the world*" (1:8). As he closes this letter, he reminds us that everything Christ did and everything we do has one goal: "*so that the nations may glorify God*" (15:9).

CONCLUSION. Revelation pulls back the curtain on the final act of the story: the consummation of redemptive history and inauguration of the universal reign of God. You cannot miss the cosmic scope, the presence of believers from every nation. (7:9; 15:3-4; 22:17)

THE MISSION APPLIED

The "glory of God" in its global application is indeed our ultimate mission. Here are a few final implications.

- 1. Our mission is about lostness, but more so about access.** There are lost people everywhere, and we could easily spend our entire life witnessing just in our own community. But the goal is far greater: to build the church among every tribe, tongue, language, and nation. *This is the benchmark of success for the progress of the church.* How does access to the Gospel in the West compare to the rest of the world? Although we have made great progress, we must admit that our mission is far from accomplished.
- 2. Our mission should favor the global.** Ministry is not local vs. global, but today on balance the pendulum swings away from the nations. Most of our programs and efforts center on *us*. A growing preoccupation with personal and local concerns is diverting attention and resources away from our global priorities. We still need a stronger local witness for our own Jerusalem—*and as the base for a stronger global witness.*
- 3. Our mission should favor the least reached.** Ministry is *not* one nation vs. another, but today on balance the pendulum swings away from the unreached masses. We still need a strong church everywhere, but the principle of access requires greater efforts and resources for the final frontiers.
- 4. In the US church, the mission needs our attention.** A polarization is occurring. On the one end, many churches have gone into "survival mode", a fortress mentality that leaves missions outside the walls and often out of view. On the other end, a growing number of churches have left the fort to reach the nations and it has transformed their ministry. In the middle, thousands of churches—facing competing voices and shrinking finances—are fighting attacks of self-centeredness. But when a church returns to her "Missionary God" and His "Missionary Book" she will rediscover the strength to accomplish her mission.
- 5. Our ultimate goal is "maximum involvement for maximum impact".** The church is the main player and the missionary the main participant, but agencies, organizations, schools, foundations, businesses, and individuals are the supporting cast. *We all have a strategic, vital role: we can all glorify God—ultimately to the ends of the earth.* To what could we aspire, higher?

The Great Commission compels us all to respond because we are not called just to glorify God where we are: we are driven to see Him glorified where the church is not. This is truly more than we could imagine, that we could make such a difference in all the earth! Bring your life, your work, and your ministry together in a purpose greater than self. Let your unbridled passion be for God's glory to all nations so He receives glory *from* all nations.

Will you accept this mission?

How will you lead your congregation into it?

How does the Near-Culture Mission model fit within your strategy to reach your community and empower the Church nearest the unreached to reach their neighbors?

* All quotes and statistics come from Operation World, 21st Century Edition, Patrick Johnstone, Paternoster Press, 2001

Global Disciples partners with churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to fulfill their vision and passion to reach nearby least-reached people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We provide a reproducible and sustainable model to train men and women who will make disciples, plant churches, and give spiritual leadership.

Global Disciples partners with more than 1,200 training programs in over 46 countries. In the past year, those trained and sent out through affiliated programs planted 1,969 church and saw more than 45,000 people come to faith in Jesus Christ.



Global Disciples®

315 West James St., Suite 202
Lancaster, PA 17603 • USA
GlobalDisciples.org



