

God-Centered Missions

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Introduction: What does God-Centered Missions mean?

- It is intended to be a contrast with ideas like man-centered or need-centered.

Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg provide an illustration of man-centeredness while writing on evangelism. In offering argument for why believers should be concerned about lost people, they start by appealing to an “Anthropic Principle.”

So the lesson we can draw from the Anthropic Principle is this: *Someone* must have gone to a lot of effort to make things just right so that you and I could be here to enjoy life. In short, modern science points to the fact that *we must really matter to God!*¹

- The label “God-centered Missions” aims to address a basic question about the ultimate purpose or goal of missions. Is missions primarily centered on man or on God? Or, to put it another way, Is missions an ultimate issue or is it a means to an ultimate goal?

I believe that John Piper is correct when he writes,

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.²

We must be willing to go against the grain of our man-centered world in order to ground our obedience to God in the highest motive possible—God's glory. I believe that the Scriptures are clear that God's glory is the ultimate goal of missions and that our pursuit of His glory is to be the driving force of missions.

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF GOD-CENTERED MISSIONS

- A. Stated, 2 Cor 4:15
- B. Clarified

Two balancing implications may be drawn out from these words.

1. This does not mean that no other goals exist.
2. This does not mean that all other goals are unimportant.

¹ Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming A Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 14.

² John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), p. 11.

II. THE PROOF OF GOD-CENTERED MISSIONS

A. Our Response to the Gospel Promises Acknowledges God's Glory, 1:20

The doxological focus of missions is confirmed by the fact that the proper response to God's promises (faith) is intricately joined to God's glory.

B. The Spirit's Work through the Gospel Displays God's Glory, 3:7-11

The doxological focus of missions is confirmed by the fact that the work of missions can only be accomplished by the Spirit's power and the display of that power is intended to bring glory to God.

C. The Believer's Transformation Reflects God's Glory, 3:18

1. God's Original Created Design: Man as God's Image and Glory
2. The Result of Sin: The God's Image Marred, not Removed
3. The New Birth: God's Image Renewed within the Believer
4. Final Salvation: Conformed to the Son's Image, the Perfect Representation of God's Image.
5. Progressive Sanctification: Transformation into Christlikeness by the Spirit through the Word.

The doxological purpose of missions is confirmed by the fact that God's eternal plan in redemption results in His glory displayed in the transformed lives of believers.

D. The Center of the Gospel Message is God's Glory, 4:4-6

The doxological purpose of missions is confirmed in the very message that is the heart of missions—that God's glory is revealed in Jesus Christ; therefore, He is Lord before whom all will bow, either now in repentance or later in judgment.

III. THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GOD-CENTERED MISSIONS

A. The priority of missions must be faithfulness to God and His Word, not fruitfulness.

B. The promotion of missions should be primarily based on God and His Glory, not man's needs.

- C. The practice of missions must be controlled by Scripture, not traditions or trends.
- D. The power for missions must be divine, not human.

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