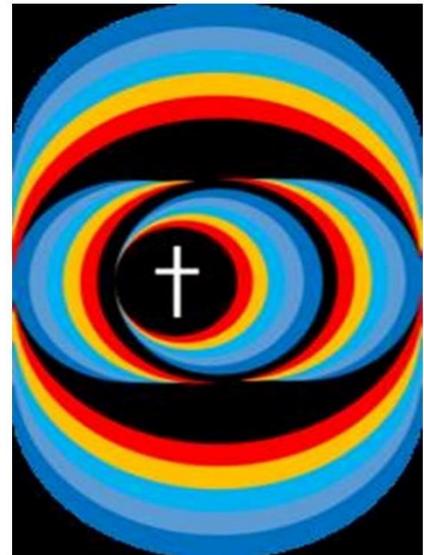


# The Inside Out Church:

## MOVING TOWARDS A disciple-MISSIONAL MODEL

The Inside Out Church is a church that balances the inside with the outside. What does that mean – balancing the inside with the outside? It is well understood that a church is a gathering of peoples who share the same faith, in the same God, and potentially share the same worldview. The church consists of people who gather inside a building, but who live outside of that building – they gather to worship Jesus Christ, but they scatter to live, work, and play in the world out there.

The Inside Out church seeks to give clarity to how and why we live, work, play, and worship the way we do. The pages you are about to read are a chapter excerpted from the full Doctoral Project book as written by Dale Melenberg. The first two chapters (3&4) utilized for this Study are chosen to reveal the worldly influences on our lives, in and out of the church. The next two chapters (5&6) will reveal the biblical impetus for how we are live our lives, in and out of the church.



Since these excerpts are taken directly out of the completed Doctoral Project, please know they are written to satisfy the academic standards for which they were intended. These chapter excerpts are supplementary to the Sermon Study Series and are not compulsory for reading before or after each study session. They are provided as additional resource only.

## CHAPTER 5: MISSIONAL THEOLOGY

The catastrophe of the Tower of Babel, as told in Genesis 11:1-9 portrays God sending the peoples of the earth out over the face of the whole earth. Gerhard Von Rad describes this event as “God’s future relationship to his rebellious humanity ... is now scattered in fragments.”<sup>1</sup> The story of humanity as told from Genesis Three to Ten reveals an ever widening chasm between themselves and God, and the end of that relationship seems imminent. However, it is evident throughout the first eleven chapters of Genesis that despite mankind’s corruption God continues to preserve, forgive, and provide; or in the words of Romans 5:20, “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” It appears that there might be a hopeful turn to this tragic story of humanity’s broken relationship with God.

Genesis 12 begins the story of God’s redemptive plan to reconcile all the peoples of the earth back to himself despite their dispersion. God begins anew with the election and blessing of Abram. Von Rad refers to this as the point where sacred history begins;<sup>2</sup> God’s salvation for all nations is shown in the outcome of God’s selection of and blessing of Abram — “and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Gn12:3) “From the multitude of nations God chooses a man, looses him from his tribal ties, and makes him the beginner of a new nation and the recipient of great promises of salvation.” Von Rad says, “What is promised to Abram reaches far beyond Israel; indeed, it has universal meaning for all generations on earth.”<sup>3</sup> Beginning with Abram, God plans to reconcile the world back to himself. A pattern of sending out chosen people to bless the world is seen again and again in the Biblical narrative, beginning with the election and blessing of Abram.

*Missio Dei* is the contemporary phrase for the sending out of God’s people to help him reach the ends of the earth to which they have been scattered. Darrell Guder in his book, *Missional Church*, credits Leslie Newbiggin with a good articulation of the mission of God being theocentric, as opposed to church-centric. This is an important distinction to understand as it sets the stage for any participation that the church might have in the mission of God. Guder says this of Newbiggin,

Newbiggin brought into public discussion a theological consensus that had long been forming among missiologists and theologians ... The missiological consensus that Newbiggin focused on our situation may be summarized with the term *missio Dei*, “the mission of God.” Mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation.<sup>4</sup>

The church’s mission is in fact a participation in God’s mission for God’s purposes.

## The Missional Impetus in Scriptures

### Old Testament Impetus: Abram, Moses, and Isaiah

Beginning with Abram's election and blessing, the word "go" appears in many instances of God's sending out of his people to participate in the *missio Dei*. Often, each instance of sending also reveals an outcome of what God will do as a result of their participation. Three examples of Old Testament stories illustrate this pattern of sending and outcomes: Abram, Moses, and Isaiah.

#### **Abram**

Genesis 12:1 has the Lord saying to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and *go* to the land I will show you." What follows in verse 2 and 3 is the promises of God to bless Abram, to bless those who bless him, and to bless the whole world through Abram. And so in trust, "Abram left as the Lord had told him." (Gn12:4)

#### **Moses**

Moses, whose name sounds like the Hebrew word for *draw out* is chosen by God to be instrumental in drawing out his people from Egypt's tyrannical rule. Moses finds himself far from Egypt, but not far from God as God himself speaks to Moses on the side of Mount Horeb. "So now, *go*. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." (Ex 3:10) After balking at the idea expressed by God, Moses hears the promise of God's presence with him, and also the promise of an outcome. "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." (Ex 3:12)

#### **Isaiah**

The commissioning of Isaiah is often utilized as a proof text in the commissioning of modern-day missionaries. The magnanimous scene of the Lord seated on the throne, with the seraphs bellowing their worship, call to mind the humility of the one being sent. Isaiah exclaimed, "Woe to me! ... I am a man of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." (Is 6:5) The dramatic scene unfolds and the Lord himself asks aloud, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" to which Isaiah responds, "Here I am. Send me!" (Is 6:8) The Lord then says that infamous word, *go*; "Go and tell this people." (Is 6:9) Despite the positive uplifting nature of this participation in God's mission, the mission will call for perseverance on Isaiah's part. The Lord informs Isaiah that the people will not listen to him, but that a remnant, a tenth, will remain in the land, a holy seed for future blessing. (Is 6:9-13)

## New Testament Impetus: from Jesus to Saul

The pattern of sending and foretelling of outcomes repeats in the New Testament. The most prominent and pivotal is of course Jesus Christ, God's own son. It is through the salvific act of Jesus' commission that all of humanity is to be reconciled back to God. The angel spoke of why Jesus was sent, saying, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today, in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." (Lk 2:10, 11) It was the whole host of angels who spoke the outcome of Jesus' mission, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." (Lk 2:14) Jesus becomes the hinge-point where God now widens his attention to the ends of the earth. Jesus, the son of God, continues in his Father's footsteps and also sends out chosen people to participate in the *missio Dei*, as witnessed in the sending out of the seventy-two disciples, Peter, and Barnabas and Saul.

### **Seventy-Two**

Jesus originally sent out his twelve disciples to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Lk 9:1-6) Later, in Luke 10, we read that Jesus appointed and sent out seventy-two other disciples, saying, "*Go!* I am sending you out like lambs among wolves." (Lk 10:3) Jesus sent them out ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. Jesus was asking these seventy-two disciples to prepare the people to receive him. Jesus forewarned them of the possible outcomes – they will either be accepted or be rejected: for those who accept them, healing and promises of the coming Kingdom; for those who reject them, warnings of judgment and impending doom. Jesus repeats the pattern established by his Father in sending and foretelling the outcomes of the mission.

### **Peter**

Post-resurrection and post-Pentecost the early church has been empowered by Jesus and the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel. Jesus had told them, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Ac 1:8) The church grew but became persecuted by the authorities in Jerusalem, and thus the church at Jerusalem was scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. This turn of events now sends the apostles outwards, beyond that of Jerusalem into Judea, Galilee and Samaria.

The last stage of where the church was to *go* was that of the ends of the earth, and the Lord chose Peter to be the first to reach beyond racial borders to spread the Good News. Acts 10 tells the story of how God prompted Peter the Apostle to witness to Cornelius a gentile. Through a metaphorical dream depicting the crossing of boundaries the Lord was showing Peter that it is acceptable for him to

share the Good News with gentiles. And just as Peter was pondering the meaning of the dream, the Spirit said to him, “Simon (that is Peter), three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to *go* with them, for I have sent them.” (Ac 10:19) The outcome of this sending was not so much foretold as it was understood after Cornelius and his whole household accepted the Good News; and the church back in Jerusalem assented to this move of the Spirit, “praising God, and saying, ‘So then, God has granted even the gentiles repentance unto life.’” (Ac 11:18) God was making his blessing come true, that all the peoples on earth will be blessed through Abram and his seed.

### **Barnabas and Saul**

The early church might have remained in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria if not for the Lord once again prompting the church to go beyond its current borders. Acts 13 records the Holy Spirit’s directive to the church to send Barnabas and Saul further than the church had reached previously. The Holy Spirit gave no specifics about destination, nor did it foretell the outcomes; the Holy Spirit simply said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” (Ac 13:2) So the two of them were sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, and what follows is the first of three missionary journeys that Saul (now Paul) undertakes as he reaches the ends of the earth. Countless churches were setup in the then known world as new disciples of Jesus witnessed to the truth of the Good News.

The pattern of God’s chosen people being sent out continues to this day with outcomes like that of the early churches’ participation in the *missio Dei*. New disciples are made, and the blessings of God through Abram’s seed, Jesus Christ, continue to reach the ends of the earth. The making of disciples is key to the undertaking of participating in the mission of God. A church must first make disciples for the witness of Jesus Christ to be authentic. The aspect of discipleship, like that of *missio Dei*, is also found in the Bible, in both Old and New Testaments.

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<sup>1</sup> Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Translated by John Marks, (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1961) 148.

<sup>2</sup> Von Rad, *Genesis*, 150.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 3-4.