

Philosophy of Missions

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Missions is the obedient response of the church to Christ's command to propagate itself by proclaiming the gospel to the world.

Missions is essentially the same as evangelism. While the words *missions* or *missionary* are not found in our English Bibles, the concept of missions is found in other words such as *sent* (Acts 13:3–4) and *apostleship* (Rom 1:5). The word *missions* comes from the Latin *missio*, which means to send or to send away. Therefore, a “missionary” is one who is sent by the Holy Spirit through the church (Acts 13:4). Missions emphasizes the **status** of those who are sent. The word *evangelism* comes from the Greek *euangelizo*, which means to proclaim good news or to declare good tidings. In the New Testament, the *evangel* (or *gospel*) refers specifically to the message of God's salvation made available through the person and work of Christ.

Evangelism highlights the **message** with which missionaries are sent.

Missions is one of the responsibilities of the church. It is not the only duty of the church, but it is the means by which God has ordained that souls should be regenerated (1 Cor 1:21) and the church built (Acts 2:41; 1 Cor 3:10).

Missions is not social work. We must be careful not to confuse the Church and the Kingdom of God. The Church, begun on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to make disciples of the nations (Matt 28:19). The broad social implications of the Kingdom of God as seen in the gospels (healing, feeding the multitudes, etc.) should not be confused with the biblical command for the church to preach the gospel (Mark 16:15). Along the same lines, the kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament should not be confused with the New Testament church. At the risk of being simplistic, the church's responsibility to the nations in the New Testament is “Go and tell,” while Old Testament Israel issued a call to the nations, “Come and see.”

Missions is not necessarily a geographical endeavor. Frequently, we tend to make a distinction between missions abroad and the same work in our country. Missions as developed in the New Testament involves personal witnessing to neighbors and co-workers, church planting in our own country, as well as foreign missions. One does not need to cross any geographical or political boundary in order to obey the New Testament mandate for missions.

Missions is essentially church planting and building. While other ministries may support and aid local churches (e.g., theological training, youth ministry, etc.), the goal of missions is the advance of the gospel both quantitatively and qualitatively. *Quantitatively*, the gospel advances when we tell those who are not Jesus' disciples that God has made a way for them to be right with him through faith in Jesus Christ and that he commands them to repent and believe in Jesus (Rom 3:21–26; Acts 17:30; Titus 1:2; 2:11). *Qualitatively*, the gospel advances when Jesus' disciples learn to submit every area of their lives to his authority and to obey all his commands (Matt 28:18–20; Titus 1:1, 16; 2:1, 12–14).