

## THE FIELD IS THE WORLD — 2 MOBILISING THE CHURCH

[This is part 2 of a two-part message. If you have not yet read part 1, it would be best to do so first. It may be found by clicking [here](#). Having read part 1:]

In our frequent use of the word “missional”, one of the things that some people forget is what the underlying word actually means. To be on a mission is to be *sent*. It’s the *sending* that makes it a mission, rather than simply an intention or an adventure. As a Church and as individual believers, we’re on a mission because God has *sent* us—and for no other reason.

It’s well over twenty years ago, but somehow it feels more like yesterday. I was working through the writings of Stephen Covey, who is famous for his book, “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.” Several of my colleagues at the time were influenced by Covey’s ideas, and a few of us had purchased our Seven-Habits Organiser, a seven-ring multi-section binder looking like an oversized Filofax. One of the initial exercises that Stephen Covey encouraged us to do was to write down a personal mission statement, a statement of what we were on the earth *for*. There was a workshop to help identify the issues, but it involved some imagining and a lot of thinking to discern the appropriate ingredients and express them in a simple yet complete way. Here is how my personal mission statement came out:

*To operate with responsibility and good character as a son, a husband, a father and a friend; to listen, learn and understand, and to pass on that understanding and learning to others who will listen; to teach, clarify, proclaim and invest truth, establishing, equipping and empowering God's people to establish, equip and empower.*

### **Mobilising by Equipping**

The last phrase of the statement is reflected in the Liberty Ministries website, in the strap line “Establishing, Equipping and Empowering”. It still expresses what we’re about.

When it comes to “equipped”, it’s by the Spirit and the word. Although we can encourage and advise on some things of the Spirit, people who are filled with the Spirit are already basically equipped for ministry. However, people *do* need to be equipped in the word. We need to be introduced to and led into Biblical principles that Christians live by, the principles that underlie Christianity.

The Bible doesn’t teach itself. It has to be read and it has to be taught. It starts with positional truth—who I am in Christ—that’s the *establishing* part. It’s about the Gospel, the grace of God and the gift of righteousness; about being in Christ Jesus and what it means that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who *are* in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). It’s establishing so that we’re standing securely on the right ground and the right foundation.

Then it moves on to various kinds of equipping. It’s not just equipping in the sense of “how to do this or that”, although some of that can be useful. If we spend time studying just the raw word, it can equip us and inculcate Biblical principles. Simply *reading*, *learning* and being *taught* the Bible is powerful equipping.

Noting that new believers are often fascinated with the book of Revelation, there was a pastor who decided just to *read* the book of Revelation to his Church. So for six consecutive weeks, in what would normally have been the sermon time, he read Revelation. He allowed himself to define terms, but that was all—no preaching, no exposition, no cross-references, no maps, charts, times or dates—just the text. By the end of it, the people stood and applauded God. They'd been led into a renewed concept of the power of Jesus, the sovereignty of God, the security that is ours in Christ, and the triumph of the Church of Jesus Christ. That's what the word can do!

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3:16,17

## **Mobilising by Empowering**

Jerry Cook in his book *Love, Acceptance & Forgiveness* tells this story:

*A phone call came one day from a woman who had been a Christian for only two or three weeks. She said, "I've been talking to my neighbor, and she wants to receive Christ. Could you come and talk to her?"*

*I said, "sure," walked out, got in my car and started down the road. I had gone no more than five or six blocks when the Lord began to interrupt me. I knew in a flash what He was saying: "If you go there, I will honor my word and on the basis of her trust in me that woman will be saved, but I will hold you responsible for stealing the reward of one of my sheep."*

*I said, "I don't understand. She is going to get saved, and I am going to be judged?"*

*It didn't make sense. Nevertheless, the Lord's word to me was so strong and so definite that I knew I couldn't go. I turned around and went back to my office.*

*On the way back, I got a short but intensive course on pastor-people relations. I remembered a deep-sea fishing trip that my wife, Barbara, and I had taken. She had tied into a shark out there—a big one about eight feet long. She was having a ball trying to play out the shark. About that time, one of the crew members came, took her rod and landed the shark for her. What a letdown. He had taken away her victory, and she resented it.*

*The Lord said, "Jerry, that's exactly what you've been doing as a pastor. You have been running in, taking away the ministry of the people, thinking you're doing them a favour ..."*

*I called the woman on the phone, told her I couldn't come and explained why.*

*"But I don't know what to do," she said. "I don't know what to say."*

*"Do you know Jesus?" I said.*

*"Well, yes."*

*"If you know someone, you can introduce that person to anyone, can't you? What happened when you were introduced to Jesus? Were any Scriptures used? You could use these same verses if you want to. Just introduce your neighbor to Jesus in the same way you were introduced to Him. If it worked for you, it'll work for her.*

*She agreed to try it, and we had prayer together on the phone. Less than an hour later, there came a knock on my study door. Here stood this woman and her neighbor, both glowing as if they had spotlights on their faces. Not only had the neighbour been gloriously saved, but both the women had also begun to understand that leading people*

*to Christ is not the exclusive work of a few well-trained professionals. Any Christian can do it.*

The point is powerful. In mobilising the Church, we must stop taking things back into “expert” hands, but dare to leave them in the hands of people who “do not know what they are doing!” People will make mistakes, and of course we want to avoid making mistakes. But there’s no other way to produce mobilised people. And producing mobilised people is more important than displaying perfect method.

### **Mobilising by Engaging**

The man was a new believer, and he went to his pastor and asked him to pray that he’d get a different job. “The place I work is so rotten, you wouldn’t believe it. I hear nothing but foul language and dirty stories, and there’s not one other Christian there as far as I can tell.”

Can you complete the story? How would you expect the pastor to respond?

The response was: “I can’t pray for you to get a different job. Why would I pray for God to take the only source of light out of a dark place? That’s crazy. Why do you think God leaves us here on earth after we’re saved anyhow?”

The man’s perspective shifted, and soon he was running a Bible study at work with the other new believers he’d witnessed to. Perspective is important—whether we see ourselves as willing to invite others into our light, or willing to take our light into their darkness.

In the Old Testament, they would bring people to the Temple to meet with God, even if only to the court of the Gentiles. Then the angel told Joseph about the Son Mary would bear, and everything changed.

It’s been called the “Immanuel Principle”, and it gives us a helpful shift of perspective. Religion tries to bring people to God. But our goal is *not* that. Our goal is to take God to *people*. When we reach out, and God is with us, we are taking God to people. And that’s the motivation.

So the Church is mobilised by *equipping*, in the Spirit and the word, by *empowering*, releasing and allowing people to have a go, and by *engaging*, taking God to people.

We are indeed sons of the Kingdom—planted in the field of the world—a Church mobilised by *equipping*, *empowering* and *engaging*.

George Alexander  
January 2015  
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Reference: Jerry Cook with Stanley C. Baldwin, *Love, Acceptance & Forgiveness* (Regal Books, 1979) ISBN 0-8307-0654-2