



*Is missions an outdated idea? Do missionaries do harm or good? We need biblical answers to these questions. This book dismantles the myths that obscure God's beautiful plan to make disciples of all nations. Christians are equipped to become joyful participants—not spectators—in the redemption of the world.*

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# MISSIONS IS PERIPHERAL

*The goal of missions is the worship of God  
through the intended and eternal diversity of all people  
and cultures in the kingdom of God.*

— F. LIONEL YOUNG, III

**Perception 1:** Global missions is one of many good activities.  
It is in the Bible but is not a central theme.

I grew up on the island of New Guinea at the junction of two rivers that fed the surrounding forests and swamps and filled them with crocodiles, cockatoos, and all manner of edible creatures and plants. Like my childhood, the Bible is framed by rivers and trees. Scripture begins in Genesis with a garden, two special trees, and a river that waters the entire region (Gen. 2:8–14). It culminates in Revelation 22 with a river “as clear as crystal” and the tree of life that brings healing to the nations (Rev. 22:1–2).

One of the most beautiful expressions of the Bible’s river and tree theme is hidden in Ezekiel 47. In that passage, God shows Ezekiel a river that begins in His temple and flows deeper

and stronger with time, bringing life to places of death. A small trickle from below the threshold of the temple rapidly swells in size and intensity until Ezekiel describes it as “deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross” (Ezek. 47:5). In the vision, Ezekiel’s guide tells him that the river will turn the saltwater of the Dead Sea fresh so that “where the river flows everything will live” (Ezek. 47:9). Its banks are lined with fruitful trees “because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing” (Ezek. 47:12). It’s an amazing picture that I believe graphically portrays God’s global redemptive purposes.

In Scripture, trees and animal life are often used symbolically to represent the nations and peoples of the world. Over the ages, the Spirit of God is unfolding a plan to transform spiritual wastelands into lush gardens reverberating with the joyful worship of peoples, nations, and cultures that have been transformed by His grace. The best-known articulation of God’s global intentions is found in Matthew 28:18–20, known as the Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to [His disciples] and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

God is fulfilling the Great Commission through His people as we carry the gospel to the many communities that have yet to encounter His lavish grace. Today we call that effort, which has already been underway for two thousand years, global missions.

If God has promised to inundate the world with a torrent of life-giving spiritual water, how much time do we spend pondering the implications? Why does global missions often feel like the strange venture of a few eccentrics, something we might occasionally pray for or give money to, but otherwise consider unrelated to our daily lives? One reason may be that some of us think of the Great Commission as an idea that Jesus introduced for the first time at the end of His earthly ministry as a sort of divine afterthought: “Oh, by the way, there’s something I forgot to mention . . .” But what if the Great Commission is not an afterthought at all? What if God’s redemptive plan for the nations surges through the Bible like a river of life?

**“Our church is extremely missions-minded, yet there is great apathy even here.”**

~ CHURCH LEADER ~

### **HOW GREAT IS THE COMMISSION?**

Over the years I have frequently asked fellow believers, “What do you think are some of the misperceptions or ‘myths’ that keep God’s people from realizing their full potential in Great Commission work?” This question provoked some stimulating exchanges, and I noticed patterns in people’s responses. To confirm how common those perspectives were, I conducted an informal survey probing the prevalence of these perceptions in the North American church and their impact on our engagement with global missions. More than 120 people responded, including field missionaries, sending agency staff and board members, senior pastors, missions pastors, and missions-minded church members. You will find many of their comments highlighted

throughout this book. My survey is not a source of robust statistical data, but it provides some insight into the way many missions-engaged Christians perceive the church's current understanding of missions.

When asked which of ten perceptions most hinder the North American church's missions engagement right now, 82 percent of the survey respondents (including 92 percent of church

**“My role involves visiting  
a lot of church websites.  
In general, missions is hidden  
away unless you are  
committed to finding it.”**

~ MISSIONARY~

leaders) included “missions is important but not primary” in their top three choices. The idea that missions is just one of many good ways for the church to serve God had the highest survey score for impact on the

church and tied for first in prevalence. More than half of the respondents said that this perception is “very much” a hindrance to missions engagement, with another third considering it as “somewhat” of a problem. Twenty-one percent rated it as “almost universal” and another 71 percent said it was “quite common.” In other words, many Christians aren't sure just how great the Great Commission really is.

Of all the missions perceptions we will consider, the primary importance of the Great Commission is the most crucial. If we think of reaching the nations as just one of the many options God has given us for living meaningful lives that please Him, we will miss out on the most important invitation in all of history and a deep source of purpose and joy. The Great Commission is the central message of the Bible, the burning passion of God, and the primary responsibility of the church in this age.

## THE THEME OF THE BIBLE

In the early years of China's reopening to the outside world, I was invited to speak to a forum of four hundred university students in Beijing. A secular political regime had deprived the Chinese people of religious input for decades. The students were smart, engaged, and hungry for new perspectives. Much to my surprise, my assigned topic was "The Theme of the Bible." How would you sum up the message of God's written revelation? What one thought ties the whole Bible together?

With little preparation besides a quick prayer, I plunged in. "Like any good book," I began, "the Bible has an introduction that sets the stage; a plotline full of colorful characters, drama, and suspense; and a spectacular conclusion with a surprise twist. *The theme of the Bible is God glorifying Himself by blessing all nations on earth through Jesus Christ, the descendant of Abraham.* God's plan for mankind began thousands of years ago and is still unfolding today. Most amazing of all, the Bible tells a real-life story in which each of us plays an important part." In other words, I told an auditorium full of secular Chinese students that the theme of the Bible is missions.

When I finished speaking, the room buzzed as the students submitted a flurry of questions scrawled in simple English and mixed in a bag to ensure their anonymity. *Where can I buy a Bible? How can I communicate with God when I can't see Him? How does someone become a Christian? Could I believe in Christianity and Buddhism at the same time?* When I presented the Bible as a unified story that makes sense of the world, the students suddenly discovered new context, beauty, and meaning for their lives. They desperately wanted to know more.

Have you ever stopped to soak in the reality that God has one worldwide, millennia-long purpose: to exalt the Lord Jesus by blessing all the nations of the earth through Him? Is it hard to believe that you have a part to play in that great cosmic drama?

The essence of the Great Commission mandate is found in all four gospels and in Acts (Matt. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46–47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Jesus articulated it on five different occasions, in different words, to different audiences, and with differing emphases. He had been specifically preparing His disciples for this big-picture assignment for three years, but the plan itself was much older than that. When the apostle Paul, the most influential missionary of all time, explains the biblical foundations of his calling in his New Testament writings, he doesn't mention the Great Commission as Matthew and the other gospel writers record it. Instead, in passages like Galatians 3:8 and Romans 15:8, he refers back two thousand years to the "original" Great Commission: God's covenant promise to Abraham. God's plan to redeem obedient disciples from every people group on earth had been hidden for centuries in plain sight, from Moses to Malachi. The disciples just didn't recognize it until Jesus "opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" after His resurrection (Luke 24:45). May He do the same for us.

Many churchgoers have a simplistic understanding of missions and only a vague sense of its importance. Others have contributed through finances and prayers for years, but nagging questions hold them back from fuller engagement. Is global missions outdated, unnecessary, or presumptuous? Is it working? And what, if anything, does it have to do with me? Church leaders, missionaries, and sending agencies have not always done a



good job of providing clarity about our Great Commission roles, strategies, and progress. The good news is that God has clearly laid out His big-picture plans in Scripture.

### **A MESSIAH FOR ALL PEOPLES**

Let's take a look at the overarching story line of the Bible with our radar engaged rather than wandering through life nibbling on carrots in hopes that they might help us see our way in the dark. In Genesis 1–11, God introduces the essential pieces of His redemption plan—creation, the fall, God's judgment in the flood, the proliferation of peoples and languages—without which the rest of the picture wouldn't make sense. In Genesis 12, God chooses Abram to initiate His two-part response to the overwhelming dilemma of sin: "I will bless you," and "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:2–3). Paul explains in Galatians that this was a preview of the gospel and a call, ultimately, to worldwide missions. Abram responds with obedient faith, and the drama of the ages begins in earnest.

Just as Jesus gave the Great Commission five times during His ministry on earth, so the original covenant was given in its full twin-lensed format five times—three times to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3; 18:18–19; 22:17–18), then again to Isaac (Gen. 26:3–4), and to Jacob (Gen. 28:13–15). We call these men the patriarchs because they are the first recipients of the heavenly promise and God's global mission statement. They are the ones to whom God announced the plan that would become the theme of the Bible. This promise was so important to God that even He, who cannot lie, bound Himself with an oath to fulfill it (Heb. 6:17–18). To make the scale of His intentions abundantly

clear, God further promised that Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the stars, the sand, and the dust. It's hard to imagine more comprehensive descriptors of the ultimate outcome of God's global plan.

The rest of the Old Testament unfolds against the backdrop of the Bible's redemptive theme. Abraham learns to walk by faith and become a blessing (though imperfectly) to surrounding peoples. Joseph blesses Egypt as well as his own family, with messianic foreshadowing. The Jewish people are forged as a nation during their bondage in Egypt, and their dramatic exodus reverberates to this day. Israel is called to be a "kingdom of priests," standing in the gap on behalf of the nations of the earth, illustrated through the stories of Jethro, Rahab, Ruth, and many others.

Psalms 67 explicitly describes Israel's missional role. The psalmist cries out for blessing "so that [God's] ways may be known on earth, [His] salvation among all nations" (Ps. 67:2). Echoing the Abrahamic covenant once again, Psalm 72:17 declares, "Then all nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed." At least fifty other psalms feature similar statements. Remove the multicultural dimensions of the Old Testament, and very little remains.

Israel's era of God-honoring faithfulness didn't last long. She largely defaulted on her assignment to bless the nations of the world. One of the saddest verses in the Bible is Isaiah 26:18: "We were with child, we writhed in labor, but we gave birth to wind. We have not brought salvation to the earth, and the people of the world have not come to life." National disobedience resulted in destruction and exile, and yet hope still remained. Had God not bound Himself by oath? A Messiah had been promised, and

His job description was clear: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (Isa. 49:6).

In the “fullness of time,” Jesus the Son of God arrived, heralded by angels, shepherds, and an international delegation bearing gifts fit for a king. His mission was to “shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace” (Luke 1:79)—a reference to the Gentile (non-Jewish) world. Simeon prophesied that Jesus would be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32).

Nazareth in Galilee of the Gentiles seemed like an improbable hometown for a Jewish messianic figure, but it fit perfectly with God’s mission. Jesus came “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10), not just in Israel but all over the globe. He provided the atoning sacrifice for all who would believe, demonstrating how much “God so loved the world” (John 3:16). Jesus’ death, resurrection, commissioning of the disciples, and sending of the Holy Spirit revealed the next stage of God’s plan. The invitation to new birth was for everyone. You don’t have to leave your culture and become a Jew to be a part of God’s redemptive plan anymore. Galatians 3:29, for example, assures us that Gentiles who belong to Christ are “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

The book of Acts documents a dramatic new phase in the redemptive strategy. Instead of the Jewish nation functioning as the primary vehicle of God’s blessing, the church—a community of believing Jews and Gentiles—becomes the conduit of salvation for the nations. We are so accustomed to the idea of Gentiles enjoying equal access to God that it’s hard to appreciate how

radical this new arrangement was. The change from a centripetal model (come and see) to a centrifugal model (go and tell) had huge implications. Paul was God's improbable instrument to lead the nascent church into this new chapter. The transforming power of the gospel message began to permeate the Roman world from Jerusalem first and then springboarded west from Antioch. The race was on to see the "power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes" released to the ends of the earth (Rom. 1:16). And the race is still on, just the runners are now different. Now it's our generation's turn to run.

The Bible closes with climactic scenes in the book of Revelation, giving us a preview of our final destiny. All nations will eventually worship God and His Christ (Rev. 7:9). Multitudes from the East and the West and the North and the South will sit down for a great feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the original recipients of God's covenant promise, to celebrate the completion of global redemption.

The book of Revelation describes the end of this seminal part of history, but it's really just the beginning of the rest of eternity. The redemption of representatives from all the peoples of the earth will be a source of unending worship and celebration. Isaiah 9:7 prophesies an expansion of Christ's governance for eternal ages to come. You and I have only the tiniest comprehension—even with all that we can see from our current historical vantage point—of the scale of what God is doing. We can begin to appreciate, however, that global missions (the advance of God's kingdom through the spread of the gospel to all cultures and communities) is indeed the central theme of the Bible and the mission of His people in this age. Are you playing your part

in the story of the redemption of the world? Or do you live as if the Great Commission were an afterthought?

### **CARROTS DOWN, EYES UP**

When I go jogging, if I'm not careful, my eyes automatically focus on the ground right in front of my feet. Looking down is probably a self-protective instinct. The problem is that looking at my feet helps me avoid roots and potholes, but not tree branches or cars. It's actually not safer, though it feels that way. I can see where I am but not where I'm going or any of the splendor of the world around me. When I look down, every curb looks the same and I miss the sunrise entirely. Based on my interactions with missionaries, sending agency staff, church leaders, and missions-minded believers, I fear that we in the North American church often stare at our feet rather than fixing our eyes on the glorious redemptive mission our Lord has called us to pursue.

At a key moment in His earthly ministry, Jesus prompted His disciples to lift up their eyes and take in the big picture. Returning from a shopping excursion in the town of Sychar, the disciples were surprised to find Jesus conversing with a Samaritan woman. While the Twelve urged Him to eat, the woman ran back into the town the disciples had just left, told everyone that she had met the Messiah, and led them back to Jesus. As a result of her testimony, many people believed and were saved (John 4:39).

The disciples were caught staring, metaphorically speaking, at their own feet. They had focused on their physical needs and cultural conventions rather than sharing the message of salvation. They missed the fact that this community was ready to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah, so they missed out on an opportunity to be the initial messengers of the gospel to a

receptive people. Seeing a teaching opportunity for His disciples, Jesus challenged them, “Open your eyes and look at the fields” (John 4:35).

Like Jesus’ disciples, we need to periodically lift our eyes and remember the big picture. Otherwise, we may think we are on stable footing, but we won’t know where we’re going, and we certainly won’t enjoy the view along the way. If we are not clear that God is love, and that His love extends equally to people of all nations, and if His “marching orders” are ambiguous to us, we may easily become discouraged, distracted, and apathetic.

Most of the perceptions of global missions that hinder believers from participating stem from this core problem: too many of us have lost sight of God’s big-picture priority of blessing all the peoples of the world through Jesus. There is more to the Christian life than dying and going to heaven. God’s methods are often mysterious, but His overall purpose is clearly laid out for us in Scripture. Let’s not drift through life with good intentions but no sense of direction. Don’t live as if the Great Commission is merely a suggestion.

### **THE SCALE OF THE MISSION**

God’s global mission is breathtaking in its scope. While “make disciples of all nations” may sound like simple enough instructions, we can barely even begin to grasp what is involved in such a vast and elaborate plan. The Greek word often translated “nations” in Matthew 28:19 refers to ethnolinguistic people groups, not political nations. We have identified at least ten thousand such groups, and there may be many more. Some are further subdivided by geopolitical borders or by subcultures and dialects.

For example, I grew up in a New Guinea tribe that consisted of only about three thousand people at the time but was divided into two distinct dialects. Each of the eighteen villages also had a unique accent, even though they were only separated by a few miles of jungle.

The world's people groups not only speak different languages and dialects, but they also have different worldviews. They value different things, organize ideas in different ways, and express emotions differently. Some Indonesian friends once shocked me by laughing as we drove past a terrible highway accident. Later I learned that in their culture, laughter is a common response to stress. On another occasion, an official asked for the pen in my pocket. I chuckled and turned him down because I thought it was just casual banter. To my dismay, he was deeply offended at my culturally inappropriate laughter.

Taking the gospel across cultures presents many challenges. Cultures have different ways of organizing leadership, making decisions, and viewing success. Even family structures can look very different. My sister-in-law, for example, is Minangkabau, a highly unusual people group because they are both matriarchal and Muslim (she is one of the few Christians in this people group of seven million). In every culture, values and ways of life are passed down through thousands of years of tradition and history and literature and art, some of which retain aspects of biblical truth, and some of which have been distorted by sin. Reaching so many diverse cultures with the gospel is a dizzyingly complex task.

Most of us will only come to deeply understand one or two cultures in our lifetimes. In our own culture we are like fish swimming in water, hardly aware of its influence. We know all

the rules intuitively. The diversity of humanity, however, exceeds anything we can imagine. The geographical, historical, cultural, political, linguistic, and economic obstacles to the fulfillment of Jesus' Great Commission mandate are already daunting, even before we consider the spiritual dimension. So how can we possibly face such a vast, formidable task? If millions of believers over thousands of years have yet to complete the mission, who are we to attempt it?

### **AN ASSURED OUTCOME**

The Great Commission is God's idea, not ours. Our confidence to engage in Great Commission work comes from the identity of the One who calls us and the resources He has provided. Jesus described His Father as "the Lord of the harvest" (Luke 10:2). In Matthew's text the command to make disciples is immediately preceded by the words, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," and followed by the promise, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:18–20). God did not explain His purpose and then leave us to carry it out under our own power. He works with us and through us, empowering us by His Holy Spirit who can lift long-entrenched spiritual blinders and give "new birth" to people from Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, animist, and secular societies. Only He can transform them (and us) into mature, obedient followers of Christ who are able to lead and disciple others.

While God's mission for the church may feel overwhelming, He has not left us without role models. The historical record is unclear on some of the details, but we know that the disciples took Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations very



seriously. They spread the gospel across the known world in the first century. According to church tradition, Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome, and most of the other disciples endured violent deaths in foreign lands. Andrew preached the gospel in modern-day Turkey, Greece, and the former Soviet Union. Thomas went east to Syria with Matthias and then possibly as far as India. Bartholomew may have joined Thomas in India, then traveled through Armenia, Ethiopia, and southern Arabia. Philip preached in North Africa and Asia Minor. Matthew ministered in Ethiopia, James in Syria, Simon in Persia.<sup>1</sup>

The first-century church in Rome summarized Paul's life this way:

After he had been seven times in chains, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, and had preached in the east and in the west, he won the genuine glory for his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world and having reached the farthest limits of the west.<sup>2</sup>

May we all show the same courage and commitment! This does not mean that all of us need to get on airplanes and fly away to distant lands. Great Commission work is so vast and so complex that there are as many ways to engage as there are willing participants. When we understand our corporate purpose as a global church, then we are each free to pursue it wholeheartedly according to the opportunities, giftings, resources, skills, education, and experiences that God graciously gives us as individuals. Take heart—you are not responsible to “finish” the Great Commission. You are only responsible to be faithful in your small part of God's eternal plan.

Misperceptions about missions don't threaten the ultimate accomplishment of God's purposes. I have no doubt that "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations" (Matt. 24:14). In God's time, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14). As the Lord of the harvest, God

**"Don't miss out! Be a part of reaching the last people on earth with the gospel! God will get the job done with or without you . . . so get on board while you can."**

~ MISSIONARY ~

will fulfill His promise to Abraham. He will bless all peoples through His Son. When He is finished, we will stand back in awe at what He has done, overwhelmed with gratitude that we were invited to participate in such a glorious task.

I can imagine no greater privilege than to work alongside my Father to make known what Christ has accomplished. The key question we should each be asking ourselves is, *Am I wholeheartedly and strategically participating in His great plan?* We need clear vision to joyfully pursue God's glory among the nations. Whether we physically go to the ends of the earth as missionaries ourselves or contribute in other ways, those of us who organize our lives around the Great Commission will find deep satisfaction in this life and eternal reward in the next.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

NFL lineman Jim Marshall was part of the revered "Purple People Eater" Minnesota Viking defensive line. For twenty seasons he never missed a game, earning a reputation for toughness and reliability. In 1964, playing against the San Francisco 49ers,

Marshall recovered a fumble in the fourth quarter and ran untouched for sixty-six yards to the end zone. After crossing the goal line, he tossed the ball away and began celebrating. Imagine his surprise when an opposing player trotted up, patted him on the back, and thanked him. Marshall suddenly realized that he was standing in the wrong end zone.<sup>3</sup> He had just scored a safety, giving two points to the 49ers.<sup>4</sup> In football, as in much of life, it doesn't matter that you're doing something earnestly if you aren't doing the right thing.

My daughter Kelly had a similar experience to Jim Marshall at one of her kindergarten sports days. During a race with her classmates, she became disoriented and ran in the wrong direction. My wife and I, along with everyone else, shouted to her to turn around and go the other way. Kelly thought we were cheering her on, so she ran even faster. She was motivated and diligent. She just wasn't running in the right direction.

Running the wrong way in kindergarten is an adorable mishap. In the NFL, it's a big deal. In the Christian life, neglecting our Great Commission purpose can be an eternal loss, both for us and for the worldwide church. God has sovereignly chosen to make His church the conduit of His blessing to all the peoples of the world. He commands all believers to participate in His great campaign of mercy and love and has entrusted the gospel to us. In the final analysis, when God reviews our lives, it won't just be about our sincerity or discipline. It'll be about whether we did what He instructed us to do. Did we give ourselves wholeheartedly to the mission? Did we run hard in the right direction?

Even if we start off running in the right direction, we need continuing reminders and markers to stay the course. Mission drift is a real threat, both for individuals and organizations. For

example, Harvard University was founded in 1636 with the motto, “Truth for Christ and the Church.” The original mission statement reads: “Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life, and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.”<sup>5</sup> Eighty years later, a group of pastors established a new school to be a stronghold of Christian higher

**“God purposefully designed each follower to assist Him in the work He is doing around the world. He wants to show you the greater purpose He has for you.”**

~ MISSIONARY ~

education because they were concerned that Harvard had drifted too far from its original mission. They called it Yale. The cycle repeated. Neither school has a reputation for theological conviction or Christian character today.<sup>6</sup> If mission drift happens to large institutions started by Christians, aren't individual believers and congregations also in danger of losing sight of their primary mission over time?

No one likes to think that their ideas are faulty or incomplete, but correcting misinformation can actually be a positive, motivating experience. I believe that a proper understanding of global missions will remind us of the immense privilege we have of aligning our lives with God's will. My prayer is that the process of reflection and learning will give us a clearer picture of what God is calling us to do and inspire us with the glory of His big-picture plan for the world.

Don't let the enemy distract you from your purpose, convince you that it is only for other people, or discourage you that it can't be done. If we miss the big picture, staring myopically at

our feet as we run in the wrong direction, we may feel that we are being safety conscious, but we will miss out on the purpose for which our Lord created us. Lift up your eyes to the harvest. When we and our local churches organize our lives around the Great Commission mandate, then everything else will fall into alignment. May God's global redemptive purpose take its proper place as the central theme not just of the Bible, but of our lives and our churches as well.

### **WHAT'S COMING NEXT**

In the next chapters we will unpack seven more common perceptions of missions and missionaries that can distract or discourage the people of God from fully engaging in the Great Commission. You may share some of these views yourself, or you may hear them from other people. For example, shouldn't the lost hear the gospel from Christians in their own countries rather than from foreign missionaries? Isn't it better to send lots of people on short trips than a few people for a lifetime? Could missions be doing more harm than good? Each perception we will consider has at least a kernel of truth to it. However, if our understanding of these topics is inaccurate, incomplete, or imbalanced, the church can quickly become apathetic or skeptical about fully engaging in global missions.

By design, this book provides only a brief treatment of each subject. Not everyone will agree with me on every point, and that's okay. The Great Commission is not only a global task, but also a communal one. God has equipped the church with an abundance of resources and a robust immune system so that we can refine our understanding of our global mandate together.

I hope this material stimulates conversations in local churches. At the conclusion of each chapter, I have included discussion questions to help church members dive deeper into God's magnificent plan to redeem all the peoples of the world.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Do you agree that God wants to glorify Himself by blessing all the nations on earth through Jesus Christ, the descendant of Abraham? Do you see that as the theme of the Bible?
2. What distracts you from that big-picture plan or discourages you from getting more involved?
3. What activities or resources help you lift your eyes to the harvest and take in God's big-picture plan for the world?

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