

Rethinking *Missio Dei*: Temporally Remedial or Eternally Doxological?

by Dave Shive

My suspicion arose late. It was that gradual sense that something was missing. I didn't suspect the evangelicalism that has shaped my missiology. I'll always be grateful for an evangelical¹ community environment where missions was treated as a high priority. My father was a pastor, my parents loved God with all of their heart, and our home was saturated with God's Word and a deep interest in missions.² My college and seminary education were also spent in evangelical institutions, and for almost half a century my vocation has found me in evangelical ministries. But I later discovered that something was missing and I've invested the final chapters of my life searching out that "something." It has required a fine-tuning of my theology of mission.

A Thesis on God's Intentions

I want to begin by stating a thesis, one that at first may appear obvious to any evangelical, but which I believe can lead us deeper into God's intention for mission today.

*It is axiomatic that the church is to be gripped by the purposes and passions of God.³ Alignment with God's intentions and motivations must be the foundation of all worship. If the God who created heaven and earth is on a mission, the scope and objectives of that mission must be universal, comprehensive, and eternal. His mission must possess a magnificence of scope that should stagger the imagination. The *missio Dei* centers on the most intense zeal and grandest intentions embedded in the mind of the creator God. Discovery of the full dimensions of such a mission is the greatest ambition laid before those who love Jesus Christ.*

This essay proposes to offer a panoramic vision of the *missio Dei* in the hope that others might be encouraged to consider the one whose depth of wisdom and knowledge is both incomprehensible and worthy of our pursuit.

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Traditional Evangelical Missiology

I slowly began to perceive a fundamental problem. The prevailing evangelical view of God's work in the world is simply that missions is both temporal and remedial. To say that it is *temporal* means that evangelicals view missions as limited to a time period, having a beginning (usually in Gen. 3) and an end (often in Rev. 19–20). The term *remedial* suggests that missions is viewed primarily as intending to fix what is broken. In this view, the need for “repairs” arose in Genesis 3 and the necessity of remediation will no longer exist after Revelation 19–20. In essence, evangelical missiology holds that when things went bad in the Garden of Eden, God initiated missions. And when all enemies will be finally subjected to the Son's regal authority (i.e., 1 Cor. 15:23–28; Rev. 19:6–10), missions will be complete. While not every evangelical believes exactly this way, it is safe to say that this is a fairly standard evangelical missiology.⁴

Three providential occurrences prompted a rethinking of my own traditional evangelical missiology. First, I enrolled in the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course⁵ and shortly thereafter embarked on a long career as an instructor in that same program. But like many pastors, I had been satisfied with my missiology and felt no need to take any further missions course. Though my missiology was biblically inadequate, God was gracious and the church I was pastoring was somehow innovative, creative, and passionate in its missions effort. During my hours of study and preparation for teaching in that course I found my presuppositions challenged and my missiology began evolving. The idea of a “Living God as a Missionary God” (lesson 1 of this course) had shattered my assumptions and I began to undergo a paradigm shift regarding the passions and purposes of God as revealed in Scripture.

Second, I acquired an additional graduate degree (this one in Biblical Literature from Baltimore Hebrew University). This unique academic exposure provided needed motivation for me to begin taking the Old Testament more seriously. This proved essential to my quest for a more wholistic “Genesis-to-Revelation” missiology.

Third, I discovered that a more thoughtful reading of the Bible was required, and that realization led me to the crucial idea of “the Bible as story.”⁶ This dramatically altered how I approached the grand drama of Scripture and ultimately led to a reshaping of my missiology.

I have been on a three-decade journey to expand my thinking on this more traditional *temporal/remedial* perspective of God's mission. My purpose has been to foster breadth of understanding on the *missio Dei*, thus allowing the

incorporation of the brilliant biblical themes that provide a window into the heart of God and his deepest passions.

Restoring a Christological and Doxological Foundation

Having taught the lessons in the biblical portion of the Perspectives course hundreds of times, my passion has increased to see the evangelical heart and mind move beyond the limited (i.e., temporal, remedial) understanding of the purposes of God to the broad, magnificent cosmic plan of the triune God to “sum up all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:10). Rather than adhering to a micro view of missions which focuses on particular subplots of God's story (e.g., man's redemption, deliverance from sin, our eventual place in heaven, etc.), the great need is to discern the macro overarching trajectory of the divine narrative in Scripture. When the arc of God's story is grasped, multiple adjectives such as “majestic, cosmic, global, universal, comprehensive, grand” are required to adequately explicate God's wonderful story.

The hegemony of the temporal/remedial approach to missions produces the unintended consequence of engaging in missions with an incomplete theology that then produces an inadequate missiology. The temporal/remedial missiology inevitably diminishes the missional priority of the majestic glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. When this shift occurs, the human sin problem and human efforts to resolve that problem are magnified to dominate missiological thinking. Wright alludes to this more limited view of missions as the “. . . persistent, almost unconscious paradigm that mission is fundamentally and primarily something we do—a human task of the church.”⁷ This, of course, is an insufficient missiology. The priority of God's purposes will tend to decrease as the focus on our efforts increases. Piper posits a similar idea when he states that “compassion for the lost is a high and beautiful motive for missionary labor But we have seen that compassion for people must not be detached from passion for the glory of God.”⁸ Dearborn corrects a skewed perspective on our importance in the work of God with his assertion that “it is insufficient to proclaim that the church of God has a mission in the world. Rather, *the God of mission has a church in the world*”⁹ (emphasis original).

There is a desperate need to restore the *christological* (Christ at the center) and *doxological* (worship as the intended process and outcome) *missio Dei* as the thread that holds the fabric of Scripture together from Genesis to Revelation. While it is right to embrace the words of Jesus as contained in the Gospels, I find a fragmented missiology will result if we neglect the *entirety* of Scripture with its relentless emphasis on Christ's presence and ongoing influence in the lives of characters and events from Genesis to Revelation.

From Eternity into Time and Space Mission in the Pre-Creation

It may sound counter-intuitive to go backwards from Genesis 1:1, but the flashback¹⁰ device so common in literature is also frequently employed in the Bible. Failure to allow the Bible's "foundation of the world"¹¹ vocabulary to impact our missiology has the unintended consequence of a diminished missiology. An anemic curiosity concerning the frequent allusions in Scripture to the triune God's activities before Genesis 1:1 will result in a drift from the christological-doxological foundation of the *missio Dei*.

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Reeves considers this issue important enough to give an entire chapter in his short volume the title "What was God doing before creation?"¹² And Snyder concurs: "God's eternal plan predates both the Fall and the creation; it existed in the mind of God 'before the creation of the world' (Eph. 1:4)."¹³ God's mission must have eternal scope and grandeur far exceeding anything our minds can comprehend.

Just two of the many "pre-creation" texts are needed to make the case. Both are found in the prayer in John 17 as part of Jesus' conversation with his Father the night he was betrayed. This prayer is theologically dense, practically rich, and missiologically insightful. In John 17:5, Jesus prayed to his Father: "Now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you *before the world existed*." And in verse 24: "... For you [Father] loved me *before the foundation of the world*" (emphasis mine).

These two statements are an "insider's report" on the ongoing activities in the eternal heavenly temple¹⁴ before creation. There the triune God was dynamically active. This is noteworthy for a robust missiology because, as will be demonstrated, what was taking place in the eternal heavenly temple prior to creation provided the impetus for what would follow: the creation of the universe, an earthly temple to serve as Jesus' residence.

As John 17 indicates, God was acting in the heavenly temple in accordance with his divine nature by displaying his extraordinary glory and exercising his incomparable love. Because the Father delighted in the glory of his Son, the Son's radiance was just too good to not share on a wider platform. Then and there a plan was settled upon to create a massive venue (e.g., the universe) that would serve as a "staging

ground" so that the Son's glory could be exhibited and the love of God might be exercised.

Four primary decisions were made before Genesis 1:1 which then led to the creation of a new universe to extend God's pre-creation mission into space and time. First, it was determined that the universe would belong to the Son.¹⁵ Second, this new creation would be the platform for the display of God's glory.¹⁶ Third, creatures who could appreciate this marvelous exhibition of glory would be made in the Son's image. They would reside in this new earth, enabled to respond in worship

and adoration of the Son. Fourth, the Son would take up residence in the new universe.¹⁷

God's purpose and passion surface clearly in these texts that flash back to the pre-creation heavenly temple. If he was intentional and zealous before creation, then God's missional activities were ongoing before Genesis 1:1.

Mission in Creation

The fact that the Bible begins (Gen. 1–2) and ends (Rev. 21–22) with identical themes stands as yet one more clue that the Scriptures were indeed written as story. The *inclusio*¹⁸ linking the opening and closing of the Bible points in the direction of a grand theme of God's mission: the triune God loves a heaven and an earth that functions in shalom.¹⁹ Shalom is the perfect picture of God's preferred universe in Genesis 1–2 and his mission moves relentlessly toward the restoration of shalom in Revelation 21–22.

The creation event provokes the missiological question: "Why did God create a universe?"—especially with the advance knowledge that his creative work would be sabotaged. It seems that an informed answer to this question is essential for a vigorous missiology.

Factoring in these four primary "pre-creation" decisions (see above) is foundational to answering this question and constructing a biblically wholistic missiology. A missiological reading of the creation account material directs the inquisitive student towards a meaningful *missio Dei* answer. As Stevens points out, "if the only possible explanation for God's motives in creating the world is egomania or loneliness, as some might

assume, then that shows how incoherent the rest of the story must be.”²⁰ Yes, we must do better!

Clues provided in the “pre-creation” flashbacks suggest God’s purposes and passions were eternal. Thus, it is only natural that the term “blessing,” so prominent later in Scripture in relation to the *missio Dei*, should surface in Genesis, chapters 1 and 2 (1:22, 28; 2:3). Creation was intended to do something; thus, it was blessed. Recognition of this factor prepares the student for the re-emergence of blessing ten chapters later in the call of Abraham.

Creation blessing enables the achieving of two missional objectives. First, Psalm 19:1 informs the reader that “the heavens disclose God’s glory.”²¹ It was the Creator’s intention that his glory be displayed and that the new universe would be the platform for its demonstration. Second, this creation was intended for Christ (“all things were made for Him,” Col. 1:16). Confusion and ambiguity about the role of Genesis 1–2 is resolved with the realization that the universe was for Jesus’ purposes. These two missional ideas are vital to avoiding a distortion of the *missio Dei*.

Wright is correct in noting that mission begins with the triune God: “Mission is grounded in an intra-trinitarian movement of God himself . . . mission flows from the inner dynamic movement of God in personal relationship.”²² The creation of a universe was missiologically central to God’s purposes and passions. God values his Son and his Son’s glory and so he created a universe. Without a universe, there could be no wider display of God’s glory, no place for creatures to reside who were made in the Son’s image, and no venue where Jesus could take up residence. Stevens summarizes the matter:

Without a motivation rooted in his nature—not because of some circumstance or consequence of creation—nothing would have moved God to take on the task of creation. Creation must have arisen because of the way it accomplishes something God values. By creating the universe, God essentially made the well of his own creativity overflow by seizing the opportunity to demonstrate his creative and conceptual genius. It was an occasion for God to indulge himself in an artistic explosion of sorts, and things like his power, wisdom, prudence, goodness, and truth could be put on display. God is excellent, and our existence grows out of his desire to give his excellence a greater audience, so this makes creation a gracious decision.”²³

Mission in Genesis 3–11

A biblical missiology is needed that carries the reader to Abraham. The vast expanse between Genesis 1–2 and 12:1–3 provides needed background to get to Abraham. If the Bible

is to be read as a story, the intention behind the narrator’s use of nine chapters that link creation to Abraham must be revealed. It is Genesis 3–11 that sets the stage for the Abrahamic covenant.²⁴

Budding missiologists must go beyond the entrance of sin in Genesis 3 if the early chapters of Genesis are to be integrated into a broader missiological thinking. When we recognize the massive bridge (i.e., Gen. 3–11) that links the creation account to Abraham, critical missiological information can be acquired.

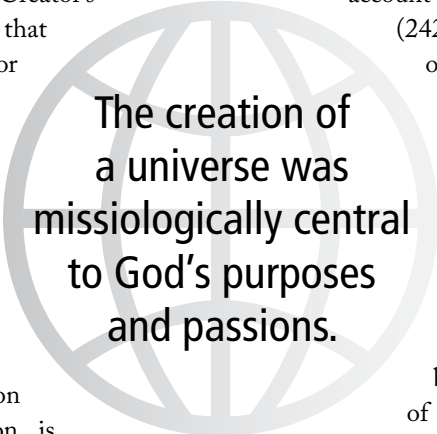
Why would the narrator choose to use comparative lexical sparsity (56 verses) in recording the stupendous creation account while allotting considerably more space (242 verses) to the generally “ugly” narratives of the Fall? Two answers surface. First, the fact that chapters 3–11 contain four times the quantity of material found in chapters 1–2 suggests that God wants those who read his story to grasp the enormous disaster caused by sin’s entry into Jesus’ universe. Second, after the creation account has been read, the narrator will bring the reader to Abraham by going through chapters 3–11. The story of the fall (Gen. 3–11) injects complication and creates tension in the narrative. The story is crying out for resolution, and Abraham will provide what the story demands.

Six observations will expand the reader’s understanding of the missional thrust of Genesis 3–11.

First, there are three vignettes: the Fall (chapters 3–5), the Flood (chapters 6–10), and the Flop (i.e., Babel; chapter 11). Each of the three has its own internal 3-part cadence: sin, judgment, and genealogy. The idea becomes inescapable that the narrator was intentional in the organization of this material. There is purpose here that suggests these chapters play a vital role in the unfolding of God’s missiological drama.

Second, each of the three vignettes concludes with a genealogy (normally avoided by Western readers). Fully one-third of Genesis 3–11 is composed of genealogical material. These genealogies prove to be a major piece of the puzzle that illuminate how God intends to accomplish his mission: through a godly line running continuously from Adam to Abraham.

Third, the text alerts the reader to the problem that may have troubled Eve: “If Adam and I together could not resist the wiles and force of the serpent, why would anyone think we can produce ‘seed’ that will have the power to crush the serpent’s head?” The genealogies provide the answer to Eve’s musings



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by indicating that God intended to preserve a godly line from Adam to Abraham (the three genealogies, while perhaps having gaps, are nevertheless continuous) so that “Seed” could be produced capable of crushing the serpent’s head.

Fourth, the allusion in 3:15 to the woman’s “seed” piques the curiosity. Clearly, men—not women—have seed. The term “seed,” occurring as it does in Genesis 3:15, signals the fact that something exceptional is afoot. While “seed” may be subsequently translated “descendants” in later chapters of Genesis to refer to Abraham’s offspring, its appearance in chapter 3 as a referent to a woman’s reproduction is unusual. The narrator’s decision to connect this term to a woman in Genesis 3:15 is as provocative and momentous for the modern reader as it was to Eve or for Paul in the 1st century AD (see Gal. 3:16–29).

Fifth, apparently, Eve got the general idea. She may have been thinking in Genesis 4:1 that Cain might be the promised head-crushing “seed,”²⁵ the one who would crush the head of the serpent. While she couldn’t have been more wrong about Cain, her intuition was correct in looking for a son to be the “seed.” In the same chapter Eve comments upon the birth of Seth, “God has appointed me another seed in place of Abel,”²⁶ implying she was expecting one of her sons to be the one who would crush the serpent’s head. Her ruminations may have gone something like, “Maybe Abel . . . No, sadly it wasn’t Abel . . . Maybe Cain . . . Oh no. Definitely not Cain . . . Maybe Seth . . .”²⁷

This emphasis on “crushing the seed” may prompt the reader to recall Paul’s 1st century AD foreshadowing to the Roman church of the “crushing” of the serpent’s head: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom. 16:20).

Sixth, if “blessing” in the creation account means something like “enrichment and empowerment to achieve one’s potential,” then “cursing” is its opposite (“the weakening or limiting of the ability to achieve one’s potential”).²⁸ The allusions to “cursing” in 3:14, 19, and 5:29 could not have been clearer. Having glimpsed the wonderful blessing in creation on days 5, 6, and 7, the occurrence of cursing at this juncture should jar and disturb the reader.

Exploring the text of Genesis 3–11 can supply what the reader desperately needs: a bridge that provides a meaningful transition from creation to Abraham. The narrative flow of these chapters can greatly augment one’s understanding of mission in the Old Testament. The student will be growing in love and appreciation of the text of Scripture and of the genius of the God who oversaw the compilation of these amazing nine chapters. The unique portion of Genesis 3–11 is meant to lead us to Abraham’s

“God-encounter” in 12:1–3. And Abraham’s meeting with the God of Genesis 1–11 is vital to the remainder of the story.

Mission in Genesis 12:1–3

God intended that the creation account would point the reader toward what would follow. The vital connection between Genesis 1–2 and 12:1–3 is chapter 3–11. To the question, “Why does Abraham need blessing?” the answer has been provided in the narrative of chapters 3–11. Genesis 12:1–3 establishes the theme that will nuance the rest of the Bible: God intends to restore blessing to all creation.²⁹ Many are surprised to learn that such a “missiological” conversation occurred with Abraham 2000 years before Jesus gave the Great Commission.³⁰

Since the root of the term “bless”³¹ was used five times in just two verses (i.e., Gen. 12:2–3) when dispatching Abraham on a mission, grasping the meaning of the term “bless” becomes a crucial issue. Definitions surface as different authors attempt to explicate its meaning: “enrichment” and “divine enablement;”³² “filled with the potency of life, overwhelming defeat and death . . . enabling humanity to achieve its destiny;”³³ “endowment;”³⁴ “God’s provision for human flourishing;”³⁵ and “increase”³⁶ (i.e., multiplication, spreading, filling, abundance). A plausible definition of the term in light of its Pentateuchal usage (particularly in Genesis) is “enrichment and enablement to reach one’s potential.”

It becomes quickly apparent that beginning one’s missiology in Matthew 28 is inadequate for grasping the *missio Dei*. It is equally obvious that a full appreciation of the narrative of God’s story cannot be gained by beginning in Genesis 12. After all, who skips the first eleven chapters when starting to read a story? Studying Genesis will open up the thinking to the idea that the Bible is a narrative³⁷ that began in Genesis 1:1 and continues through Revelation 22:21. If this background in Genesis 1–11 is mastered, the fundamental

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character of God’s conversation with Abraham is given a broader narrative context. In the words of Christopher Wright,

Genesis 12 comes after Genesis 1–11. This innocent observation not only relates to . . . the pivotal nature of the opening verses of Genesis 12. It also reminds us of the importance . . . of paying attention to the context of any text.³⁸

Conclusion

In spite of the fact that Matthew 28 is commonly viewed as “Ground Zero” for missions in the Bible, it is clear from eternity past to eternity future that God is missional. This enlarged grasp of the stunning dimensions of the *missio Dei* means that the Great Commission in Matthew 28 cannot suffice as either starting point or terminus for one’s missiology.³⁹

In his essay, “The Scope of Mission,” Dwight Baker offers a most profound proposition:

Missio Dei, or God’s mission, is rooted in the character of God and God’s intent—present and active *from eternity past*—to make God’s love and grace known. Whatever contravenes or is inconsistent with the character of God is not part of authentic Christian mission. The *missio Dei* is both well-spring and motivating force from which all authentic Christian mission flows. Mission is not merely remedial. Mission as *missio Dei* began long before the fall of mankind. The *missio Dei* continues far beyond getting people born again. It extends all the way to the point at which every person comes to maturity in Christ Jesus and God is all in all. (1 Cor. 15:28, “from eternity past,” emphasis mine).⁴⁰

Here Baker denies the idea that the essence of God’s mission is “remedial” and “temporal.” His essay provides three foundational premises with which I wish to conclude this essay.

First, God’s mission is rooted in the character of God and God’s intent, present and active from eternity past. Biblical allusions to God’s activities prior to Genesis 1:1 are not obscure, and these references and their implications should merit greater missiological consideration.

Second, mission is not merely remedial. God’s mission began long before the fall of mankind. We cannot afford to make the error of beginning our thinking about the *missio Dei* with Genesis 3 simply because the necessity of remediation arose at that point. Though we should be grateful that God “fixes broken things,” Scripture does not permit a diminishing of the *missio Dei* to a “Genesis 3 to Revelation 20 divine corrective project.” Rather, our imagination—our missiological thinking—must be captivated by God’s eternal gracious cosmic intention of bringing all things in subjection to his Son.

*Third, the *missio Dei* extends far beyond getting people born again. It reaches all the way to that place where every person comes to maturity in Christ Jesus and God is all in all.* One of the unfortunate results of the traditional evangelical paradigm of mission which starts with Matthew 28 is that many sincere believers in good churches are unable to consider the massive scope of God’s intentions in Christ. Too many have missed the magnificence of the grand plan of the ages whereby we are joined eternally with the loving “community of the divine family.” We should be startled to discover that Jesus’ taking

us as his bride is missiological. The divine invitation for us to reign with him as his bride and share as co-heirs with him in all that he inherits is pure *missio Dei*.

Baker’s essay is clearly articulated, his thesis virtually unassailable, and the implications profound for our missiology. It is time for individual believers in the evangelical community to be given adequate opportunity to rethink the nature of the *missio Dei* and arrive at such exciting and motivating biblical deductions.

For those in positions of influence in churches and mission agencies, the need is clear. We must allow the Scriptures and the Spirit of God to captivate our hearts with the wonder

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of an eternally missional triune God who determined that the Son was worthy of exaltation to the highest place in the eternal heavenlies as well as throughout space and time. The Son’s glory is unparalleled, and he is so replete with love and grace that his glory generously overflows in abundance with creatures made in his image. The Father intends to bring all of creation—not just believing human creatures, but all of creation—under the authority of this Son so that the triune God may be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). This is the christological, doxological, universal, eternal *missio Dei*. It should galvanize us as instruments of his mobilization, to bring his church to full maturity in Christ, that believers may marvel at the magnitude of God’s plan for the ages. **IJFM**

Endnotes

- ¹ In this essay, the term “evangelical” refers to those who affirm the doctrinal framework of the Lausanne Covenant, particularly the purpose, power, and being of God; the authority and power of the Bible; and the uniqueness and universality of Christ. These elements are the *sine qua non* of all biblical mission. See “For the Lord We Love,” the Lausanne Movement, 2009.
- ² Three terms will be used here in regard to what is generally referred to as “missions.” The word “missions” is restricted to the prevailing approach in evangelical churches of taking the gospel to those in spiritual darkness. On the other hand, “mission” (without the “s”) refers to God’s eternal doxological and christological quest to display the Son’s glory throughout the universe. See Wright, *Mission of God*, 61–62, 67, for a defense of this distinction. “Mission” and *missio Dei* (Latin for “the mission of God”) are used interchangeably. In addition, the term “missiology” denotes “the study of both missions and mission.”
- ³ Steven C. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: The Study Guide* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009). Consideration of these two aspects of God’s missional approach (purpose and passion) first came to me through this study guide. They are the “key words” for lessons 1 and 2 in that course and profoundly sum up the two basic requirements for any missional activity. To be on mission, one must have purpose and passion. God is the exemplar of both and thus can be called “the quintessential missionary.” Recognizing this about the Triune God is key to a healthy engagement in God’s mission.
- ⁴ For a clear analysis of this *temporal/remedial* issue, see Dwight P. Baker, “The Scope of Mission,” *The Covenant Quarterly* (Feb. 2003): 3–12.
- ⁵ For more information on this course, see www.perspectives.org. In addition, it would be hard to overstate the significance of Christopher Wright’s magisterial *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006). This volume may well be the best biblical analysis in print on the topic of God’s mission.
- ⁶ For a thoughtful discussion of the idea of Bible as narrative, see Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004).
- ⁷ Wright, *Mission of God*, 61.
- ⁸ John Piper, “Let the Nations Be Glad,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 4th edition, eds. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 68. See also Hawthorne’s similar emphasis, “The Story of His Glory,” 61, in Winter and Hawthorne: “Mission efforts which draw their motivation from compassionate response to human predicament will only go so far. Guilt-based appeals to care for hurting or lost people continue to soften our hearts a little. In practice, however, they weary and harden believers to a minimal token obedience.”
- ⁹ Dearborn, “Beyond Duty,” 70, in Winter and Hawthorne.
- ¹⁰ “Flashbacks” interrupt the flow of a story to point the reader to a prior unknown incident. Information contained in the flashback offers nuance to provide the reader with background for current narrative events.
- ¹¹ “Before the foundation of the world, before the world existed, hidden from ages past” are similar “flashback” expressions that can be found in Matthew 13:35; 25:34; John 17:5, 24; Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:3; 3:4, 8; Colossians 1:26; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20. These all open the window to consider the eternal missional passions and purposes of the Triune God.
- ¹² Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 19–38.
- ¹³ Howard A. Snyder, “The Church in God’s Plan,” 154–158, in Winter and Hawthorne. Snyder references Matthew 13:35; 25:34; John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; Hebrews 4:3; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8; 17:8 and comments that “these passages make it clear that Christ was appointed as Savior from eternity and that God’s kingdom plan is eternal.” See also Ben Stevens, *Why God Created the World: A Jonathan Edwards Adaptation* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014).
- ¹⁴ See Hebrews 8:2, 5; 9:11, 23–24.
- ¹⁵ “. . . All things were made for him . . .” (Col. 1:16).
- ¹⁶ “The heavens declare the glory of God . . .” (Ps. 19:1). Wright references the idea of “God’s glory as the goal of creation.” Christopher J. H. Wright, “Mission and God’s Earth,” 27–33, in Winter and Hawthorne.
- ¹⁷ Reference to “the Lord God walking in the garden” (Gen. 3:8) is presumed to be the first christophany (a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God).
- ¹⁸ “Inclusio” is a literary device also known as “bracketing” or an “envelope structure” where similar material at the beginning and ending of a section serves as “bookends” for the entire section (or book).
- ¹⁹ Plantinga, Cornelius, Jr., *Not the Way it’s Supposed To Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995). Plantinga describes *shalom* as “universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights,” 10.
- ²⁰ Stevens, *Why God Created the World*, xiv.
- ²¹ Note also the same intention declared in passages like Numbers 14:21; Psalm 72:19; Isaiah 6:3; 11:9; and Haggai 2:14.
- ²² Wright, *Mission of God*, 62–63.
- ²³ Stevens, *Why God Created the World*, 8.
- ²⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 16–17.

- ²⁵ In favor of this thesis, see Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 16. Contra this view, see Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988), 156, Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 96, and Nahum Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 32. The consensus seems to be that Eve felt she had synergistically made a great accomplishment; e.g., “with the help of the Lord I have done this.”
- ²⁶ See Genesis 4:25. It is unfortunate that most major English translations have adopted the word “descendant” or “offspring” to occasionally translate the Hebrew *zera* in 4:25 and 3:15. While “offspring” or “descendant” is a suitable translation in many contexts, Genesis 3:15 and 4:25 deserve special treatment due to: (1) the close proximity to “seed” in 3:15; (2) Paul’s linking of this text to the 1st century church in Romans 16:20; (3) Paul’s use of *sperma* in passages like Galatians 3:16ff. when quoting Old Testament texts that refer to Abraham’s descendants; and (4) John’s vision in Revelation 12:9 of the seed as representing both the people of God and the Messiah. It thus seems preferable to retain the terminology “seed” both in 3:15 and 4:25 to reflect Eve’s thinking in context that she (*vis a vis* her *plus* Adam) would produce the head-crushing seed.
- ²⁷ Implicit in Laban’s mysterious comment in Genesis 5:29 is the same kind of thinking that was in Eve’s mind. Laban named his son “Noah” (rest) thinking, “*Rest* will give us *relief* (a word-play in Hebrew) from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed.” Laban apparently expected his son to be a key player in the grand drama of the crushing of the head of the serpent.
- ²⁸ Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 145: “banishment from the place of blessing.”
- ²⁹ These three verses provide the impetus and foundation for Perspectives lesson 1 which is titled “The Living God is a Missionary God.” Given the general assumption among evangelicals that God’s mission is temporal and remedial, it is helpful to note the title of the lesson and then inquire: “What would lesson 1 be emphasizing if the title were “The Living God *Became* a Missionary God””? Discussion may ensue around the issue of whether the point of the title is that God is *currently* a missionary God (with the inference that he may at one time *not* have been on mission but now *is*), or if God is *eternally* a missionary God (with some rather obvious and profound implications).
- ³⁰ The Perspectives Reader offers a veritable treasure trove of outstanding material to navigate these missiological waters. For example, John R. W. Stott, “The Living God is a Missionary God,” in Winter and Hawthorne, 3–9, Kaiser, “Israel’s Missionary Call,” 10–16. Kaiser focuses on three primary Old Testament texts (Gen. 12:1–3; Ex. 19:5–6; Ps. 67) to buttress his claim that Israel had a missionary calling. These same three passages serve as the biblical core of lesson 1 in the Perspectives course.
- ³¹ Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 16–18. Kaiser points out the importance of blessing in the creation account as a foundation for what will happen in 12:1–3. See also G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 86. Beale sees the blessing of humanity in Genesis 1:28 that contains the implied promise that God will enable humanity to carry it out. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 68–69, says that “The seventh day is infused with procreative power . . . Blessing is God’s gift of potency and power.” See Sarna’s, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 15. Sarna states that the seventh “day becomes imbued with an extraordinary vital power that communicates itself in a beneficial way.” *The NET Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019), 72, notes that God’s blessing of Jacob in Genesis 32:29 means “the Lord endowed Jacob with success; he would be successful in everything he did . . .”
- ³² Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Book House, 1996), 113, 263.
- ³³ Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 63, 67. In regard to Abraham, Waltke suggests that “blessing brings the power for life, the enhancement of life, and the increase of life,” 205.
- ³⁴ Sarita D. Gallagher and Steven C. Hawthorne, “Blessing as Transformation,” in Winter and Hawthorne, 34–41.
- ³⁵ Richard Bauckham, “The Story of Blessing: Prevailing Over Curse,” in Winter and Hawthorne, 38–39.
- ³⁶ Wright, *Mission of God*, 209
- ³⁷ Wright, *Mission of God*, 63ff.: “The Bible presents itself to us fundamentally as a narrative, a historical narrative at one level, but a grand metanarrative at another.”
- ³⁸ Wright, *Mission of God*, 195.
- ³⁹ In John 12:41, the fourth gospel states that in Isaiah’s vision in Isaiah 6, the Old Testament prophet actually saw the preincarnate Christ. This lends credence to the view that it was indeed the preincarnate Christ who met with Abraham in Genesis 12 to initiate the missional covenant. That this might actually be a christophany is supported by the observation that both Genesis 12:1–3 and Matthew 28:19–20 are remarkably similar in that both contain the same five elements for a missional call: (1) a command to go; (2) a missional task assigned; (3) a comprehensive scope; (4) an ethnic target; and (5) God’s assurance to accompany both Abraham and the disciples on their daunting mission.
- ⁴⁰ Baker, “The Scope of Mission,” 3.