

What is a Missional Community?

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A missional ecclesiology is rooted in God's character and purpose as a sending or missionary God.

With this view, "mission" shifts from naming a function of the church to describing its essential nature.

Practical Difference:

Now this theological difference finds expression in practical ways through our common ideas, language and practices about church. For example, church is typically defined in one of several ways.

Church as a place: For many people, church is a place you go. It is a facility, a campus or a building. The common phrase, "I'm going to church" summarizes this view. When a person is at the building or facility, they are at church. The implication is that when they are not at the building, they are not at church.

Church as an event or spiritual activities: For others, church is something that happens. Church is defined by worship services, Bible studies, prayer meetings or other ministries. Again the implication is that when one is not engaged in one of these events or activities, they are no longer doing or having church.

Church as associated with a person: For others, church is an organization associated with a pastor or Christian leader. For example, people often say things like, "I go to Chuck Smith's church" or "I attend Jack Hayford's church."

Church as offering programs or services: For others, church is determined by what the organization offers to meet needs such as youth programs, music programs, marriage groups, fellowship, discipleship, mission opportunities, etc.

However, in a **missional community, the church is God's sent people**. That means when everything is stripped away – the building, the events, the activities, the leaders, and other identifying markers for the church – the people are the church and church is the people. Therefore, wherever God's people are corporately or individually, there is the church. Church is at home, in the car, in the restaurant, the beach – wherever God's people find themselves in their daily lives.

Another practical difference can be seen in the practices of the general American Christian populace. American Christians cannot be distinguished in any significant way from secular culture. Christian lifestyles and time-styles, although slightly Christianized, are virtually the same as the culture around them. There are also no noticeable differences between Christians and their secular counterparts in areas of morality and ethics. Dawn Haglund states that the church has completely adopted American culture. She writes:

Marketing, promotion, advertising, consumerism, selfish materialism. I'm not sure the church is much different than the American culture. I find that sad, disappointing, and disturbing. Church has become a place of consumerism. People come to get their needs met. The church is about giving people what they want – making them comfortable. Maybe we've reached more people, but I'm skeptical if we've participated in transforming lives.[3]

Rather than embodying, demonstrating and announcing a new way of being human under God's reign, the modern church, in general, has been domesticated by American culture. The task of the missional community is to explore and rediscover God's countercultural call to represent the reign of God in our emerging post-modern society.

* *Emphasis Mine*