

4 P's of Incarnational Mission

By Jeremy Stephens

Define Mission

"Mission comes from the Latin "mission", meaning "I send". It is the task on which the church is sent into the world.

But what does it mean to "be missional," "have mission," or to "go on a mission"? Sometimes we define mission too narrowly, often frustrating our microchurch as they fail to fit within our narrow definition. Sometimes we define mission too broadly allowing for our micro churches to never really engage in mission because everything has mysteriously become mission. To help your micro church eliminate both extremes, take a few minutes to unpack how you perceive mission, define it and seek to embody it as the church.

To get the discussion going, here are a few definitions. Which one do you like the most? Why?

"Mission means proclaiming the kingdom of the Father, sharing the life of the Son and bearing the witness of the Spirit." Newbigin

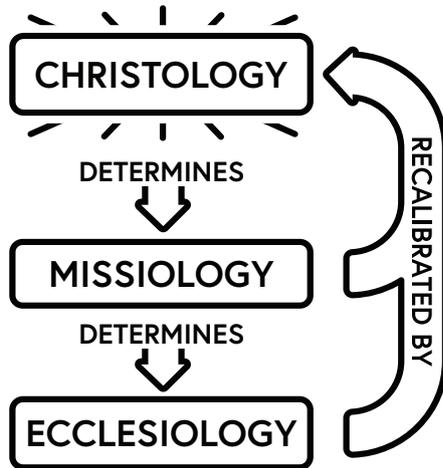
In Transforming Mission, an editor suggests that "Mission... is a passage over a boundary between faith in Jesus and its absence."

In the same book, Bosch later states in all mission there is a "boundary breaking dimension... Apostles, missionaries, sent ones, always look to jump the fences of this world to witness to the extension of God's glory."

Spend time as a group developing a definition of what it means for your microchurch to be missional.

JESUS' WAY IS OUR WAY

Mission is a comprehensive word encompassing everything that Jesus sends his people into the world to do and accomplish in his name. Jesus himself drew a parallel between the commission with which the Father had sent him into the world and the way he was sending the disciples. "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."



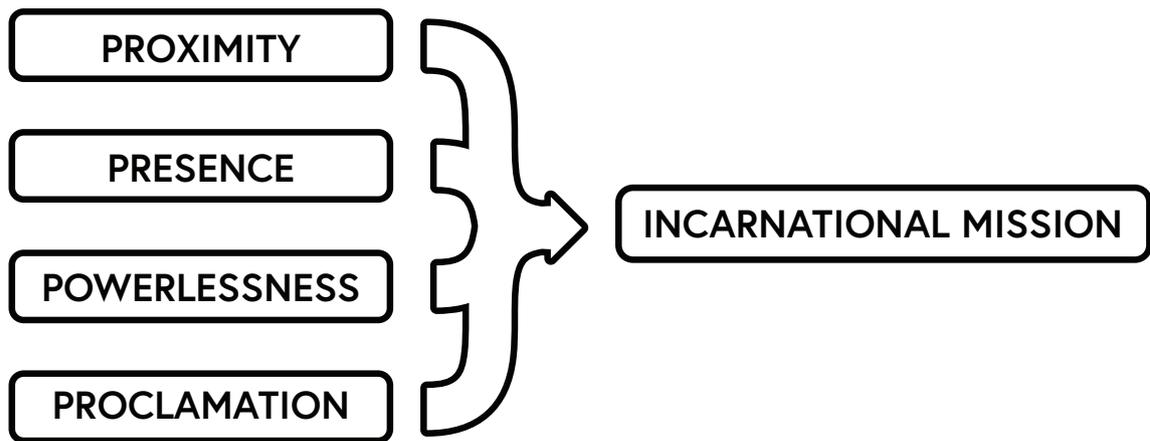
In this diagram, Alan Hirsch implores the church to calibrate itself based on the mission that is determined by Jesus. Jesus defines his mission and the church is then defined by HIS mission. Hirsch puts it this way, "The church does not have a mission, the mission of God has a church." This helpful diagram illustrates how our micro churches need to evaluate the way we do mission and recalibrate back to HIS mission no matter how successful or unsuccessful we are.

The question is "how did Jesus do his mission"?

The 4 P's of Incarnation

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Incarnation means "to put flesh on" and is how Jesus enters HIS mission to bring the kingdom of God. His way is to be our way, so our microchurches must consider how to emulate his methods as we enter his mission. Below is a helpful framework to help us emulate Jesus to join HIS mission the way he entered it.



PROXIMITY

Move in and get close to the people he has called us to love.

This means frequency and regularity. It requires us to move our bodies and to be in the same spaces as those we are trying to love in the name of Jesus.

Ideas: Weekly porch parties, walk regularly, work from café, discover natural gathering points and go.

As a microchurch:

- Where do you exist already? (picking kids up from school, soccer moms, cubicle) How can you begin to be inspired to see this as a place of mission?
- Where do the people we are called to reach gather and connect? How can we enter those spaces with them on a regular frequency?
- How can we encourage/challenge each other to jump fences and get close to those we are called to reach?

PRESENCE

Be around, beyond proximity, and engage in a meaningful way.

This requires intentional questions, conversations, becoming good listeners to the dreams and pain of people without trying to solve them.

Ideas: When you enter the place of proximity you pray for the peace of Christ to rest on the place. Be attentive to names, body language. Wonder about people's stories, what makes them tick... then go ask them.

As a microchurch:

- What are a few good spiritual and/or meaningful questions to have in your back pocket?
- How can we make space to be present (without agenda) with the folks we are called to reach?
- How can we help each other have meaningful presence in our mission field?

POWERLESSNESS

Demonstrate you have needs - Don't have all the answers, share doubts, weaknesses and the trials you face.

This means sharing the difficulty of your life with others and maybe even asking them for help. You never want to use those you mean to reach for Jesus but inviting them into your life is an authentic way toward relationship on equal footing: "we are all beggars looking for bread".

Ideas: Ask for help, share about things you're confused about, unanswered prayers and questions you have no answers for. Become comfortable replying, "I don't know".

As a microchurch:

- What places of vulnerability can you share with those we are called to reach? Are there places you can appropriately ask for help?
- How can we encourage each other to be vulnerable with people we are trying to reach?

PROCLAMATION

Demonstrate with words the hope of Jesus

This requires talking about Jesus using words, in order to share the truths of God's eternal love for the broken world.

Ideas: Explore how God has touched their lives, giving biblical interpretation to their spiritual encounters. Share about God's heart for justice, restoration, healing and relationship with his creation.

As a microchurch:

- Thinking about those we are called to reach, what are obvious areas where we can proclaim God's love? How can we share without coming across as "religious" but rather we are proclaiming God's good news authentically from our hearts?
- How can we coach each other to grow as proclaimers of the good news of the kingdom?

METHOD OF GOD

Take time in this passage to unpack how you see the 4 P's in the way Jesus came to do mission with us.

John 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'")

16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

What can we learn about "His Way" of doing mission?

What do we need to change both individually and as a microchurch to align with God's methods of mission?