

## **Mobiology: Its Relationship with Missiology and Beyond**

**By Max Chismon**

Over recent centuries, the development and refining of missiology has helped the Church focus on the missional task. It may have begun in the colonial context with a geographical focus but has been considerably refined in recent decades to direct our attention to people groups and today to the more than 7,000 people groups that remain unreached.<sup>1</sup> With these people being arguably the most resistant to the gospel, missiology's value to the body of Christ remains indispensable.

One of the longstanding frustrations missiology has faced is the need for harvesters in the harvest fields of the world. To address this, Mission Agencies, the custodians of the outworking of missiology, have actively employed mobilizers to recruit personnel for cross-cultural ministry. Their efforts have been rewarded but, sadly, always with fewer workers recruited than the ripened harvest fields of each generation have demanded. And worrisomely, these traditional recruitment methods are seeing even fewer workers responding than in previous times.

Mobiology, I would like to suggest, is the answer to this dilemma. Moving forward, mobilization must be seen as more than an activity. It must be seen as a sound Biblical theology. This is where mobility steps in.

### **Mobiology and the World Christian Movement**

Mobiology is the study in the participation of all God's people on mission with God and therefore, every local church being a missional church. 'God on mission and God on mission with his people' is seen by mobility as the heart and soul of the Bible's Story! It spans both Testaments and ushers in God's eternal age of a new earth where righteousness dwells.<sup>2</sup>

### **Mobiology's Vision Beyond Mission**

Mobiology sees God accomplishing two very different purposes at the same time ('two birds with the one stone'). As God engages his people with him on mission, God reaps a harvest – people are saved from every nation, tribe, and tongue. At the same time, those involved as harvesters are being matured – an essential preparation for his eternal age of the new heaven and new earth (Phil 1:6). Herein lies the genius of God. It is as we, God's people, engage with God on mission that the wheels of our transformation begin to turn. We are learning to lay down our life, to take up our cross, to deny self – all of which are prerequisites for true transformation and growth into maturity and to the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph 4:13).

### **Mobiology and Missiology - Two Complementary Theologies**

Whereas missiology focuses on the harvest field, mobility focuses on the harvest force. Missiology is focused on what God does through his people, and mobility on what God does in his people by engaging them in his mission. Both missiology and mobility have their eyes focused on the harvest, with mobility focused also on the 'harvested' for God's glorious age to come (Ro 8:18). Mobility was always meant to be missiology's indispensable companion. Without mobility by its side, missiology has been like a single parent trying to attend to all the needs of the family on its own. As a result of mobility's absence, mission agencies may have embraced missiology's vital message, but local churches seldom have. A precious number of harvesters may have been

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua Project <https://joshuaproject.net>

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pe 3:13, Rev 21:1, Isa 65:17

mobilized but seldom has all God's people. Mission departments may have developed but seldom have missional churches. Missiology has lacked the staunch support of its partner, mobiology, thus missing out on "a marriage made in heaven" and the full potential such a partnership could achieve.

### **Mobiology Defines Mission Holistically**

The term 'mission' has often been defined differently, adding to the confusion. Local churches tend to interpret mission by their local context, and 'mission people' and mission agencies define it as a cross-cultural ministry and often to unreached peoples. To mobilize all of God's people into living missional lives and to see every church become a missional church, then our definition of mission and understanding of mission within the Body of Christ needs 'shared meaning'. Like in any good marriage, this is an opportunity for all partners to grow in understanding and positively influence each other.

So, from a mobiology perspective, and to provide a definition that all can embrace, I suggest that mission be understood in three distinct phases. The first phase is to reach unreached peoples. This I would define as establishing an indigenous church planting movement within an unreached people group. The workers engaged in this phase would be foreigners and cross-cultural workers as the people group is unreached and therefore lacks an indigenous Christian expression. The second phase is for indigenous workers ('insiders') to evangelize their people group, plant churches, and make disciples. The third phase would be God's people, putting Christ's kingdom on display through their transformed lives in both word and deed for a witness or testimony to their nation. Interestingly, about the gospel becoming a 'witness or a testimony' to a nation, Jesus concludes with, "And then the end will come" (Mt 24:14).

Such a definition of mission, as described in these three simple phases, means every believer, church, mission agency, training school, and Bible school can be involved in meaningful and strategic mission. This 'all is mission' perspective maintains the primacy of reaching unreached peoples, as phases two and three simply can't happen without a people group first being 'reached'. Perhaps this is why Jesus said, 'The gospel must first be preached to all nations' (Mk 13:10).

I have found the writings of Chris Wright particularly helpful and have appreciated his more holistic defining of mission.<sup>3</sup>

### **Mobiology Defines Leadership in the Context of Mission**

The Bible is God's Story of mission from cover to cover and flows seamlessly from the Old Testament into and through the New Testament. From the beginning, God had appointed leaders such as Moses, Joshua, and David to help his people live on mission to grow and expand God's mission agenda. Prophets were also appointed to keep his people focused. Prophets would call an often 'wayward people' back to God and challenge them to live for the reason why they were called to be God's chosen people (Haggai 1:3-9). Mobiology identifies the leading of missional initiatives as 'apostolic' and the missional motivation as 'prophetic'. Viewed in this way, we can see the missional importance of both apostolic and prophetic ministries throughout both the Old and New Testaments (Lk 11:49). For this reason, we find Paul, in the New Testament, saying to the church at Corinth, "And God has placed in the Church first of all apostles, second prophets," (1 Cor 12:28). Missiology provides the framework for apostolic mobilization by focusing the Church's attention to the missional task from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria and onto regions beyond (Acts 1:8, 2 Cor 10:16), whilst Mobiology provides the framework for prophetic mobilization, calling all God's people to active participation with God on his mission.

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright  
Books: The Mission of God, The Mission of God's People.

In fact, mobiology sees all the five leadership ministries (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) in the context of mission. Failure to interpret these Body of Christ leadership ministries in the context of God's mission has led to, in general, a 'sleeping giant', confusing trumpet sounds (1 Cor 14:8) and a Church ill-prepared to live a life on mission with God. The people of God, in general, are not being prepared for works of missional service as ought to be happening (Eph 4:12), and thus, the bride is not making herself ready (Rev 19:7-8) as she ought to be doing.

Should these leadership ministries catch this understanding of the centrality of mission, we would see a revival, both of mission and spirituality and holiness. This is what wholehearted involvement with God on mission has been designed by God to lead to. And in my opinion, this is what the Church globally is increasingly hungry for! And mobiology makes even more sense when we realize that today's Church is in every country of the world and often in significant numbers. We are the closest today to the world's remaining unreached and unsaved than in our entire history - close geographically, culturally, and linguistically! The Mobilization of all God's people into mission with God and every church mobilized to be a missional church makes so much sense!

### **A Glorious Day Ahead for Mission**

Imagine, if you can, every church a missional church, facilitating all God's people into a life on mission with God. Imagine every church nurturing God's people to be blessed and equipping them to be a blessing. Imagine all God's people celebrating what they have been saved from and what they have been saved **for**! Imagine faithful followers of Jesus connected to the Head of the Church and the Lord of the Harvest doing precisely what Jesus said they would do, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (Jn 10:27). As a result, the Lord of the harvest will be sending out workers into his harvest field on an unprecedented scale (Mt 9:38). Imagine local churches and mission agencies meaningfully connected as these two redemptive structures were supposed to be connected<sup>4</sup>. Imagine, if you can, the harvest fields of the world reaped, to His satisfaction and His bride having made herself ready! Maranatha!

This is the vision of mobiology!

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<sup>4</sup> Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission by Ralph Winter