



What Is the Mission of the Church?

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Social justice and mission are hot topics today: there's a wonderful resurgence of motivated Christians passionate about spreading the gospel and caring for the needs of others. But in our zeal to get sharing and serving, many are unclear on gospel and mission. Yes, we are called to spend ourselves for the sake of others, but what is the church's unique priority as it engages the world?

DeYoung and Gilbert write to help Christians "articulate and live out their views on the mission of the church in ways that are theologically faithful, exegetically careful, and personally sustainable." Looking at the Bible's teaching on evangelism, social justice, and shalom, they explore the what, why, and how of the church's mission. From defining "mission", to examining key passages on social justice and their application, to setting our efforts in the context of God's rule, DeYoung and Gilbert bring a wise, studied perspective to the missional conversation.

Readers in all spheres of ministry will grow in their understanding of the mission of the church and gain a renewed sense of urgency for Jesus' call to preach the Word and make disciples.

What Is the Mission of the Church? Details

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From Reader Review What Is the Mission of the Church? for online ebook

Bryan Neuschwander says

I wanted to like it, alas. I tried.

The book reminded of this wonderful, troubling short story Jesus once told about a homeless hitchhiker who was walking along the road, was waylaid by robbers and left for dead on the gravel shoulder.

A Reformed Christian pastor happened by and decided to write an theologically correct exegesis of what the Old and New Testament had to say about his predicament. Soon another pastor, Baptist this time, passed by, and, seeing the disarray of social injustice, the flagrant misunderstandings of shalom and the kingdom--not to mention the new heavens and new earth, decided to collaborate with the first Christian pastor to survey the relevant literature, to discern and declaim any suspect interpretation, and to ensure orthodox understandings for the church.

Meanwhile, across the pond, a former Anglican bishop and New Testament scholar wrote a few pages to remind them that Jesus actually told a whole drama of 5 (not 4) Acts; and an Old Testament clergyman and scholar, another Anglican unfortunately, chimed in with a short pamphlet observing that the whole of scripture is on the mission of God. They couldn't both be right, could they?

And while they all spoke thus together concerning these things which were about to be accomplished among them, a young punk from Portland saw the homeless, battered and bruised, and now actually dead hitchhiker and called the coroner. He contacted next of kin, prepared a brief memorial service, and paid the funeral expenses with his own credit card.

Now the immortal question at the end: which of the men shared the gospel with the homeless dying man?

But Jesus told that story a long time ago, and I may have misremembered some of the details.

Heather Tomlinson says

There is a lot I could say about this book. In lots of ways, I would feel sympathetic to some of their aims: being faithful to scripture, encouraging evangelism, being sufficiently sceptical about what kinds of social justice to get involved in.

However, this book criticises the work of people such as John Stott and Chris Wright - ie those proposing integral mission - to propose that the church's priority should be the Great Commission. In their understanding, that's just preaching and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

What was screaming to me throughout the book was, that the Great Commission includes a command to teach others to obey Jesus - and Jesus' teaching is full of things that would be considered 'social action'. This

barely gets mentioned - good works should be done as obedience, the authors say, but not as a priority for the church. To me, if you're arguing that a church should be fulfilling the Great Commission, then because that includes teaching people to obey, ie loving our neighbour etc - this shows that social action IS as important as evangelism etc. At least, the teaching of it is. And presumably, Jesus was not meaning that we should be 'do as I say, not as I do'.

What is frustrating is that the book frequently criticises others for twisting scripture and reading their own political views into it - yet to me, that is exactly what these authors are doing.

I fear this book is becoming quite influential in certain quarters, and that worries me. They say they don't want to discourage social action, but to me their argument could only do this. Jesus told us in language as plain as he could, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, to 'go and do likewise'. Woe betide those of us who ignore this.

Andres Vera says

This was a great book. I know many people who want to be "on mission" but end up being "on mission" for very different things. This book, as would be expected, helpfully and thoroughly answers the question, "What is the mission of the church?" It also gives helpful categories for how to differentiate between the commands given to individual Christians and the commandments given to churches. Perhaps the most helpful section of the book, however, is the section where the authors biblically integrate social justice (and show how loosely used that term is) into the lives of Christians and explain how it relates to the gospel message. Definitely a recommended read.

Brian Collins says

DeYoung and Gilbert argue that the mission of the church is the Great Commission: "the mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering those disciples into churches, that they might worship and obey Jesus Christ now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father" (p. 241). Much of the book provides helpful responses to those who extend the mission of the church so broadly that the core of the Great Commission is minimized or lost. They convincingly argue that the missio dei and the mission of the church do not necessarily coincide, that incarnation is not the best metaphor for church ministry, and that Stott's interpretation of John 21 is not the most accurate. They could have made their argument stronger, however, by canvassing Acts and the Epistles for further indications of the church's mission. They rightly argue that gospel can refer to all the good that results from God's plan of redemption, but they rightly center the gospel on the provision of atonement and how it may be received by individual humans for salvation. They rightly tell the story of Scripture as centered on humans and sin rather than on creation and corruption, but there does seem to be some overcorrection. The Creation Blessing/Mandate gets little play in the redemptive historical survey chapter. In a later chapter it is reduced to something that Adam failed to do, that no other human is tasked with doing, and that the Second Adam will accomplish apart from our work. This incorrectly ties the Creation Blessing with Adam's probationary test. Genesis 1 and 9 present the Creation Blessing as something that all humans have, even though it is now twisted by the Fall. It is not uniquely Adamic. DeYoung and Gilbert view the kingdom of God as a spiritual reign of God in men's hearts. While Ladd, whom they draw on, is correct that "reign" rather than "realm" is foremost in the NT concept of kingdom, it is difficult to reduce the NT

teaching about the kingdom to the spiritual realm alone. Involved is the regeneration of all things. They do get this right in their chapter about the new heavens and the new earth, in which the carefully delineate what we can and cannot say about continuity and discontinuity between the two. DeYoung and Gilbert rightly correct loose talk about building the kingdom or bringing in the kingdom and instead point out that Christians await the kingdom. Even so, there ought to be an emphasis on living consistently with the anticipated kingdom in one's present vocations. Two chapters cover the important topic of social justice, and a third deals with doing good works. They show both with social justice passages demand and the correct sloppy interpretations and applications of these passages. DeYoung and Gilbert helpfully show how to avoid pitfalls that equate social justice with particular political programs. They distinguish between the institutional church and the organic church and note that Christians as individuals sometimes must do certain things that the institutional church is either forbidden or permitted but not required to do. Overall, DeYoung and Gilbert have tackled a complex subject and gotten a great deal right. What is more, they have offered a correction to common misconceptions. They could make their argument stronger in the future by reconsidering their treatment of the extent of the Creation Blessing and of the nature of the kingdom.

James Ritchie says

Very light, easy and conversational style (always appreciated!).

The authors argue that the church's mission is essentially to make disciples. They say God's mission and the church's mission aren't exactly the same. God is the redeemer, the church isn't. Instead they are representatives, witnessing to God's redemptive work in Christ.

Their stuff on Jesus' mission statements is gold. Jesus says, I came to preach, call sinners and lay down my life as a ransom for many.

Worthy of a read, especially for all those (eg pastors, ministry leaders) looking at the many needs in the world and trying to figure out what on earth the church should be focusing on.

David Varney says

A hearty 5 stars from me. I guzzled this one up! As one recommendation from the back cover puts it, 'the kind of biblical sanity we need at this moment.' He is right. Clearly lays out a biblical case for the mission of the church, cutting through a lot of waffle in the process. Lucid, chastising at points, and greatly clarifying, I warmly recommend this book to any church leader.

Chris Baik says

I appreciated this book, especially being involved in a church with many younger working adults and college students in highly liberal surroundings.

The book essentially focuses on the fact that "social justice" isn't the main goal of the church; it's discipleship. And though it doesn't discourage social justice, it's a subtle distinction that must be kept for the

church to remain the church and not to become some non-profit humanitarian aid organization. I appreciate this emphasis because I don't think it's necessarily very popular, nor is it easy to fight the tide or argue against guilt-motivated statements like, "God told us to love the nations. Why don't you have a heart for _____ (insert remote country here)?" On the other hand, we can make excuses that since it's the main goal, we don't have to do it.

In sum, discipleship is a higher goal that subsumes social justice, and that focus allows us to have a sense of priority when it comes to making decisions for a local church especially when peoples' preferences are prone to shift and change over time.

The book also does a good job summarizing and reminding us of the centrality and importance of the Gospel, and it's very clearly written and does a good job addressing some of the most common confusions in our day and age. I will say it does get a little bit long in parts, but I suppose it's good to be thorough.

John says

Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert are both pastors. They preach on a weekly basis in towns with universities and passionate young people who don't want to waste their life but want to be on mission. And there's the elusive word: mission. Slick like water in our hands, the word gives way to countless definitions and usages, agendas and abuses, leaving many Christians and churches confused about their mission. Answering the question of what the church ought to be doing is controversial. Enter DeYoung and Gilbert.

Careful Work of Definition

DeYoung and Gilbert do the difficult work of defining the mission of the church, supporting their view by answering objections with reasonable responses to difficult social and economic concerns. They argue that the mission of the church can be found in the Great Commission passages: "[T]o go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father."

However, the authors do not say the church should ignore social justice. Rather, they are concerned that the newfound missional zeal can put hard and fast oughts on churches where there should be "an inviting can."

Finishing the definitional spadework, the authors spend a good portion of the book pinning the discussion of the church's mission in the context of the (1) entire narrative of the Bible, (2) definition of the gospel, and (3) an "already/not yet" understanding of the kingdom. None of these chapters give any surprises.

However, the chapter on the definition of the gospel does make some helpful clarifications. The casual observer of debates over the gospel's definition may assume that Gilbert, based on his book *What Is the Gospel?*, defines the gospel in terms of the question, "What is the message a person must believe in order to be saved?" (what the authors call a "zoom lens perspective"). But they also explain in this new volume what they call a "wide-angle" perspective of the gospel that includes the entire good news of Christianity, which is about "all the great blessings that flow from that, including God's purpose to remake the world." All the great news of Christianity (wide lens), according to DeYoung and Gilbert, flow from the message of repentance and faith in the atoning cross of Christ (zoom lens). That center must hold. Without it, the greater blessings of the new creation are not ours to have.

Now to Everything Controversial

Throughout the book, the authors are very careful to make their conclusions from the Bible. But after several chapters of groundwork, they come to the classic “social justice” texts and give them the ol’ “they don’t say what you think they say” treatment.

It’s important to point out that the authors are working in an historical-redemptive framework, based upon their chapter on the narrative of the Bible. When these texts are understood in their canonical place, application for forced redistribution programs or disparaging the disparity between rich and poor seem superficial.

For example, Leviticus 25 (the Year of Jubilee) is a popular passage for social-justice advocates. When we understand the passage in redemptive history and the closer context of Leviticus, a few things caution us against using the text for radical social applications: (1) We are not in an agrarian society. (2) Our property is not allocated by God, particularly assigned for specific tribes of Israel. (3) Our economy is not a fixed pie of wealth where the rich get rich on the backs of the poor, but rather in our modern economy, wealth can be created. (4) We are not under the Mosaic Law and aren’t promised a miraculous harvest on the sixth year. And finally, (5) most of us are not Jews, and the distinction of foreigner and Israelite was very important to Leviticus 25.

Even so, the authors do not want us to undersell what the Bible says about the poor and social justice. Put very aptly, they write, “To be a Christian, then, is to receive God’s good gifts and enjoy them the most, need them the least, and give them away most freely.”

DeYoung and Gilbert’s treatment of the new heavens and new earth offers a particularly important caution. They are concerned that “there are a number of people who have argued that we as Christians at least have a hand in the creation of the new heavens and new earth—that we partner with God in his mission to restore the cosmos.” This is at best confusing and at worst dangerous. The new heavens and new earth is God’s gift, through the gospel, and we simply receive it. It is “in all its parts . . . for us, and not in the least by us.”

An Important Proposal

DeYoung and Gilbert make some significant and practical proposals for the local church and their social involvement. I’ll mention one of them. They propose a “moral proximity” principle, which helps churches understand who we are not only in obligation to help by way of proximity, but also who are we morally obligated to help. The key word, of course, is obligated. While AIDS work is good, is a church a “gospel-less” church if it does not engage in it? The authors are right to say no, but the principle is not meant to “make us more cavalier to the poor. [I]t should free us from unnecessary guilt and make us more caring toward those who count on us most.”

This may be one of the more helpful portions of the book for local churches concerned not only with global troubles but also their community concerns. How they decide to use their resources can be difficult, and this principle is a good one to help them decide.

But What About Discipleship?

In these rough-and-tumble debates over the mission of the church, DeYoung and Gilbert are on the side of the angels, I believe. They make clear but not simplistic conclusions about difficult issues while keeping their fingers in the biblical text. Their conclusions will not be popular with everyone, but those who want to

refute them must be as biblically and theologically sophisticated. That won't be an easy task.

But with some caution, I'd suggest we not make such a sharp distinction between acts of public justice and the mission of the church. DeYoung and Gilbert are very clear that works of justice are not somehow sub-Christian, but "tasks like disciple making, proclamation, church planting, and church establishment constitute the mission of the church." And they go on to emphasize, "We as Christians should be marked by a posture of love and generosity toward our neighbors, and that includes everyone, according to Jesus, from our best friends to our worst enemies."

So if having a posture of generosity for all people and a desire for justice in our communities (though never perfect until Christ returns) are marks of being a born-again Christian, then shouldn't equipping believers to demonstrate these marks with wisdom and care be a part of our discipleship and, therefore, within our larger understanding of the church's mission?

Yes, with bold font and yellow highlighter, I agree with DeYoung and Gilbert that central to the church's mission is the Great Commission. And we need to keep the main thing the main thing. But just as the authors argue for a zoom and wide lens understanding of the gospel, can we not do the same thing with the mission of the church? With the proclamation of God's Word the center of the church's mission, can we not say the wide lens mission includes equipping Christians to have wisdom and understanding when laboring for justice?

Nevertheless, I want to put both arms around DeYoung and Gilbert's thesis and hug it. It's the most clearly biblical treatment on the subject I know of. They are clear and gracious towards their opponents, putting them in the best light possible and sympathizing with difficult questions. I hope they get the widest of hearings and that more people think they're right than wrong.

originally posted here: <http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-re...>

Justin Lonas says

Among evangelical Christians these days, there is a groundswell movement toward cultural transformation—not simply to reach the world with the Gospel of Christ but to do the work of renewing communities and creation as a whole to make ready for the new heavens and the new earth. This philosophy goes by several names with different shades of meaning: social justice, kingdom building, missional ministry, shalom, etc.

Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert have written *What Is the Mission of the Church?* to address this "mission drift" and call the Church to remember that its specific priority is the proclamation of salvation—the redemption of mankind from the righteous wrath of a holy God through the shed blood of His Son Jesus Christ.

Though their aim is to correct a popular level misconception, the authors rightly critique the theologians and pastors who have propagated exegetical and hermeneutical faults to drive the movement. They are careful and nuanced in their argument, but pull no punches when expositing the key passages used as source texts for the other side of the debate (Gen. 12, Lev. 19, Isa. 58, Amos 5, Matt. 25, etc.). The level of scholarship employed and the winsome tone of the book make their case a strong one. The book is not meant to be a polemic against an opposing viewpoint, but rather a plea for all believers to let Scripture, not culture,

determine the focus of our efforts in this world.

DeYoung and Gilbert are not attempting to undermine the good work done by believers in various venues, rather they criticize such alternative interpretations of the Church's core mission as "putting hard 'oughts' where there should be inviting 'cans'." That is, they warn against confusing the good things that Christians may be individually called to do with the overarching goal that the Church gathered must pursue.

They carefully define "mission" as the central priority of the Church to which all other activities point and provide support. They point out repeatedly that the Church is given its mission specifically by Christ, and that its mission is distinct from (though part of) the overall mission of God in restoring a fallen creation—our mission is not exactly the same as God's mission, and we shouldn't take that unobtainable responsibility on ourselves.

Beyond simply articulating the pitfalls of a misdirected mission (i.e., that doing all manner of social good at the expense of Gospel proclamation fails to achieve eternal good), the authors issue a rallying cry for the Church to recapture the excitement and joy that comes from pursuing Christ's commission to us. They remind readers that what ultimately leads to the transformation believers seek in the world is the blood of Christ and the work of the Spirit, and they challenge believers to remember that God chooses to break into the lives of the lost through the faithful proclamation of His Gospel through the Church. They make the foundational point that the only thing the Church does that no one else in the world will do is to make disciples of Jesus, and that this should be our driving motivation.

What Is the Mission of the Church? is a well-written, well-researched, and much needed book—it might be the most important Christian book of 2011. The implications of our interpretation of our mission for the Body of Christ are tremendous.

Mike says

The main point of this book is to address what exactly is and (more importantly) what is not the mission of the church. They are concerned that evangelicals are getting too swept up in fighting poverty and social injustice and have forgotten our mission is discipleship. I think I understand their heart to make sure we keep the proclamation of the gospel the main thing in the church and not making social justice or helping the poor our primary calling. This is the strength of the book - word ministry is a non-negotiable and ought to be at the heart of all we do. As a conservative Presbyterian pastor I say amen. However, I do think there is some unbiblical narrowing of what the Bible calls us to be and do in the world.

Perhaps a better way to say it is that the authors end up disconnecting word and deed ministry and at times pits them against each other when there is no need to do so. There were a lot of frustrating false dichotomies running through the book - sacred vs. secular, spiritual vs. physical, word vs. deed, faith vs. works, private piety vs. public justice. Sure, Matthew calls us to make disciples of all nations but that includes obeying all that Jesus taught - including the church MUST be salt and light and not do away with one letter of the Torah (which calls us to protect the rights of the poor and the immigrant, etc.). So the book is not successful because their thesis that our mission is to make disciples full stop does not acknowledge that making disciples by definition requires putting God's Word into practice. They acknowledge a place for good works in the life of a believer but do not connect them to our discipleship or our mission.

The Bible from the beginning shows us that God's people are called by God for the sake of the world and that one of the main ways we bear witness to God is by being a holy people (Genesis 18:19). The OT sets the trajectory for the mission of God's people that continues into the NT and much of this has been understood well for the first time in the past generation of evangelicals like Christopher Wright. The authors dismiss much of this gain in my opinion. In fact I think they misread Wright and Stott at times. Stott and Wright affirm the primacy of the Word, so they are really quibbling with those who abuse Stott and Wright and in wanting to guard the primacy of the Word they end up with a reductionistic mission.

Their doctrine of creation and its connection to our redemption is also a weak spot in the book. Our redemption is returning us to properly functioning humans again and this is a huge component of any faithful witness. No one would dispute that our primary problem in the Bible is our alienation from God, but the Bible also says a lot about our alienation from one another and from the creation. We can't say that our salvation has nothing to do with reconciliation with others and with a restored ruling over the creation.

The book is to its credit focused on working through Scriptural texts. However, there are some ridiculous statements such as "God's old covenant people are never exhorted to engage in intentional cross-cultural mission" and "there is not a single example of Jesus going into a town with the stated purpose of healing or casting out demons." They want to affirm the importance of "demonstration" as well as "declaration" but their treatment texts that connect demonstration to our mission they undermine because some have abused them. However, the abuse does not negate their proper use, and I'm concerned their handling of such texts will lead many to deemphasize the importance of good works in witnessing to a community.

The fallacy of the excluded middle runs through the book as well. They pit their view against an extreme view that very few actually hold and leave out addressing the middle positions. I think many "missional" types reading the book would find themselves saying quite often, "that's not what I believe" or "that's not a fair summary of my view". Perhaps some have changed God's mission into saving whales and poverty programs and forgotten evangelism. Well, there is a middle position that keeps proclamation and evangelism central while also seeing a life lived in obedience to serve others even outside the body as a nonnegotiable to our mission (Titus and 1 Peter make this strong connection in the NT as do many other texts in the OT and NT).

I see their heart and I understand their intention - to rein in some evangelicals who are a little too "missional" in the sense that the central mission loses focus on discipleship and specifically evangelism. However, I do not think this book will succeed with the intention, unfortunately. I think any of these types will be further pushed away by the unfairness of their statements about "missionals" (for example, missionals basically don't carefully read the Bible!). The more likely outcome of the book is that those who are too comfortable in their churches will use this book to justify staying comfortable and not reach out to their neighbors with word or deed. This is not their intention, and in a sense it is not their fault. I think it is their fault for not discerning what most conservative churches need (which is of course their primary audience and they know that!).

I would recommend this review by Ed Stetzer, he can say it way better than I can:
<http://thegospelcoalition.org/themeli...>

I would also recommend this wonderful sermon by Dr. Brian Fikkert (prof. at Covenant College) on primacy of the Word but also the necessary marriage between word and deed in our calling to the world. Also, he's tall: <http://www.hopeingod.org/sermon/how-h...>

Kent says

I had difficulty with this book, from the cover on. The title, "What Is The Mission Of The Church?" suggests that God's Church is assigned a singular "mission." From my perspective, when a question is written ineffectively, the answers will be ineffective too. From the beginning of the book it is clear to me that the authors want, in fact, they need the Church to have, rather than a dynamic presence and ministry, a singular and linear mission.

It seems to me that the authors draw bold, solid lines where scripture draws no line at all or at best a dotted line.

My perception of the author's intent is more along the lines of "What Isn't The Mission of the Church?" With great effort they suggest that proper exegesis will reveal that the Bible clearly states everything the Church should not consider her mission. Unfortunately, this isn't so.

What part of Jesus' life was not in alignment with the nature and character of God? Part of the power of Jesus' ministry was that he only did what he saw his Father doing. At that point, talk of "the mission" would be unhelpful, unless one were to say, "Jesus' mission was alignment with the Father."

Maybe the Church doesn't have a mission, but an invitation to align with the Living God in all of life. To somehow suggest that alignment with the work of God in the world does not include feeding the hungry, clothing those without clothes, and providing homes for those who are homeless, is absurd. And this idea that scripture somehow discourages helping the non-Christian poor is equally bizarre.

The argument for "Moral Proximity" is unconvincing too. Any way you slice the pie, you can not conclude that God leads his children by some sense of moral proximity. The Incarnation nukes the idea of moral proximity.

Somehow, in all the scholarly approach to the texts, we can lose the simple message of the Gospel, "For God so loved the world that he gave..."

My take is that the Church is invited to do what the Father is doing and, what ever it is, it includes loving with both words and deeds.

Clayton Hutchins says

Re-read it for school. DeYoung and Gilbert argue that the mission of the church is, simply, the Great Commission described in Matt 28:18–20. They critique views which place "social justice" or serving the poor or transforming the city in the definition of the church's mission. While Christians should do all sorts of good works—including works of generosity toward the impoverished—the church's mission is not to serve the poor, but to make disciples of Jesus. Like I said, their message is worth heeding and gives good food for thought, but I myself wonder if their proposal is ultimately a bit reductionistic. Is it merely optional for local churches to have "mercy ministries" that reach out to the poor among them? DeYoung and Gilbert seem to think so. I'm not so sure. Is it meaningful to say that Christians individually should indeed help the poor, but "helping the poor" is nowhere to be found in an articulation of the church's mission? DeYoung and Gilbert say, "Yes." But I find this a bit confusing. I'm not sure if I would separate out mercy ministry so far away

from the mission of the church as DeYoung and Gilbert do. Still, it was a good read. Their critiques are often sensible and worth heeding—especially re "building the kingdom," social justice, and the legalism that calls to radical sacrifice can all too easily fall into.

David says

This one was hard for me. The reason they wrote the book was unclear during most of my reading of it. The point was to emphasize the church's responsibility to spread the good news and to disciple new members. And the authors kept emphasizing that this was instead of helping the poor. I have done some writing calling for balance and emphasizing the need to help the poor, so I was a little put off by the repeated calls for the church not to do that. The trick here is that they see the church as different from a collection of its members. They accept the legitimacy of the institutional church and make a case that its mission is different from that of its members, but all the time protesting that they are not suggesting that we not set out to help the poor. In the final analysis, I still wonder why they thought the book was worth writing. What I did gain from it, I suppose is what they really intended anyway: a renewed commitment to the spread of the gospel of salvation and grace.

David Rathel says

Though this book has generated much controversy, I personally found it to be excellent. In fact, I cannot recommend it any higher!

When reviewing this book, one must remember what DeYoung and Gilbert are writing against, namely, the more radical elements of the missional church movement. Some missional church proponents "flatten" the church's mission by trying to make every good activity (creation care, social work, etc.) an essential part of the church's work. While DeYoung and Gilbert argue that a church certainly CAN do these things, they intend to remind us here that the primary, essential mission of Christ's church is the Great Commission, i.e., the spread of the Christian Gospel.

Cho Yim says

Good book that makes very good arguments that the Great Commission is the mission of the church. Tackles the modern day trend to make the church's mission "social justice" or "good works" or "transform society," etc. The church's role is not to bring change from the outside, but to bring change from the inside. The chapter on social justice is probably one of the best cases I have read on why it is not the mission of the church (though a good thing and an individual call all Christians have). This book helps to focus back on the church's actual mission, helping the church keep the main thing the main thing.
