

# MOBIOLOGY

## An Introduction

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Over recent centuries, the development and refining of missiology has helped the Church focus on the missional task at hand. It may have begun in the colonial context with a geographical focus but it has been considerably refined in recent decades to direct our attention to people groups and today to the more than 7,000 people groups which 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 a lack of harvesters for the harvest fields of the world. To address this, mission agencies, which have modernly been the custodians of the outworking of missiology, have employed mobilizers to actively recruit personnel for cross-cultural ministry. Their efforts have been rewarded but, sadly, with fewer workers recruited than the ripened harvest fields of each generation have demanded. And worrisomely, these traditional recruitment methods are seeing fewer workers responding than in the past.

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 mobiology steps in.

### So, what exactly is *mobiology*?

Mobiology is the study of 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 through mobiology 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>

Through the lens of mobiology, God is accomplishing two very different purposes at the same time. 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—essential preparation for His eternal age of the new heaven and a new earth

<sup>1</sup> Joshua Project [www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net)

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1; Isa. 65:17

(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 fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

## Mobiology and Missiology—Two Complementary Theologies

Whereas missiology focuses on the harvest field, mobiology focuses on the harvest force. Missiology focuses on what God does through His people; mobiology focuses on what God does in His people through engaging them on His mission. Both missiology and mobiology have their eyes focused on the harvest of this age, with mobiology focused also on the “harvested” for God's glorious age to come (Rom. 8:18).

Mobiology was always meant to be missiology's indispensable companion. Without mobiology by its side, missiology has been like a single parent trying to attend to all the needs of the family on its own. With mobiology's absence, mission agencies may have embraced missiology's vital message, but local churches seldom have. A precious number of harvesters have been mobilized but seldom has all of God's people. Mission departments 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 that such a partnership could achieve.

## Mission as Defined by Mobiology

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 also defining it differently as cross-cultural ministry and often to unreached peoples. If we are 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 needs a shared meaning within the Body of Christ. Like in any good marriage, this is an opportunity for all partners to grow in their

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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 could be defined 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 own people group, to plant churches, and to make disciples. The third phase is 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, in reference to the Gospel becoming a witness or “a testimony to all nations,” Jesus concluded with, *And then the end will come* (Matt. 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* (Mark 13:10). I have found the writings of Chris Wright particularly helpful and have appreciated his more holistic defining of mission.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Wright, Christopher J.H. 2006 *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, Downers Grove: IVP; Wright, Christopher J.H. 2010 *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, Zondervan Academic.

## Recapturing 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 appointed leaders such as Moses, Joshua, and David to help His people live on mission to grow and expand God's mission agenda. Prophets also were appointed to keep His people focused. Prophets would call an often wayward people back to God and challenge them to live for the reason they were called to be God's chosen people (Hag. 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 (Luke 11:49). For this reason, in the New Testament we find Paul 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 on the missional task from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and into 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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In fact, mobiology sees all of 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 confusing trumpet sounds and a Church ill-prepared to live a life on mission with God (1 Cor. 14:8). The people of God, in general, are not being prepared for works of missional service as ought to be happening and thus the bride is not making herself ready as she ought to be doing (Eph. 4:12; Rev. 19:7–8).


Should these leadership ministries catch this understanding of the centrality of mission, we would see a

revival of mission and of spirituality and holiness. This is what God designed wholehearted involvement with Him on mission to lead to. And, in my opinion, this is what the Church globally is increasingly hungry for. 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 reaching the world's remaining unreached and unsaved than in our entire history—geographically, culturally, and linguistically. The mobilization of all God's people into mission with God and every church mobilized to be a missional church just makes so much sense!



## A Glorious Day Ahead for Mission

Imagine every church being a missional church, facilitating all God's people into a life on mission with God. Imagine every church not just nurturing God's people to be blessed but equipping them to be a blessing. Imagine all God's people celebrating not just what they have been saved from but what they have been saved for. Imagine true followers of Jesus connected to the Head of the Church and to the Lord of the Harvest doing exactly what Jesus said they would do, *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me* (John 10:27). As a result, the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into His harvest field on an unprecedented scale (Matt. 9:38). Imagine local churches and mission agencies meaningfully connected as these two redemptive structures were supposed to be connected.<sup>4</sup> Imagine the harvest fields of the world reaped to His satisfaction and His bride having made herself ready!

This is the vision of mobiology! 

<sup>4</sup> Winter, Ralph D. 1974 "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission" *Missiology*, 2:1, 121–139.