

What is the mission of God?

A pastor I know offers the following words at the end of every worship service:

“When you leave this place you are going into the mission field where people are in need of a kind, caring, helpful word and God’s sending you to get the message out. The joy and peace in this life comes in sharing what you’ve received. So go in peace to experience the joy in the name of the living God who loves you in Jesus and who empowers you to be witnesses through the Holy Spirit.”

With those words he reminds people that we are instruments of God’s mission in the world.

The question that emerges is, “What is mission?”

Volumes have been written attempting to articulate what mission means. It can be easy to be confused with words like mission and missions. A simple “s” can change the focus.

- **Missions** (plural) are the missionary activities of the church (e.g., Faith Promise, Habitat for Humanity, collecting school supplies, supporting missionaries around the world, participating in the free produce market, etc.). Missions involve more than money; missions are our engagement with people, or participation in the mission of God.
- **Mission** (singular) refers to the mission of God. The *missio Dei*, or mission of God is understood as: God the Father sending the Son; God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit; and, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. God’s mission expresses the good news that God is with us and for us. God’s mission gives the church purpose and direction.

The mission of the church flows from the mission of God. The church is an instrument for the mission of God, from which we take our direction.

I don’t know about you, but I can’t live into God’s mission alone. I need the church. David Bosch reminds us, “To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.”

When God is a fountain of sending love, we have the great privilege of responding. May all we say and do help us to live into the mission of God.