

Why Failure to Live on Mission is a Worship Problem

Sometimes we think the way to engage people in mission is to make sure we get the right information to them.

- If we just preach the Bible, people will evangelize.
- If we show people the commands in Scripture to care for the poor, people will develop a heart for mercy ministry.
- If we make people aware of our need for more volunteers, people will sign up.

In other words, **we perceive a knowledge problem**. People need to know how to apply the Scriptures better, and once they know what they need to do, they'll do it.

Not So Fast

But this isn't the way long-term change takes place. Most of the time, when we are marked by missional apathy, it's not that we don't *know* what we ought to be doing; it's that we don't *want* to be doing what we ought to be doing.

In our efforts to increase missional fervor, we can get so focused on giving people more information, or better application, that **we forget that our main task is to lead people to exultation**. That's a fancy word for "worship." We exult, we delight in the Savior, we revel in him. Exaltation of the Savior leads to exultation of the saints.

Lack of mission is rarely a knowledge problem; it's a worship problem. We don't have any trouble talking about the things we love most. Whenever we find something worthy of attention, we talk about it.

The same is true of our relationship with Christ. **The more we are in awe of his worthiness, the more likely we are to speak of him to others and serve others in his name.**

Weighty Truths and Heartfelt Worship

Sometimes people worry that the rough edges of Christianity will lead us to avoid serving our neighbor and sharing the gospel. So we play down some of the harder truths of the gospel, not denying them of course, but not giving them their proper weight.

The reality of hell is an example. There are all sorts of ways to downplay the truth of one's eternal destiny; the most common is simply to not speak of it, or to recast salvation as dealing more with this life than the next.

But what happens when the reality of hell is no longer grounding our talk about salvation and the gospel? We miss out on a moment of worship.

What Makes Us Marvel More

Consider this scenario. You're walking with a friend, not paying much attention to where you are headed. Suddenly, your friend grabs your arm and yanks you backwards. At first, you are annoyed that you've been stopped so suddenly. But then your friend points in front of you. Sure enough, he had a reason. You were about to step off into a ditch, where you might have broken your foot or sprained your ankle. Your annoyance turns to gratitude for his "saving you" from possible harm. You thank your friend and move on.

Consider the same scenario, except this time your friend doesn't pull you back from a ditch, but a cliff. You were about to fall to your death, hundreds of feet below. What would your reaction be in this situation? Not just a word of "thanks." You'd be crying and hugging your friend, overflowing with gratitude for the way he just saved your life.

In the same way, **when we minimize the severity of God's judgment for sin, we are less inclined to stand in awe of the marvelous salvation Christ has provided for us.** We think we're pushing aside an obstacle when we neglect the reality of judgment. But what we're actually doing is pushing away one of the truths that most leads us to worship. The reality of God's grace is all the more amazing the more we see our sin and what it deserves.

Feel the Truth

A gospel-centered teacher isn't satisfied to see his people *learn* truths about God. A gospel-centered leader wants them to *feel* those truths. To feel the full weight of God's provision for us in Christ. To have the heart's affections stirred to worship the loving God who has saved us by his grace and incorporated us into his family.