

STANDING *in The gap*



The missions gap

At many churches, there can be a wide gap between what the missions pastor knows and what the congregation knows and how they live.

These gaps can be divided into two categories:

- The Knowledge Gap: This is when people in the congregation are illiterate about the current state of world missions as well as why they need to even care about missions.
- The Action Gap: This gap occurs when congregants simply don't know HOW to get involved in missions.

In our world today, being involved in missions is more accessible than ever before. But many people don't even know why missions is important.

The Barna Group did a survey on practicing Christians and Pastors, asking if "Missions is a mandate for all Christians."*

- 85% of pastors aligned with this statement
- Only 42% of practicing Christians aligned with this statement

*<https://www.barna.com/research/missions-mandate/>



If practicing followers of Jesus don't even know that they are called to missions wherever they are at, then why would they want to get involved?

The Theological anchor: MISSIO DEI



“The challenge of every preacher is to enable God's revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of the men and women of today.”

-John Stott

Stott's observation highlights a challenge familiar to every pastor and teacher: profound theological concepts are often difficult to communicate in ways that are both clear and practical. Here are a few missiological concepts explained simply to try to help:

Missio Dei

- The idea that mission is not just an activity of the Church but is rooted in the very nature of God Himself. Mission is not just something God does - it's who He is.
- Mission begins with God Himself. The Father sends the Son, then the Son sends the Spirit, and finally, the Spirit sends the Church. Mission is not something the Church invented; it is the ongoing expression of God's redemptive love.
- Mission is not simply one of the Church's responsibilities; it is part of the Church's very identity. As the body of Christ, we are a sent people, partnering with God in His mission to the world.

from The church To The Church

A local church is a group of Jesus followers who meets together to worship Christ, study the Word, fellowship together, and pray under the guidance of church leadership.

The Global Church is the worldwide body of Christ. It includes all followers of Jesus in every nation, and in every time in history.



Missions is not an extracurricular activity of a church, but the purpose of the Church.



standing in the gap — WHAT'S NEXT?

TEAM's research shows that you already understand these biblical truths and theological concepts. The challenge is not a lack of knowledge but the reality of ministry. Between preaching, counseling, administration, staff leadership, and countless other responsibilities, the tyranny of the urgent can leave little capacity for intentionally shepherding your church beyond supporting missions to truly becoming a missional people.

The good news is that cultivating a missional church does not require a new program, a larger budget, or another ministry initiative competing for your attention. It begins with a shift in how your people understand who they are. As a shepherd, your role is not to manufacture missionary passion but to faithfully remind God's people of their identity and create space for the Holy Spirit to work. A simple way to think about this process is through three movements:

REDEFINE, REFRAME, AND RELEASE





redefine

Start addressing the knowledge gap by helping your congregation redefine mission as the identity of the church. Integrate this idea regularly into your sermons. No dramatic shift or annual “Missions Sunday” is required. Instead, consistently point out themes of sending, witness, kingdom expansion, and God's heart for contexts with least access to the Gospel as you teach through Scripture.

When preaching through Genesis, highlight God's promise to bless all nations through His people. In the Gospels, emphasize Jesus' invitation to join His mission. In Acts, celebrate the ordinary believers who carried the Gospel wherever they went. Help your congregation see that mission is not merely something the church does. It is part of who the church is.

Over time, these small but intentional reminders create a new understanding:

Followers of Jesus are not simply consumers of ministry services, they are sent people participating in God's redemptive work in the world.



reframe

As you start redefining mission, help your congregation reframe it not as the calling of a select few who “go over there,” but as the calling of everyone in the Church, with some serving here and others serving there. As John Stott says, God wants to use the “whole Church to bring the whole Gospel to the whole world.”

Practical ways to help your congregation make this shift include:

- Regularly sharing stories of everyday faithfulness, not just overseas missionary success stories.
- Celebrating members who live missionally in their workplaces, neighborhoods, schools, and community organizations.
- Inviting missionaries to speak not only about where they serve but also about why every believer is called to participate in God's mission.
- Using language that connects local and global mission rather than separating them.
- Asking application questions in sermons that move people from information to participation: *Who has God placed around you? How might you demonstrate and share the Gospel this week?*

Also, help people understand the difference between spiritual need and Gospel access. Everyone around them has spiritual need, and helping them identify that need is important. But Gospel access is different. It refers to whether people have a realistic opportunity to hear, understand, and respond to the message of Jesus through a believer, a church, or resources available in their language and culture.

As the congregation begins to see mission as a lifestyle rather than a destination, they will recognize opportunities that have been present all along. The goal is not to convince everyone to move overseas. The goal is to help every believer understand their role in mission--wherever God has placed them.

release

Your role is to shepherd and teach, not to force outcomes.

Once you've started redefining and reframing, release your people to the Holy Spirit. Trust that the same God who calls people to Himself is also able to lead them into His mission. Some will discover a passion for international missions. Others will become faithful ambassadors in their workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities. Many will take small yet significant steps of obedience that only eternity will fully reveal.

Resist the temptation to measure success solely by visible results or immediate commitments. Transformation often happens gradually. Your responsibility is to faithfully cast the vision, teach God's Word, and create opportunities for obedience. The Holy Spirit's responsibility is to convict, call, empower, and send.

When pastors embrace this posture, the burden becomes lighter. You are not responsible for manufacturing missionaries. You are responsible for making disciples. As disciples grow in their understanding of God's mission, many will naturally begin to live as the sent people they were always created to be.



partnership

As you lead your church toward becoming a missional people, remember that you were never meant to do it alone. God has called the Church to be His primary instrument for mission, but He has also provided organizations that can help churches carry out that calling more effectively.

The right missions partner does not compete with the church's role. It strengthens it.

At TEAM, we believe mission is not the responsibility of a few churches or a few individuals. It is the identity of the Church. Our role is not to replace the local church but to come alongside it, helping bridge the gap between local discipleship and global mission.

As you redefine mission, reframe who it is for, and release your people to the Holy Spirit, consider who can help you take the next step. The right partner can help your church move from simply supporting missions to becoming a people who are actively sent on God's mission, wherever He leads.