

FOREWORD

The local church has always been the primary stakeholder in God's global agenda, at the very epicenter of the Great Commission. But since William Carey set sail for India and the Protestant mission movement was born, there has been a dynamic tension, an ebb and flow, between the modality of the church and the sodality of mission organizations.

For nearly two centuries churches were largely dependent on mission structures for information about what was happening around the world and therefore more inclined to express their vision through the initiatives of mission organizations. Over the past few decades, as the world has become flatter and information democratized, churches have felt empowered to pursue Great Commission initiatives of their own, independently. In some cases, churches have chosen to marginalize or even disregard traditional mission structures, taking on the mantle of a full service mission organization within the framework of the local church.

I am seeing encouraging signs that the relationship between churches and mission organizations is moving beyond the bipolar expression of either dependence or independence toward a healthy interdependence. More churches are realizing just because they can become their own mission agency doesn't mean they should repeat the mistakes of the past. These churches are increasingly willing to learn lessons from the overstocked library of trial and error accumulated by mission agency experience.

David Mays has been in the trenches with churches observing this very important season of change over the past three decades. He has been living and breathing the interface of the Great Commission with the local church through his ministry with pastors, lay leaders

and mission executives. This practical engagement has been built on an amazingly deep and wide foundation of personal development. I believe I could make a compelling case that David Mays has read more books, interviewed more thought leaders and facilitated more mission-focused webinars than anyone in North America (quite possibly the world) in the past thirty-six months.

All this experience and exposure to fresh thinking about how we do mission has uniquely positioned David Mays to write this book. I have repeatedly challenged him to take on projects like this as a means of stewarding all that God has entrusted to him. I encourage you to engage this resource thoughtfully with others who shape the Great Commission initiatives of your church. If you are not on the mission leadership team (or committee or whatever your church has named this group) I encourage you to get copies of this book for them, or at least pass yours along.

I believe you will find this tool to be comprehensive, flexible, practical and doable. In this short resource David covers all the “big bucket” issues your church will face in sorting out how to maximize your potential for engagement in the Great Commission. But he doesn’t try to force you into prefabricated molds of one-size-fits-all thinking. He understands good questions are better than prescriptive answers. As you wrestle with these important issues I believe you will become increasingly convinced there is a practical, doable model in sight that will help unleash the kingdom resources of your church to uniquely contribute to God’s global agenda as the primary Great Commission stakeholder He intends you to be.

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