

# Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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## What is Our Mission?: Part 1

Church leaders are asking the question What is our mission? Like many areas of life, our mission flows out of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and the mission of Jesus had several aspects.

His overall mission, what we might call his doxological mission, was to glorify God the Father. The Apostle John records the story of Jesus teaching in the temple during the Feast of Booths. The Jews who heard him speak were amazed wondering how he

The principle mission of Jesus was to glorify God the Father.

could know so much when he had no formal education. Jesus replied to them "My teaching is not Mine; but His who sent me. . . . He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the one who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him" (John 7:16-18). Jesus was seeking the glory of the one who had sent him, a mission that he completed, as he later declared "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do" (John 17:4).

The principle mission of Jesus was doxological, but how did this happen? How did Jesus bring glory to God the Father? Look again at his prayer, for he tells us exactly what he did. "I glorified Thee on the earth, *having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do*" (emphasis added). It was the accomplishment of his earthly mission that brought ultimate glory to the Father.

I say *earthly* mission since it is clear that as part of the Godhead, Jesus had a broad-

based mission that included, among other things, the creating and sustaining of the world. As part of the Godhead, Jesus has many missions, but his earthly mission was to "give eternal life" to all mankind (John 17:2). This was his destiny, and Jesus referred to it throughout the Gospel of John as his *hour*.

Jesus first mentioned it when talking with his mother Mary at the marriage in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11). In reply to Mary's request for him to make more wine, Jesus answered, "My hour has not yet come" (2:4). At first, one might think Jesus was saying that the time for making the wine was not at hand, but as one reads further through John's Gospel, it becomes evident that he meant much more.

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# Those who believe in Jesus Christ have life.

## Jesus came to die on the Cross

Jesus told his brothers “My time is not at hand” and “My time has not yet fully come” (John 7:6, 8). John later commented twice that “His hour had not yet come” (7:30; 8:20). The repetition of the idea of Jesus' hour not at hand gradually increased tension, as the hearers of Jesus' words wondered when his hour will come.

The anticipated announcement came on Palm Sunday. Some Greeks told Philip they wished to see Jesus. Philip referred the request to Andrew, after which they both went to Jesus and told him about the Greek's request. Jesus answered, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12:23). After all of the suspense, Jesus' hour was here. Jesus was speaking about his death. The next verse makes it obvious: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (12:24). By this analogy, Jesus referred to the fact that he must lose his life so others may gain eternal life. It was an act (dying) of which he struggled, as the Son of Man. He asked the Father to save him from this hour, but finally declared “*for this purpose I came to this hour*” (12:27, emphasis mine). It is the hour of his death; his crucifixion for all mankind. It was his hour “to be glorified” (12:23). His death was not a time of tragedy but one of triumph! It was his earthly work!

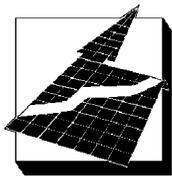
This was the mission that God the Father sent Jesus to accomplish on earth. After Jesus asked the Father to glorify his name, a voice came out of heaven saying “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again” (12:27), which was the Father's response. In this context it must refer to the cross. God the Father was glorified at the cross. In the beginning of his Gospel, John moved quickly away from noting Jesus' mission as Creator (1:3) to his mission as Messiah. “In Him was

life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4) is a continuing theme through the Gospel. Jesus is called both the *life* and the *light* of men, and the two are connected throughout the Gospel. In his mission as Creator, Jesus gave the universe life and light (Genesis 1:1-2:3). John the Baptist came as a witness to the true light (1:6-9). Jesus came as light into the world that he made, but few recognized him, “But, as many as received Him [the true light], to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (10-13). Light and life are connected, to have one is to have the other. John mentions that he recorded certain signs or miracles for the express purpose “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (20:30-31). All of this was connected when Jesus said his hour had come. His earthly mission was simply to die on the cross that all whom God the Father has given him may have eternal life. As Jesus affirmed, “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life.”



Gary L. McIntosh is editor of *Growth Points* and speaks at several leadership events each year.

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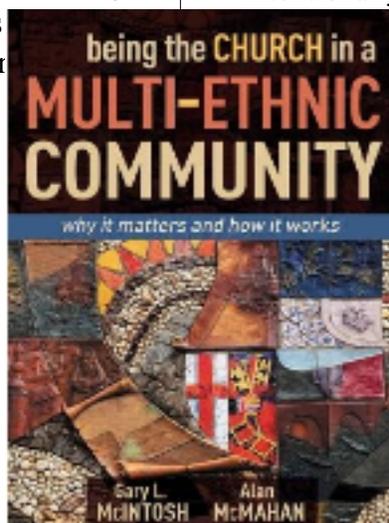
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