

## WORD GAMES: *Missional Scrabble*

by Michael Ruhl

All of a sudden, the conversation changed dramatically. Gone were the laughter, the kinship, and the frivolity of close friends playing a casual game of *Scrabble*. Instead, there were heated innuendos exchanged as jugular veins began to bulge and transform to deeper shades of blue. The reason was quite predictable: One of the players had arranged several tiles to spell out a word that was new and unfamiliar to the other three players. Together, the trio of *protestants* insisted that the strange word on the board was not found in any of the books or articles they had read (or even in the *Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary* lying nearby on the coffee table). Therefore, the word could not be authentic or legitimate.

What is your reaction when someone arranges nine tiles on the *Scrabble* board to spell out the word **m-i-s-s-i-o-n-a-l**? Is the word strange, unfamiliar, and fraught with suspicion? Some see a "red flag" at the appearance of this word because of a perception that the word implies anthropomorphic *action* (human strategies and efforts) instead of theocentric *action* (God working through the appointed means of grace).

On the other hand, are you among those who see the word *missional* as descriptive of God's immutable will for His Church on Earth (Church Militant)?

Though spell check refuses to recognize "missional," it is a word with many powerful and biblical implications that speak clearly to what Almighty God has in mind for His church on earth.

1. *Missional* means actually doing mission work right where you are (not simply having an attitude of caring about missions).
2. *Missional* means adopting the posture of a missionary. This translates to learning about and adapting to (but not adopting) the culture around you, as you remain biblically sound. This missionary posture happens right where you are in community and culture, as well as in the foreign mission field.
3. *Missional* means being intentional and deliberate about reaching people in the community who do not know Jesus as Savior and Lord.

4. *Missional* means being respectful, knowledgeable, and sensitive to the people of the culture God has called us to reach with the Gospel. This is similar to the training and practice of foreign missionaries sent out to engage in trans-cultural mission work in other parts of the world (Acts 1:8).
5. *Missional* means seeking to understand the culture God has sent you to reach. This understanding creates new and effective pathways for communicating the Gospel to the unevangelized
6. *Missional* means knowing and understanding cultural norms, but not allowing those norms to conflict with biblical theology and confession.
7. *Missional* means adapting methods (points of connection) which align with the culture for the sake of communicating the Gospel.
8. *Missional* means that the form of 'church' being planted and nurtured in the culture is thoroughly and continually *biblical, regardless of the cultural context*.

A prominent missiologist (spell check does not like this word also), Ed Stetzer, made this comment while reflecting on the cultural diversity of US cities and communities, "Today you can be a missionary (with 'missional posture') without ever leaving your zip code!"

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. How missional is your congregation?
2. What specific things does your congregation do to be aware of the community where God has placed it?
3. In what compassionate ministries does your congregation engage to meet the needs of those in its community?
4. What specific outreach ministries does your congregation use to share the faith with those in its community?
5. Who is the last person to join your church from the community where it is located? What attracted him or her? How do you know?
6. What is one specific thing you will do to help your congregation be more missional?