

Place Kingdom Concerns First
The Ninth "Essential Practice" of the Missional Congregation
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It felt like scales dropped from my eyes. When reading *The Kingdom of God* by John Bright, I discovered that the kingdom of God (*Basileia tou Theou*) which Jesus proclaimed and spoke about in the parables referred to the **kingship** of God, the process by which God sets up His reign and rule in the hearts and lives of people today. In fact, that phrase had little to do with the realities of heaven in the future.

Congregations which are missional place the highest value on the *growth (advance) of the Kingdom of God*, not on sectarian, denominational or even congregational accomplishments. They hear and heed the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things shall be added to you." As the missional congregation embraces and engages in the mission of God (*missio Dei*), the Holy Spirit brings the presence of God to occupy the territories which the Enemy (Satan) desires to rule.

In his insightful book, *Shaped by God's Heart ~ The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches*, missiologist Milfred Minatrea points to placing Kingdom concerns first as an intense and predictable practice of a missional congregation. Missional church members continually find themselves wrestling with three critical, kingdom questions:

1. How can we develop Kingdom disciples, people who can evidence what the world would look like if God were revered as King?
2. How can we, with integrity, cooperate with, embrace, and move comfortably among other missional Christian believers, rather than compete and criticize?
3. How can we stand for right and oppose every evil that prevents others from experiencing the joy of Kingdom living?

Were the church, through the means of grace, to accomplish the desire of God's heart, every city would display the character of God, the evidence of His kingship and reign. For that purpose, the church is sent into the world. But unfortunately, the presence of Christian churches in an area does not always guarantee a clear representation of the Kingdom. In fact, many congregations often allow their calendars to be filled with many activities that expend the energy of the Body without leading to the advance of God's Kingdom; that is, the accomplishment of God's missional purpose.

So what is the difference? Is such thinking mere legalism, or frenetic work righteousness?! Not at all. Missional congregations understand the reality of spiritual warfare. For the bottom line is that missional congregations are not building *their own kingdoms*. Their first and foremost allegiance is to *God's kingdom* and to its advance.

Their vision is a moment-by-moment, day-by-day shifting of balance of power and control from the domain of Satan to the Kingdom of God.

George Otis Jr., in *City Reaching*, commented, “When the Kingdom of God comes, it comes with fire. It flows like a river of molten lava, consuming every stronghold of the enemy. No institution or sector is left unaffected.”

Scales from eyes continue to fall as we pray the Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven ... ***thy Kingdom come!***

This article is the final article in a series on the 9 characteristics of missional congregations. Access the others from our website: Resources – listed by topic and type – under the topic “Missional congregation.”