



Center for United States Missions

# Mission Moments



## *BiVo: For All the Saints - Part 1*

January 2, 2015 - by Rev. Dr. Peter Meier



These days, in church planting circles, there is no small amount of discussion on the topic of *bi-vocationalism*, the blending of two primary callings. *BiVo* mashes up provision for oneself and one's family together with the calling of every Christian to be engaged in God's mission. *BiVo* challenges church planters and church members alike to live intentionally as missionaries, as Christian witnesses. (See [Making Much of Jesus Through Missional Communities](#), where bi-vocationality was identified as a growth area for both church planters and the church at large).

For this and the next issue of *Mission Moments*, we will take a look at the topic of *vocation* and *BiVocation*, especially as it affects church multiplication. Let's begin with a look at "vocation."

I am convinced that the "vocation" (from the Latin *vocatio* or *vocare*, meaning *to call*) of a Christian is not properly understood in terms of one's *station in life* (father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, worker, employer, etc), but should rather be understood in terms of one's missional calling by virtue of one's baptism into Christ. All those who are baptized into Christ (the church) are given one and the same calling, or vocation, namely to be "witnesses" (Acts 1:8), to be the "sent ones" (John 20:21), partners with God in his mission. This is the *one vocation* of the Baptized, which is then carried out in *whatever station of life* a person may find himself or herself.

This understanding of vocation is a missional or incarnational lifestyle which recognizes the missionary nature of the Christian calling. As Alan Hirsch puts it, "Mission is not limited to the corporate mission of the local church or denomination. Mission must take place in and through every aspect of life. And this is done by all Christians everywhere"

(Hirsch, [The Forgotten Ways](#), page 22). He continues,

If God's central way of reaching this world was to incarnate himself in Jesus, then our way of reaching the world should likewise be *incarnational*... We will need to exercise a genuine identification and affinity with those we are attempting to reach. At the very least, it will probably mean moving into common geography/space and so set up a real and abiding presence among the group. But the basic motive of incarnational ministry is also *revelatory* - that they may come to know God through Jesus (Hirsch, 133).

"Incarnational living" is done in every-day contexts together with the people who live around us in every-day life. This is a *missionary lifestyle*. Missiologist David Bosch simply says, "The Christian faith, I submit, is intrinsically missionary" (Bosch, [Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission](#), page 8), and again, "Christianity is missionary by its very nature, or it denies its very *raison d'être*... The entire Christian existence is to be characterized as missionary existence" (p 9).

Detlev Schulz affirms the missionary nature of the Christian life, "Ideally speaking, we would expect this much: All Christians are involved in mission after having received the good news of their reconciliation with God through Christ" (Schulz, [Mission from the Cross: A Lutheran Theology of Mission](#), page 8). Schulz also quotes Martin Luther's understanding of how faith is always active, which compels Christians to share their faith with others:

O it is a living, busy, active mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them (Schulz, 48).

Schulz also makes reference to Luther's illustration of the Word of God which is proclaimed, as a stone thrown into the water, always making waves rolling further outward, "It is always being more widely known to those who have never heard it before" (Schulz, 48).

The concept of *vocation* is key to understanding the missionary calling of the Christian. Schulz notes,

Vocation contains great mission potential, for it demonstrates how Christians may contribute in the civil sphere toward the promulgation of the Gospel: The Priesthood of All Believers lives out its Christian vocation within their daily occupations and in their sharing responsibility for the corporate witness of the church... Vocation also broadens the scope of mission by taking into consideration that, through their everyday service, Christians contribute to the spread of the Gospel (Schulz, 105).

Traditionally, the church has set certain individuals apart for their missionary service on behalf of all Christians and given them the title, "missionary." At the same time, the church commits itself to encouraging each Christian person to take his or her missionary

responsibility seriously and so actively and intentionally bear witness to Christ. As Robert Scudieri says, "The mission... has been given flesh and blood in the women and men baptized into Christ" (Scudieri, [\*The Apostolic Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Missionary\*](#), 78). And, "As baptism makes the new disciple an evangelist, the Lord's Supper is the food for renewal of the mission urgency. So the life of the missionary becomes the life of every member of the Body of Christ" (Scudieri, 81).

This understanding is stated in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod's [\*A Theological Statement of Mission\*](#), prepared in 1991 by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. Beginning with recognition of the *missio Dei*, "Mission begins in the heart of God, and expresses his great love for the world (*A Theological Statement of Mission*, page 5), the Statement continues with these theses, "6. God's Mission is Our Mission" (*Mission*, 13), and "7. God's Mission is My Mission" (*Mission*, 16). The latter thesis is explained:

In Holy Baptism, God adopted each of us by name into his family, and called us to be involved personally in the task of reaching out to all people with his saving Gospel... Our personal involvement in God's mission takes place wherever we are - wherever God has placed us. Each of us, in our "station" or "calling" in life, is called to serve God and bear witness to His grace... We cannot therefore, leave the work of God's mission to "the church" in general or to "others" who may appear more gifted to the task or to "the pastor." ... Each of us is a personal letter from Christ to the world (2 Cor 3:2-3), telling all who will listen of his grace, mercy and power (*Mission*, 16-17).

To summarize, the mission is God's mission, and those who are baptized into Christ are "co-workers with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9), sent by Him as partners in the *missio Dei*. The *missional church* seeks to emphasize the calling of each Christian person to live out this missionary calling in his or her daily life and context, so that as "elect exiles of the dispersion" (1 Peter 1:1), Christians will see their strategic role and urgency in partnering with God in the family business, which is *His mission*. As Christopher Wright observes, the question for God's people becomes, "not where does God's mission fit into my life, [but] where does my life fit into this great story of God's mission?" (Wright, [\*The Mission of God\*](#), page 534).

This is what many call "the missional life." It is a way of understanding God's call for each of the Baptized, a way of thinking and acting, a way of seeing one's life as that of a gospel seed-sower in one's every-day mission field, not as an *addition to* daily life and work and family, but as an *integral part of* one's daily life and work and family. *Vocation is seeing oneself as a missionary and acting intentionally as such in one's daily station of life.*

*This is the Bi-Vocational calling for all the saints, for every Christian.*



Next time, we'll apply BiVo to church multiplication and planting.

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## Questions for Discussion

Personal or Group Reflection



1. What do the following Scriptures have to say about living bi-vocationally?
  - a. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10
  - b. Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Luke 24:4-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; Galatians 2:20; 1 Peter 1:1-2 etc.
2. Discuss: "Personal meaning can never be found in a role, business card, title or salary. Meaning comes from personal clarity and obedience to what God calls us to do." What does this mean for your life?
3. Discuss: "If none of us got paid, God would still expect us to lead and serve the world."
4. Discuss: "The goal of our existence is to learn how to leverage everything God has given us for His Kingdom/His mission."
5. Discuss: "All our business enterprise is kingdom building. Every second on the job and every penny earned is a resource or leverage that God can use... Your secular work is the soil in which God plants his sacred kingdom work. Therefore your work is not a hindrance to what God is doing, but instead a significant part of what he is doing."

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## Resources You Can Use

Related Books and Links



The above quotes for discussion are taken from Hugh Halter's recent book, [\*\*\*BiVo: A Modern-Day Guide for Bi-Vocational Saints - Leveraging All of Life Into One Calling\*\*\*](#). This is a great resource for bi-vo discussion and planning for planters, pastors, and laity alike. Hugh Halter will be the featured speaker at the NAME meeting, February 25-26 in Phoenix. (*NAME is the North American Mission Endeavor, a group of District Mission Executives, Mission Facilitators, and Mission Partners in the LCMS*).

The references in the text above are all hyperlinked. These are *must-reads* for those

interested in God's mission and Christian vocation.

Thom Rainer's August 12, 2014 blog is worth reading and sharing, [10 Reasons BiVocational Ministry Matters](#).

For those considering Bi-Vocational ministry, Ray Gilder's blog, [The Demands and Benefits of the BiVocational Minister](#), on the LifeWay website is helpful.

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## *What's Happening?*

News from the Center



**C4USM Connections** - is our e-newsletter sent out monthly. It is designed to keep you informed about the training, research, and resources offered by the Center for U.S. Mission. [Click here to subscribe](#).

**Mission Moments** - is our twice monthly mission blog designed to discuss current topics related to church multiplication. [Click here to subscribe](#).

Please pray for these training events in the upcoming months:

### **January 24**

#### **Church Planting Introduction**

Regional Congregation Mission Convocation  
Kearney, NE

### **January 25**

#### **Church Planting Introduction**

Regional Congregation Mission Convocation  
Lincoln, NE

### **January 29**

#### **Church Planting Introduction**

Regional Congregation Mission Convocation  
Mapleton, IA

### **January 30**

#### **Church Planting Introduction**

Regional Congregation Mission Convocation  
Ft. Dodge, IA

### **January 31**

#### **Contagious Believers Conference**

South Wisconsin District

**February 2-3**

**Church Planter Essentials**

Missouri District

**February 5-7**

**Church Planter Assessment Center**

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

**February 26-28**

**Best Practices in Ministry Conference**

Registration is now available. Visit [cclphoenix.org](http://cclphoenix.org) to register. For more information contact Nancy Barton at [nbarton@cclphoenix.org](mailto:nbarton@cclphoenix.org). Please share with your co-workers, friends, and peers. See [Book of Speakers](#) for a complete list of all speakers and sessions.

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