

## Missional Leadership Challenges: Anticipating the Way Forward into God's Future Mission

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The global great commission effort has moved into the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With this new reality, the contribution of this essay will be to issue a three-fold call to sanctified *living*, strategic *leading*, and sensitive *listening*. Each of these missional leadership challenges are coupled with anticipated expectations of the way forward into God's future mission:

Sanctified *living* toward the Savior's *manifestation*: God's future mission will be sanctified, spiritized, and scriptural.

Strategic *leading* toward sustainable *models*: God's future mission will be strategized, structured, and sustainable.

Sensitive *listening* toward surprising *moments*: God's future mission will be spontaneous, sudden, and surprising.

I. Sanctified *living* toward the Savior's *manifestation*: God's future mission will be sanctified, spirited, and scriptural.<sup>1</sup>

We resonate with the revelation of that classic passage on the Second Coming of Jesus

Christ in 1 Thess. 4.13 – 17 and consecrate ourselves with the epistle's closing verses:

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<sup>1</sup>Note the centrality of Exegesis (Word) and Experience (Spirit) at the heart of McClung's "Pentecostal Missiological Paradigm" in Grant McClung, Editor. *Azusa Street and Beyond: Missional Commentary on the Global Pentecostal Charismatic Movement* (Bridge-Logos Publishing, Revised Edition 2012), p.18 (also online at www.MissionsResourceGroup.org).

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it (1 Thess. 5.19 – 23).<sup>2</sup>

It is highly appropriate, even indispensable, for missions leaders to be reminded of sanctified living and personal spiritual growth. This is the Biblical model and expectation. So much of the discussion about the future of world evangelization has to do with knowing facts, statistics, and trends; followed by a call to action according to planned strategies. It is good and necessary to know and do. The triangle of training is only complete, however, when we also experience the *affective* side of learning. This integration is called knowing, doing, and being, with the learning outcome of balancing head, hand, and heart.

There has been a recent growth in missions leadership studies toward spiritual formation in the missions leader.<sup>3</sup> This is of particular importance to the new generation of millennial missions leaders who are longing for transparency and looking for mentors of integrity. “Sanctified living toward the Savior's manifestation” calls for a realization that what we *do* grows out of who we *are*.

The first disciples had the distinction of being sent by Jesus with power from Him. This proceeded, however, out of the *prior* calling to, “...be with him” (Mark 3.13 – 15). God's future mission for both experienced and emerging leaders is an ongoing call to discipleship. It is a commitment to a local church family before it is to a global community. It is internal before it is external. It is private before it is public. It is consecration before commission. It is intimacy with God before initiation of preaching, projects and plans.

We honor the salvation history of a holy God who calls us to holiness and we understand that our future is wedded together with our faithfulness. In the opening chapters of Luke's gospel we have the stories of a connected group of consecrated individuals who

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<sup>2</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptural citations will be from the New International Version (NIV).

<sup>3</sup>Missio Nexus ([www.missionexus.org](http://www.missionexus.org)) and William Carey Library ([www.missionbooks.org](http://www.missionbooks.org)).

experienced the work of the Holy Spirit upon and through them.<sup>4</sup> We witness sanctified living toward the Savior's manifestation in the personal life of Simeon. Three times in Luke 2. 25 – 27 we see his lifestyle of holiness and the corresponding work of the Holy Spirit of God upon, in, and through him [italics mine]:

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was *righteous* and *devout*. He was *waiting* for the consolation of Israel, and *the Holy Spirit was upon him*. It had been *revealed to him by the Holy Spirit* that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. *Moved by the Spirit*, he went into the temple courts.

What were the simple hallmarks of this man used by God? He is described as being “righteous, devout, and waiting for the consolation of Israel.” Is there any wonder, then, that the simple, yet profound moving of the Holy Spirit was upon him, revealing to him and moving him with specific guidance? We are mentored and inspired by his lifestyle and consecration as we present ourselves to be moved by the Spirit on mission with God. Not only was there the three-fold work of the Holy Spirit (1) coming upon him, (2) revealing to him, and (3) moving him. When Simeon saw Jesus, “the consolation of Israel,” he worshiped God through (4) inspired speech: [italics mine] “Simeon *took him in his arms* and praised God, *saying....*” (Luke 2.28). Simeon held and embraced God's future in his arms! By the Holy Spirit he proclaimed the “light of revelation” for Israel and all the peoples of the earth (Luke 2.32). Sanctification enables proclamation. In the surrounding narrative of Luke 1 - 2 there is rich Biblical symbolism and instruction to illuminate how we move into God's future mission. As it is sanctified, spiritized, and scriptural, God's future mission will reflect the inter-generational, gender and international/ethnic diversity in this story involving both older and younger.<sup>5</sup> There is a single female teenager, older and younger married couples, an old man, and a widow. Women and men live and witness under the power of the Holy Spirit. There is a promise to Israel and beyond to the Gentiles. The chapter closes with the twelve year old Messiah in question and answer sessions with an older generation in the temple, living in faithful

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<sup>4</sup> James B. Shelton. *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke—Acts* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), pp. 17 – 24); Merrill C. Tenney. *New Testament Survey* (Eerdmans Publishing Company/Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), pp. 183 – 185.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Stronstad. *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), pp. 36 – 39.

obedience to his parents, and growing, “...in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2.52).

In time, this Messiah will raise up, mentor, and multiply a new generation of disciples. This new generation will witness His cross, resurrection, ascension. They will obey His command to wait in Jerusalem until, as He promised, they will be, “...clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24.49b). At Pentecost, Peter will testify:

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear (Acts 2.32 – 33).

The gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter says, is both present and into the unseen future. It is, “...for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2.39). It is a sanctified, spiritized, and scriptural promise of Almighty God from Joel 2.28 – 29 realized on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2.16 – 21). It is an inter-generational, gender inclusive, and multicultural promise for “all people,” “sons and daughters,” “old men and young men,” and God's servants, “both men and women.” It is an enduring, global future promise until, “...the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord” (Acts 2.20).

We bear witness to the necessity of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as the indispensable, Biblical, God-ordained empowerment for God's mission. Let us not take one more step forward in mission until we also have fulfilled Christ's command to wait upon supernatural anointing. This is a command concurrent with the commission, co-equally incumbent upon the older and the younger, the mature and the millennial.

Look at the yearning for the anointing of the Holy Spirit expressed by a younger leader from generations past. Based upon the year of his birth in 1888, J. Roswell Flower could not have been more than twenty years of age when he penned the following remarkable spiritual insight in 1908. This could be one of the first *written* missiological statements on the relationship of the baptism in the Holy Spirit to world evangelization:

The baptism of the Holy Ghost does not consist in simply speaking in tongues. No. It has a much more grand and deeper meaning than that. It fills our souls with the love of God for lost humanity, and makes us more more willing to leave home, friends, and all to work in His vineyard, even if it be far way among the heathen... 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.' This

command of Jesus can only be properly fulfilled when we have obeyed that other command, 'Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.' When we have tarried and received that power, then, and only then are we fit to carry the gospel. When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, the missionary spirit comes in with it; they are inseparable, as the missionary spirit is but one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Carrying the gospel to hungry souls in this and other lands is but a natural result of receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost.<sup>6</sup>

We are called to, “sanctified living toward the Savior's manifestation,” understanding that God's future mission will be sanctified, spiritized, and scriptural. “So then, dear friends,” Peter reminds us, “since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him” (2 Pet. 3.14). We are urged on toward ongoing spiritual formation with a call to godly living, “...while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ....(Titus 2.13).

II. Strategic *leading* toward sustainable *models*: God's future mission will be strategized, structured, and sustainable.

Strategizing involves projecting, forecasting, and scenario planning toward what is called a “preferred future.” We consider trends and issues, and project a future that is possible and probable, even speaking of creating or believing an envisioned future. We focus on basic questions such as, “What does the Lord want us to do? How are we going to do it?” These are fundamental and appropriate questions in approaching the development of a mission strategy. Strategizing is more of an ongoing, developing process than a momentary idea that is ready-made and fully formed. It involves the following broader categories that move us from initial calling toward missional structures.<sup>7</sup>

*Summons* – a summons is a call to attention, an order that mobilizes to action. Used here in the context of strategic planning, a summons represents the burden, calling and vision

<sup>6</sup> Originally published as Roswell's Editorial in *The Pentecost* (August 1908), p.4. Also cited in L. Grant McClung, Jr. “‘Try To Get People Saved:’ Revisiting the Paradigm of an Urgent Pentecostal Missiology,” in Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen, Editors. *The Globalization of Pentecostalism* (Regnum Books, 1999), pp. 36 – 37; and in McClung, *Azusa Street and Beyond*, pp. 4 – 5.

<sup>7</sup> McClung, “Seven Steps to a Strategy,” in *Globalbeliever.com: Connecting to God's Work in Your World* (www.MissionsResourceGroup.org, 2010), p. 241 – 248; “Read the Book” (English/Spanish).

from the Lord. The call of God initiates and perpetuates mission. A classic New Testament example is the calling forth of Barnabas and Saul by the Holy Spirit for the work to which God was calling (Acts 13.1ff). Strategizing doesn't only begin with the mere accumulation of facts and potential methodologies but with the call of God.

*Supplication* – prayer is central in strategic planning.<sup>8</sup> In Acts 13, fasting and prayer both preceded and followed the calling of the Holy Spirit. Indisputably, Pentecostal mission was born and bred in the fires of prayer and revival. The hunger for God among early Pentecostals at Azusa Street and many other locations created an expectant environment for the intimate presence of God, propelling them into global mission. As I have noted, “Indeed, early Pentecostal missiology was not only a missiology of the pulpit and pew, but, more importantly, a 'missiology of the altar.’”<sup>9</sup>

*Scripture* – the Bible is both our message book and method book. Most of the main global challenges and opportunities we face in our future can be found in the back story of scripture (such as urban mission, diaspora opportunities, engagement with non-Christian religions, resistance, marginalization, and persecution, etc.). We must keep ourselves, our leadership teams, and our constituencies on a missional journey through God's word. This practice brings the Bible into the center of our missions conversations and consultations as the primary source of our definitions, practices, and strategies.<sup>10</sup>

*Stories* – we value personal and corporate experiences and testimonies, past and present. We listen globally to stories and reports of what God is doing. This provides a “tracking” or “hearing what the Spirit is saying to the churches.” It requires an intentional “global quadrilogue” among (1) the *assembly* (local churches and church movements), (2) the *agency* (missions agency), (3) the *academy* (missiologists, trainers), and (4) the *agora*

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<sup>8</sup> See the Introduction and prolific resources on prayer at [www.operationworld.org](http://www.operationworld.org).

<sup>9</sup> McClung, *Azusa Street and Beyond*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> McClung, “A Missions Journey Through the Bible,” and “How Big is Our Bible? Confidence in the Bible for Missional Leadership,” under “Resources” at [www.MissionsResourceGroup.org](http://www.MissionsResourceGroup.org).

(missional laity in the marketplace).<sup>11</sup> In our discussions of various forms of media, it is important to remember that *people are media* and we learn from their stories.

*Statistics* – faith and facts do not have to be incompatible. Thank God for the gifted women and men who bring us research, mapping, and reporting as their contribution to the global Great Commission community. The work of Operation World, Joshua Project, Finishing the Task Network, Issachar Initiative, and many others give clear insight and indications for the way forward. Statistical and trends research from secular sciences (economic, political, and demographic) are also valuable.

*Strategies* – a strategy is a working plan, a “faith projection” of what we expect to see develop under the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> Strategies are a cumulative result of the prior work of summons, supplication, scripture, stories, and statistics. God's command to Habakkuk is an example of how written and clearly articulated strategies give clear direction for the future:

Write down the revelation [some translations say “write the vision”] and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it. It will certainly come and will not delay (Hab. 2. 2 – 3).

*Structures* – structures provide a vehicle to deliver the strategy in practical, systematic forms. For years, Arto Hamalainen has provided pioneering studies and practical helps in translating missions strategy into missions structures.<sup>13</sup> More recently, Hamalainen and his colleague Ulf Strohhahn have teamed up to offer additional guidance on *Building a National Mission Structure*.<sup>14</sup> Hamalainen reminds us that, “Any strategy is useless if

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<sup>11</sup> I am indebted to missiologist Gary Corwin for the “Assembly, Agency, Academy” model, and to missions mobilizer Monroe Brewer for the “Agora” concept.

<sup>12</sup> An excellent example is found in Veera Tikkakoski Hug, “Pentecostal European Mission: A Unified Strategy Toward 2020,” in Arto Hamalainen and Grant McClung, Editors. *Together in One Mission: Pentecostal Cooperation in World Evangelization* (Pathway Press, 2012), pp. 303 – 320); also online at [www.MissionsResourceGroup.org](http://www.MissionsResourceGroup.org) and [www.worldagfellowship.org/missions/documents-and-resources](http://www.worldagfellowship.org/missions/documents-and-resources).

<sup>13</sup> Arto Hamalainen. *Leadership: The Spirit and the Structure* (Fida International, 2005); *How to Start Missionary Work in New Sending Countries* (Fida International, Revised 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Arto Hamalainen and Ulf Strohhahn. *Building a National Mission Structure* (Fida International, 2017). Also online at: [www.worldagfellowship.org/missions/documents-and-resources](http://www.worldagfellowship.org/missions/documents-and-resources).

there is no proper structure in which it can be implemented. It is then like a piece of music on paper without an instrument to play it.”<sup>15</sup>

The sustainability of God's future mission necessitates missional focus in the midst of a complex diversity of alternative agendas and competing visions. Our mandate is to stay on task with singular obedience to the straightforward instructions of the Great Commission and ensure that this international, intercultural, and inter-generational mandate is carried forward by the next generation.

*The Lausanne Covenant* challenges us with the assertion that world evangelization requires the “whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.”<sup>16</sup> I change the order to formulate a *mental map* for leaders formulating strategies into sustainable structures: (1) Whole Gospel – the Biblical/theological understanding and motivation; (2) Whole Church – the basic “workforce” of laborers for the harvest; and (3) Whole World – the scope of our missions challenges and opportunities toward making disciples.

The topics, themes, and issues related to global missiological challenges toward 2020 and beyond are highlighted in the following “M” words. This is not an exhaustive or final list but beginning points for continued dialogue, prayer, and strategic action. More extensive exposition of these themes is provided in online forums and resources.<sup>17</sup>

### Whole Gospel

Meanings – definitions of “Missio Dei; mission; missional, missions, and missiology” are necessary to focus our Biblical mandate.

Memories – knowing our story of how God has acted in salvation history, including our global Pentecostal missions heritage.

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<sup>15</sup> Hamalainen and Strohbehn, *Building a National Mission Structure*, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> See “Missional Content” at [www.lausanne.org](http://www.lausanne.org).

<sup>17</sup> Grant McClung, “Missional Focus in a Milieu of Multiplicity: A Mental Map for Pentecostal Leaders,” (See “Resources” at [www.MissionsResourceGroup.org](http://www.MissionsResourceGroup.org)). This paper, first presented and discussed with the World Missions Commission of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, is a research/discussion resource for missions leaders in a wide variety of spheres of influence such as missions agency leaders, national missions leaders, missiologists, pastors, missionaries, and missional laity in the marketplace. It includes 90 reflection/discussion questions, 30+ website resources, and 125 footnotes for further research/reading. Published also in the *International Journal of Pentecostal Missiology* ([www.agts.edu/ijpm](http://www.agts.edu/ijpm)), Volume 5 (2017).



Message – the indispensability of evangelistic verbal proclamation of the gospel with the expectation of a verdict on the part of the listener.

Miracles – whole gospel is Spirit-empowered, “full gospel” accompanied by miracles, signs and wonders.

Mercy – Biblical social action leading to societal transformation.

## Whole Church

Meeting with God [worship, spiritual renewal, intercession, spiritual warfare] – the Pentecostal heritage of prayer and missional revival.

Morality [holiness/integrity] – leadership lifestyle of personal morality; the connection of holy living to evangelistic proclamation.

Marriage [family] – Contra to the contemporary, godless assault on Biblical values of marriage and sexuality, the “mission of marriage” and the evangelistic presence of Christian families on mission with God.

Missional [local] church – the seedbed from which all mission grows.

Mobility, Mobilization, Media – mission from everywhere to everyone, everywhere; marketplace and short-term missions; mobilization of all the people of God through preaching, publications, mass and social media.

Mentoring Millennials – at 80 million, the largest cohort group in history both unreached with the gospel and a missions workforce – present and future – reflecting age, gender, and ethnic diversity.

Missionary [training, care] – How is the next generation of full-time career missionaries being trained? How are missionaries nurtured?

Monetary [Resources] – finding creative ways to fund world missions.

Mutuality [cooperation] – collaboration and interdependence across our movement and beyond to the global Christian community; partnership of women and men; equal participation and leadership of women.

Monitoring [trends, issues] and Metrics [research and evaluation] – awareness of global trends and issues; measurement and evaluation.

## Whole World

Making Disciples and Multiplying churches – local church based discipleship; priority of church planting and multiplication.

Most Neglected [least engaged/evangelized]; Most Receptive – planting where the church is *not* while reaping where the harvest is receptive.

Maps and Migration – a geographical paradigm (reaching nations, regions) mixed with the missiological opportunities of migration and global mobility in a border-less world.<sup>18</sup>

Megacities and Multi-cultural [societies] – urban missional opportunities among the younger generation, “cultural elites,” unreached people groups, and majority of world's poor.

Minors [children] – a sizable and growing bloc of world's population; discipling children ages 4 – 14; majority are unengaged, unreached.

Mars Hill [universities/students] – mission to international students and scholars: future nation builders and agents of societal transformation.

Muslim world – largest single bloc of unreached people on the planet.

Middle Kingdoms [China and India] – the geographical, population strengths, and global influence of these nations; major internal migration underway from rural to urban; India's “emerging youth tsunami” with 400 million under 25 years of age – 50% of them female.

Marginalization, Militancy, and Martyrdom – future mission in a hate- filled, violent world; hostile secularists in the West; militancy against Christians on the rise from radicalized non – Christian religionists.

Moments [“kairos,” missional moments] – sovereign, unanticipated, and strategic mission opportunities.

III. Sensitive *listening* toward surprising *moments*: God's future mission will be spontaneous, sudden, and surprising.

Before continuing a forward *projection* into God's future mission, we look back for a brief *reflection* on the past three decades of recent world history. Conventional wisdom

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<sup>18</sup>Grant McClung, “Moved by the Spirit: On Mission with God Among People on the Move” presented to the Pentecostal European Mission Consultation in Turin, Italy (November 16 – 19, 2015); See the “Resources” link at [www.MissionsResourceGroup.org](http://www.MissionsResourceGroup.org).

defines a generation as an average period of about thirty years. During this time, the current generation has witnessed a sea change in world evangelization. The world commemorates the profound transformation across Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that was sparked, among other events, by the Romanian Revolution of December 16 – 27, 1989. This led to seismic regional and global shifts on the missional landscape.

Our generation has been shocked, staggered, and surprised by the sometimes almost unbelievable events we have witnessed in our generation. As for missional implications, one world evangelization consultation and congress after another during these years has highlighted the turning of entire people groups and populations to the living God with descriptive words such as *unsurpassed*, *unanticipated*, and *unprecedented*. They have reported rapid acceleration in the spread of the gospel worldwide.

The text for our times (evidenced by its occurrence in numbers of missions related sermons and publications over the last thirty years) could be, “Look at the nations and watch – and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told” (Hab.1.5). Bible expositors have noted that:

Whereas this remarkable statement in Habakkuk has a negative outcome, Paul applies it positively to Jesus' life and ministry as the fulfillment on a grand scale of what was foretold by the Old Testament prophets about the Messiah (see Acts 13.41). God in His sovereignty continues to act at certain times and places in history (in either judgment or salvation) on such a grand scale that the contemporary generation finds it hard to believe when it is prophesied to them.<sup>19</sup>

This current generation of world Christians is also witnessing – *on a grand scale* – an incredible unfolding of the saving actions of the Triune God -- frequently in surprising moments – through the spontaneous and sovereign Holy Spirit, the divine superintendent of world evangelization.<sup>20</sup>

A parallel verse to apply to this current phenomenon are God's words to the prophet Isaiah, “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43.18). Note how the New Living

<sup>19</sup>Donald C. Stamps, General Editor. *Life in the Spirit Study Bible* (Zondervan Publishers, 2003), p. 1353.

<sup>20</sup>George W. Peters. *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Moody Press, 1972), pp. 304 – 305.

Translation renders this command, “But forget all that – it is nothing compared to what I am going to do; for I am about to do a brand new thing. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?”

This word came to Isaiah in a time of spiritual decline and geopolitical threats from massive armies to the north. Every testimony among the faithful in those dark days was about “the good old days” when God miraculously delivered the Israelites from Egypt and eventually settled them into a prosperous land, giving them political stability in the golden days of David and Solomon. But now, in essence, God is saying to Isaiah's generation – and I believe to ours – “I'll give you something *new* to talk about!”

If we are not careful, projections for God's future mission can easily get locked into the past – always leaning upon the history of what God has done and, based upon God's past patterns, predictably expect more of the same. We may be prone to bring this kind of thinking into our strategizing for future mission. As Derek Seipp has noted: “The problem with this kind of thinking is that we look back at what we have done in order to see what is possible in the future. In essence, we look backward to look forward.”<sup>21</sup>

That is why the words I heard from Eva Burrows at Lausanne II in Manila, July 1989, remain imbedded in my heart and mind to this day. At that time, Burrows was the International Director of the Salvation Army. She related how, in reflection before the Lord over her many years of ministry, a clear word from the Lord came to her: “Eva, I have seen your ministry. Now, let me show you mine.”<sup>22</sup> This powerful testimony resonates with that of missions leader Delanyo Adadevoh of Ghana. He stated that in a time of searching prayer, he asked God, “What do I need to do to allow you to work more in my life?” The Lord answered, “Dela, get out of my way!”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Derek T. Seipp. *Innovation in World Mission: A Framework for Transformational Thinking about the Future of World Mission* (William Carey Library, 2016), p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>L. Grant McClung, Jr. “Pentecostal/Charismatic Perspectives on Missiological Education,” in J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen, and Edgar J. Elliston, Editors. *Missiological Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Orbis Books, 1996), p. 65.

<sup>23</sup>Grant McClung, Lausanne Global Leadership Forum (Bangalore, India, June 17 – 21, 2013) Executive Summary Report (July 2013), p. 14.

In their last meeting with the Lord, the disciples wanted a trends forecast, “insider information,” some sort of predictable pattern as to what He had in mind for future times and dates. “It is not for you to know,” he told them, but “to receive power” and “be my witnesses” (Acts 1.6 – 8). Immediately, “While he was blessing them...” (Luke 24.51), “...he was taken up before their very eyes” (Acts 1.9).

Then, things begin to happen “suddenly” at the outset and across the developing stories in the evangelistic expansion of the early church. These “sudden missional moments” in the Book of Acts brought empowerment from heaven, unanticipated conversion of a legendary missionary apostle, the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles, and an unexpected open door across the entire household and family of one of the earliest European converts:

“*Suddenly* a sound....from heaven” on Pentecost baptizing them in the Holy Spirit (2.1 – 4).<sup>24</sup>

“...*suddenly* a light from heaven” at Paul's conversion/calling (9.3;22.6).

[At the house of Cornelius] : “Peter wasn't planning to stop at this point, but the Holy Spirit *suddenly* interrupted and came upon all the people who were listening” (10.44 *The Voice Bible*).<sup>25</sup>

“*Suddenly* there was a violent earthquake...” resulting in the conversion of the Philippian jailer, his entire “household” and “all his family” (16.26 – 34).

We cannot know the future but we can count on our missionary God to convert and call, act and anoint, speak and send – *suddenly*. We bear witness to our amazing and astounding God when we say that the work of God on mission is unlimited, indescribable, unimaginable, and unpredictable. The charismata of the Holy Spirit cannot be contained or explained. Therefore, we allow room for the unanticipated, always ready to proactively respond to the “kairos” missional moments created by the spontaneous, sovereign, saving God of history.

The promise of Acts 1.8 – “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth,” provided a predictable pattern of mission for the disciples. More often than not, however,

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<sup>24</sup>Note one of the classic Pentecostal histories from Carl Brumback. *Suddenly...From Heaven: A History of the Assemblies of God* (Gospel Publishing House, 1961).

<sup>25</sup>*The Voice Bible*, p. 1344.

“kairos” moments awaited them at every turn. They were moved by the unforeseen “surprises of the Spirit” that advanced the gospel, quite unexpectedly, into new missional directions among new peoples.

For example, there was: the unanticipated commissioning of a lay evangelist to an African seeker (Phillip to the Ethiopian in Acts 8); the unexpected vision revealed to a reluctant disciple, sending him to a religious terrorist who was destined to be an apostle to the nations (Ananias prays for Saul in Acts 9); and the startling summons sent to a recalcitrant Jewish preacher to enter the home of a Gentile, a Roman military officer (Peter preaches to Cornelius in Acts 10).

In Acts 13 a team of local church leaders respond to the spontaneous, sudden, and surprising God. The command of the Holy Spirit was, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (13.2). After fasting and prayer, “...they placed their hands on them and sent them off” (13.3). As the Holy Spirit hovered over and moved upon the waters in creation, (Gen.1.2), the creative movement of the Spirit of God hovered over church leaders worshiping and waiting in fasting and prayer, moving them to release the first intercultural mission team.

In Acts 16, we see the unpredictable moving of the Spirit by closing two doors so another could be opened. Paul and his companions were, “...kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.” The King James Version says they were, “...forbidden of the Holy Ghost...” (16.6). They tried another direction, toward Bithynia but, “...the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to” (16.7). Instead, Paul and his team moved on to Troas where a direction changing vision during the night led them into Macedonia (16.9 – 10).

William Hull informs us of an important bit of geographical information about the location of Troas as it, “...lay on the outermost edge of a protruding lip which made it a gateway to the Aegean Sea. In other words, Troas was the jumping—off place to another world!” Hull continues:

Paul would not have had the sensation of being driven by the Spirit from one “continent” to another, but he would clearly realize that he was leaving his homeland, that the beckoning of God was pointing to lands beyond the sea, that the young Timothy so recently recruited (Acts 16. 1 – 5) was being swept with

him into a wider world than either may have envisioned when they set out together.

That journey on to Troas, with the memory of twin frustrations still vivid in our minds, is always a daring act of faith in the Savior of surprises. For remember, Paul did not embark upon this third alternative with any answers in hand. Rather, it was only after he got to Troas, after he reached the end of the road with nowhere else to go, that he was given a vision of what to do next. It was not until he ran out of human plans, and was ready to offer God, as it were, a clean page on his itinerary, that he received the divine plan leading on to Macedonia.<sup>26</sup>

These are challenging phrases from Hull: “jumping – off place to another world,” “leaving his homeland,” “swept into a wide world,” “daring act of faith,” “end of the road with nowhere else to do,” “ran out of human plans,” “a clean page on his itinerary.” Paul, and succeeding generations of pioneering innovators, followed this unpredictable and surprising God to the ends of the earth. We must make this *apostolic heritage* our *anointed horizon* into God's future mission.

Let us embrace the three-fold calling to sanctified *living*, strategic *leading*, and sensitive *listening* as they are coupled with prayerful expectations of the way forward into God's future mission:

Sanctified *living* toward the Savior's *manifestation*: God's future mission will be sanctified, spiritized, and scriptural.

Strategic *leading* toward sustainable *models*: God's future mission will be strategized, structured, and sustainable.

Sensitive *listening* toward surprising *moments*: God's future mission will be spontaneous, sudden, and surprising.

The promises and descriptions of a spontaneous, surprising, and suddenly moving God are not just *promises* from our miraculous past. They are more than *projections* of God's future mission. They are most certainly supernatural *power* now in our present “kairos”

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<sup>26</sup> William E. Hull, “Forbidden to Preach” Unpublished sermon presented to the Taskforce: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Missions Consultation at Beeson Divinity School Chapel, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, January 28, 1996. The results of the Taskforce consultation (in which this author served as a Pentecostal representative) were published in Paul McKaughan, Dellana O'Brien, and William O'Brien. *Choosing a Future for U.S. Missions* (MARC/World Vision Publications, 1998).

moment. The Triune God is bringing sudden empowerment and callings, accelerated favor, unusual, unexpected financial provision, unanticipated open doors, and unforeseen, miraculous receptivity to the gospel among the unconverted:

Now to the God who can do so many *awe-inspiring things, immeasurable things*, things greater than we ever could ask or imagine through the power at work in us, to Him be all glory in the church and in Jesus the Anointed from this generation to the next, forever and ever. Amen (Ephesians 3.20 – 21).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>*The Voice Bible*, p. 1439.