

The Missional Message of Acts

An In-Ministry Graduate Course Syllabus Originally Developed by J.J. Turner, Ph.D. Taught by Rudy Wray, D.Min. 13-Hours

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INTRODUCTION:

The Bible affirms that God had a plan before the world began to save mankind in Christ, in the church, which is His body (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:3-7; Isaiah 2:2-4). The basic theme of the Bible is: (1) Someone is coming—Christ, (2) Someone has come—Christ and (3) Someone is coming again—Christ. In the fullness of time, Christ came (Galatians 4:4). During His brief ministry on earth He chose and trained 12 men to carry out His mission to the entire world (Matthew 28:18-20). This mission was begun on the Day of Pentecost. From Peter's first Gospel sermon to the closing of the Book of Acts with Paul in prison, we see the word of God spreading like a wildfire. Paul affirmed that in approximately 37 years, the Gospel had been preached to every creature (cf. Colossians 1:23; Romans 10:18).

The church is God's missionary agency for carrying the Gospel to the entire world. It was done in the first century and it must be done in the twenty-first century. The lingering question church leadership is trying to answer is, How can we do what they did in the first century? Thus, how can the church of today become missional? I believe the core answer is by reactivating the book of Acts and becoming missional.

What do we mean by missional? Missional is the latest buzz word among church growth experts, mission leaders, and Christians trying to stop the decline in church growth and return to evangelizing. Much of what is being written centers in human wisdom; some advocate a serious return to the Bible and the book of Acts. This is the purpose of this course: To reactivate the book of Acts in the twenty-first century. To examine what they did and see if and how we can duplicate it today.

Obviously, there are some things we see them doing in Acts that we can't do today. But the core attitudes, actions and spirit of our brethren in the first century can be applied today. This is the challenge all leaders face today.

In this course we will not become bogged down in trying to split hairs or initiate some non-biblical approach to take the Gospel to our world and then to the entire world. Our vocabulary will not be spiked with "the emerging church" vocabulary or an emphasis on the "holistic

gospel.” The church has a three-fold mission: (1) evangelism, (2) edification, and (3) equipping. The book of Acts addresses these three areas. Thus, a missionary (a missional practitioner) is not someone who “goes over there” to share the Gospel; he shares it in his community too. In my understanding of the Bible, all churches should be missional. This mission is based on a solid foundation of biblical theology. In His book, “The Essence of the Church,” Craig van Gelder wrote, *“In a missional church, the church IS mission rather than does mission as a program or activity of the larger life of the church. The church’s nature is to show the world what it looks like when a community of people live under the reign of God in every aspect of daily life.”* (Baker, 2000, p.31)

In the book of Acts, we see missional is what the church was, not what they went to do or practice from time to time. Thus, “mission” shifts from naming a function of the church to describing its essential nature. Remember the literal meaning of the Great Commission is, *“As you are going in your world, make disciple”* (Matthew 28:18-20). This is the missional lifestyle, which is what we see exemplified in Acts: Going and sharing the Gospel.

In missional thinking the church is not (1) thought of as place (building), (2) and event involving spiritual activities (fellowship, Bible studies), (3) as an organization of people (“I attend brother Jones church”), or (4) as an offering of numerous programs. In the missional church the concept of “called out people sent on a daily mission” is the core emphasis. In this behavior pattern Christians can be distinguished from the lifestyle of secular culture. The church seeks to refrain from adopting the American culture, habits, ethics and lifestyle. The 24-hours quest of the Christian is to glorify God in the church (Ephesians 3:20, 21).

Our goal, as churches and Christians, is to imitate Jesus when He said, *“Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth”* (Mark 1:38). In the book of Acts we see the early church obeying what Jesus commanded and practiced. This is missional! Or if you prefer, EVANGELISM!

Each assignment in this course is designed to contribute to enhancing and expanding your knowledge and skills as a minister to lead the church in a missional way as exemplified in Acts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To refresh and remind the student of the message of the book of Acts and how relevant it is for today.
2. To study the various ministry expression in Acts and how they relate today.
3. To examine the student’s congregation’s present missional emphasis.
4. To share lessons on the missional nature of the church with the student’s congregation.
5. To develop a potential plan for becoming more missional (evangelistic).
6. To expose the student to various writings that will enhance his leadership.
7. To glorify God (Ephesians 3:21).

COURSE METHODOLOGY

Since this is an In-Ministry course, as a student you are expected to “educate yourself” through the various assignments related to our methodology. You must be a self-starter. Read carefully the following ways you will discipline yourself in order to learn the material in this course.

1. Selected textbooks are required. They all relate to some aspect of the course.
2. Reading and book reports are required.
3. Research papers written according to the MLA manual of style.
4. Worksheet assignments must be completed.
5. Lessons prepared on course materials to share with the congregation.
6. Possible internet assignment.
7. Testing may be required over certain materials.

COURSE COMPLETION TIME

You will have three months (90 days) to complete this course. All assignments must be completed and sent to the teacher by the 91st day. The teacher will have thirty (30) days after receiving the assignments to grade them. Direct all questions to the teacher during times he has specified (emergencies at any time).

WORK PLAN AND SCHEDULE REQUIRED

One week (7 days) after you receive this course syllabus you must send the teacher a complete procedure and work schedule. In this you will outline and show the daily schedule of how you plan to do your work, and what you will be doing each day. This is a self-discipline tool that should help you stay on a comfortable completion schedule, instead of rushing in the last few days.

GRADING VALUE

Your final grade will be determined by the follow breakdown:

70% based on content of papers and all written materials.

20% based on grammar (spelling, syntax, punctuation, etc).

10% based on completing course on time.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Since this is an In-Ministry course, there are a number of books that will be your “teachers.” Each book will make a positive contribution to the course objectives. Remember, there will be things in these books that you will not totally agree with. Throw out the “bones” and keep the

meat. As a graduate student you are expected to be discerning in these matters. Later in the assignment section you will see the role each book plays in this course.

1. *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church* (2006), Paul Nixon, The Pilgrim Press, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44115. ISBN: 978-0-1759-1
2. *What is a Healthy Church Member?* (2008), Thabiti M. Anyabwile, Crossway Books, 1300 Crescent Street, Wheaton, Ill 60187 ISBN:978-1-4335-0457-0
3. *Religiously Transmitted Diseases* (2008), Ed Gunger, Nelson Books ISBN: 13:978-1-5995-1001-9
4. *The Seven Faith Tribes* (2009), George Barna, BARNAs: Tyndale House Publishers, ISBN: 978-1-4143-2404-3
5. *Against All Odds!* (2008), J.J. Turner, Solutions, 2.0 Inc., 922 Hwy 81 East, PMB: 325, McDonough, GA30252

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

As you know, this is an In-ministry course, and as such, it requires you to do all your work on your own. In-ministry courses are not short cuts to credit hours; they are “long ways” to credit hours. It has been proven that the student learns more in self-directed study than sitting in the traditional class room. The following assignments are designed to take you successfully through this course. The assignments are such as to justify the granting of three (3) hours of academic credit. Do your best!

I suggest you read all the assignment carefully and then prepare your study schedule. This way you will know where you are going and how you will get there.

PAPERS:

All papers must be written following the MLA manual of style.

1. A five (5) page paper on: “*The present status of my congregation in light of local and foreign mission work.*” DUE: Thirty (30) days from start of course. Date: _____
2. A two (2) page paper on: “*My burden for the lost.*” DUE: Thirty (30) days from start of course. Date: _____
3. A five (5) page paper on: “*How I plan to wake up the church to become more missional.*” DUE: Forty-five (45) days from start of course. Date: _____

LESSONS:

Prepare four (4) lessons you will deliver to the congregation. May either be sermons or Bible class lessons. DUE: Sixty (60) days from start of course. Date: _____

Textbooks:

1. Write a survey report on *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church*, with an application to your present ministry and leadership. What are the author’s strong and weak points? Remember that the weak

points may well be the most instructional. What would you add to the message of the book?
DUE: Sixty (60) days from start of course. Date: _____

2. Write an analysis of each of The Seven Faith Tribes, showing the relevancy of Barna's research to the challenge we face today in preaching the Gospel in the USA. DUE: At the end of the course. Date: _____

3. Write a thorough critique of What is a Healthy Church Member? Show how you agree with the author on certain points as well as disagree. Add your observations about what you think constitutes a healthy church member from a biblical perspective. DUE: Sixty (60) days from start of course. Date: _____

4. Write a thorough book report on Religiously Transmitted Diseases. Due: End of course. Date: _____

WORKBOOK:

On pages 106—113 of *Against All odds!* Read the book. There are two (2) Appendix sections. You are required to do all thirteen (13) exercises with complete answers and application to your ministry. Write answers on paper and submit. Write a response paper to Appendix 2. DUE: End of course. Date: _____

READING OF BOOK OF ACTS:

You are required to read the book of Acts three (3) times during this course. During your reading you will document the following missional principles (chapter and verses with principles stated) with a minimum of a twenty-five (25) words on each principle and how, if it does, relate to today. Prepare a special sheet for this project and use it as you read the book of Acts, noting the various principles. Caution: Don't try to finalize this assignment with just one reading of Acts. You might miss something. DUE: End of course. Date: _____

1. Culture (passages and comment)
2. Philosophy (passages and comment)
3. Conflict (passages and conflict)
4. Persecution (passages and comment)
5. Prayer (passages and comment)
6. Preaching (passages and comment)
7. Debating and reasoning (passages and comment)
8. Temple (passages and comment)
9. Synagogues (passages and comment)
10. Houses (passages and comments)
11. Providence of God (passages and comment)
12. Boldness (passages and comment)
13. Kingdom of God (passages and comment)
14. Holy Spirit (passages and comment)
15. Salvation issues (passages and comment)
16. Paul's preaching (passages and comment)

17. Church gatherings (passages and comment)
18. Missionary journeys (passages and comment)
19. Correcting false doctrine (passages and comment)
20. Discipling (passages and comment)
21. Teaching (passages and comment)
22. Conversions (passages and comment)
23. Confrontation (passages and comment)
24. Fasting (passages and comment)
25. Leadership (passages and comment)

TERM PAPER

Using all you have learned from this course (including the above 25 principles), write a seven (7) to ten (10) page “major term” paper on *The Missional Message of Acts.*” Answer these and other questions:

1. What is this message?
2. How does it apply today?
3. What must a church do to become more missional?
4. How will you apply the message to your personal ministry?
5. What is your next step in following up on this course?

DUE: End of course. Date: _____

All e-mail assignments must be sent as attachments in Microsoft Word Documents
Send all assignment to me:

Rudy Wray, e-mail.....rdwray@msn.com

Postal mail: 2834 NE 25th Ct., Gresham, OR 97030 Phone: 503
449 3913 (cell)

NOTE: All postage to and from me, will be paid by you. This is part of the cost of your course.