BIBLICAL MISSIOLOGY STATEMENT OF PRACTICE FOR MISSIONS

Preamble

The church of Jesus Christ has been entrusted with the greatest of commissions: to share the good news of God’s redeeming work and disciple believers in the body of Christ. To assist the church in that endeavor, missionary societies and agencies have arisen to meet a particular need or to focus on a particular area.

As a good and necessary demonstration of accountability to the church, missions agencies typically articulate their doctrinal convictions in a Statement of Faith. Further, agencies may develop a separate statement of guidelines that shape their practices. Both statements are useful, but they must never function separately. Biblical theology necessarily leads to and informs our missiology, i.e. the philosophy and practice of missions. In turn, missiology must always be submitted to and derived from an accurate understanding of the Bible. This is what we mean by the term biblical missiology.

Our identity as Biblical Missiology is found in that commitment to the integral relationship of the Bible and missions. Yet we are also concerned that churches and missions agencies are increasingly distinguishing between their faith and practice, and between the church and missions. The philosophy and practice of missions agencies and movements are often shaped more by the social sciences than Scripture, and the role of the church in missions is often abdicated to agencies. These trends must be corrected. It is not enough that a missions agency or movement profess a biblical faith; their practice must likewise be biblical. It is not enough that a church is a patron of missions; she must meaningfully take responsibility for the commission entrusted to her. Thus, Biblical Missiology is convinced there is a need today to restore "the gospel to missions, and missions to the church." Toward that end, we offer this Statement of Biblical Practices as an aid to the global church in its service to Christ.

Sections:

- Biblical Missiology
- Scripture
- Translation
- Triune God of the Bible
- Gospel
- Kingdom
**Biblical Missiology**

We affirm God’s Word is the sole authority for all Christian faith and practice, including the mission entrusted to the church to proclaim the gospel to all nations. Missions is properly a God-centered endeavor in which a right understanding and relationship to the triune God redeems people in need of grace. As such, the philosophy and practice of missions must both be faithful to God's Word. (Mt 28:18-20; Acts 4:12; 2 Tim 2:15; 1 John 4:14-15)

We affirm a missiology that submits social sciences to Scripture and the theology that Scripture teaches. (Eph 3:10; Col 1:16-18)

We affirm the church is the guardian of the theology, philosophy, and practice of missionaries, missions agencies, and mission movements. (Mt 28:18-20; Acts 15:1-6; Eph 3:10, 4:11-13)

We deny missions should be pre-eminently determined by sociology or anthropology, though missions is served by such disciplines. (Mt 28:18-20; Eph 2:15-16; Col 1:16-18; 2 Tim 4:6-7)

We deny a missiology that separates the missions endeavor from the supervision, authority, and accountability of the church. (Is 42:6; Mt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8, 15:3-4; Eph 3:10, 4:11-12)

**Scripture**

We affirm the Bible alone is the authoritative, God-breathed, Word of God (Luke 16:29, 31; 24:27, 44; Heb 1:1-2; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21), uniformly and with singular authority revealing the person and work of Jesus Christ as the exclusive source of salvation beginning from Genesis through Revelation. (Luke 23:13-52; John 5:39-47; 1 Pet 1:10-12)
We affirm God's Word is authoritative in our missionary philosophy and practice, and is alone sufficient for salvation and Christian living. (Is 55:11; Ps 19:7-11; John 20:31; Rom 10:8-15; 2 Tim 3:15)

We deny the use of other religious writings as an authoritative or valid witness to the triune God of the Bible. (Dt 4:2; John 17:3, 20:31; 1 Cor 2:13-14; 14:37; Rev. 22:18-19)

We deny the validity of reinterpreting other religious writings as if they were written for the purpose of pointing to Jesus. (Is 8:20; John 5:39; 2 Pet 1:21; 1 Cor 2:4-5)

We deny the notion that other religious writings should be considered as similar to the Bible or authoritative for faith and practice. (Dt 13:1-4; 1 Cor 2:9-10; Heb 4:12; Gal 1:8-9)

Translation

*Introductory Note:* This section is not intended to be a miniature manual on the principles and procedures involved in Bible translation. Rather, it provides general criteria for evaluating the quality of translations, in light of our conviction that the Bible is God’s fully inspired Word, inerrant in the original autographs.

We affirm the work of translating God’s written Word into every language is foundational to the Great Commission our Lord Jesus Christ gave to his church. (Mt. 28:18-19)

We affirm translation work must be done in the various vernacular languages with the goal of rendering the full meaning of the source texts—as determined by the most reliable Hebrew and Greek manuscripts—in intelligible form in these languages. (Acts 21:37-40)

We affirm a faithful rendering of God’s Word expresses the normal, literal meaning (except where the context dictates figurative usage), as intended by the inspired authors.

We affirm the meaning of Scripture resides in the text itself, and that the propositional truth of God’s Word is invariant in all cultures throughout all ages. (Ps. 119:89; Isa. 40:8; Mt. 5:18; Mt. 24:35; II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:20-21)

We affirm it is the Holy Spirit who illumines the truth of God's Word (I Cor. 2:9-13; Jn. 14:26) and uses the local Body of Christ, where it exists, to teach the Scripture. (Eph. 4:11-14)
We deny the claims of Scripture can be subordinated to the local cultural and religious patterns so as to relativize the content of God’s Word. (Lev. 18:26-30)

Since a target audience’s understanding of Scripture is not equivalent to its acceptance of the truth claims (John 6:60), we deny the translator has the right to alter the text itself so as to make a passage more acceptable to them. (II Pet. 3:15-16; Rev. 22:18-19)

We deny any names or titles referring to God and to his redemptive work can be replaced by expressions with different semantic content (in terms of the specific sense and/or reference), in an attempt to minimize the distinctiveness of each Scriptural term or to remove negative connotations that come from the presuppositions of either or both local culture and religion. (Deut. 12:29-31; Ex. 3:13-15; Ps. 9:10)

More specifically, we deny the Divine names Father and Son can be translated using other terms considered functionally equivalent, so as to obscure the eternal Fatherhood of God and the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ. (Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16-18; 5:17-26; chs. 14 – 17; Rom. 1:3-4; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:3, Heb. 1:2, etc.)

We deny the translation process into new receptor languages results in ongoing Divine inspiration and revelation. (Jude 3)

**Triune God of the Bible**

We affirm God is one in nature, and that God is loving, personal, almighty, holy, gracious, just, good, wise, and unchangeable. (Dt 6:4; 1 Kgs 8:27; Ps 115:3, 145:3; Is 6:3; 1 Cor 8:4, 6; 1 Tim 1:17; James 1:17)

We affirm the biblical witness that God exists eternally as one God in three persons: Father, Son and Spirit. (Ps 90:2; Mal 3:6; Mt 3:16-17, 28:19; John 1:14, 18; 15:26; Col 1:15)

We affirm the necessary distinctions of the persons of the triune God, such that God the Father exists eternally as Father, the Son eternally as Son, and the Spirit eternally as Spirit. (Mt 3:17, 11:27, 17:5; Luke 3:22; John 1:14, 18, 5:23, 36-37, 17:5; Acts 1:7; Rom 8:3, 32; Heb 9:14)

We affirm biblical faithfulness requires we proclaim God as he has revealed himself in Scripture, without omission or distortion. (Gal 1:8-9; 1 John 2:22-23; 4:14-15)
We affirm God's fatherhood and Jesus' sonship are archetypes and infinite, and that these Divine essentials are categorically other than the human understanding of father and son; that is the terms are descriptive of God's nature, but not merely as we humans conceive them. (Ps 2:7; 89:26; Is 64:8; Mt 5:48)

We deny the terms Father, Son and Spirit are metaphors or accommodations to our finite comprehension. (Mt 6:9, 11:25, 16:27; Mark 1:11; Luke 10:21; John 3:16, 5:17, 18, 14:26; 20:22; Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4)

We deny the terms Father and Son in reference to God can be translated using any term that is deemed functionally equivalent, idiomatic, non-biological, or non-familial. (John 20:31; Acts 4:12; 1 John 3:23, 4:9, 14-15, 5:13)

We deny the concept that the God of the Bible can be associated or identified with the god of non-biblical religions. (Is 43:10, 11; 45:5; John 17:3)

We deny any claim that other gods have the same nature and character as the God of the Bible. (Dt 4:35; Is 43:10; Mark 12:32)

We deny the teaching that one can claim allegiance to the God of the Bible and still continue to worship the true and living God by means of one's prior non-Christian religious practices. (Ex 20:1-3; Dt 6:14-15, 28:14; Jer 25:6; 1 Cor 8:6)

**Gospel**

We affirm the gospel is both what God has done for sinners, making them live with Christ, and what he will do for all his creation, which is anxiously longing to be set free from corruption. (Mark 8:35, 10:29; Luke 4:18; John 1:12; Acts 2:38-39; Rom 6:8, 19; 8:15, 20-23)

We affirm Christ gave the gospel to the church. (Eph 3:10; 1 Tim 3:15-16)

We affirm the gospel declares that God the Son took on flesh, lived a life that manifested loyal-love for the Father, leading to his death on the cross for sinners where God's wrath and love were revealed, was raised in power by the Spirit, lived on earth for forty days after his resurrection, and ascended to the right hand of the Father where he presently reigns over heaven and earth. (1 Cor 15:1-6, 20-25; 1 John 4:9-10; Rev 11:15; Ps 2:1-9)
We deny the gospel is a mere formula to recite that guarantees salvation. (1 Cor 15:1-3; Rom 1:1-7)

We deny the gospel is discovered in any place outside the Bible. (Gal 1:6-7; 2 Thess 2:14-15; 2 Tim 2:8)

We deny the gospel exists in faith traditions outside the church. (Mt 16:18-19; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor 2:7, 4:17; Jude 3)

**Kingdom**

We affirm the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of God produces a new covenant people, the church. (Mt 24:14; Luke 16:16; Acts 8:12, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 31)

We affirm that while the church is not the kingdom itself, it is the means by which the kingdom of God expands throughout the world. (Acts 8:12; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 8:18; James 2:1-5)

We deny the kingdom of God encompasses people in non-biblical faith systems who willfully resist open identification with the visible body of Christ. (Mt 10:32; Luke 9:62; Rev 1:6, 5:10)

**The Church**

We affirm the church is the beloved bride of Christ (Eph 5:22-23; Rev 21:1ff), and that Jesus delights in the growth and extension of his body. (Mt 16:18; Acts 16:5)

We affirm missions is intrinsically connected to the reproduction and expansion of local churches. (Mt 28:18-19; Acts 13:1-3)

We affirm Christ has broken down the barriers among peoples, calling his body to live by expressing the unity and love of the global church. (Rom 3:29, 12:5, 15:7; 1 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:27-29)

We affirm missions agencies and movements must be accountable to the global church. (Acts 14:27-28)
We affirm missionaries must demonstrate meaningful accountability to their local church. (Acts 11:1-18, 15:27-28)

We affirm the role of missions agencies is to perform functions mandated by the church in her efforts of discipling every nation. (Mt 28:18-19; Acts 13:1-3)

We deny a follower of Christ may live apart from the visible church by continued deliberate self-identification and participation in a non-Christian religion. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor 1:2, 4:17, 12:28)

We deny missions agencies and movements are the church, or that they may assume or replace the role and authority of the church. (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 12:28)

We deny missions agencies and movements can operate without meaningful accountability to the church. (Acts 14:27-28)

Identity

We affirm a person’s identity is ultimately defined by the biblical categories of either being in Adam or in Christ. (Rom. 5:11-20; 1 Cor 15:22)

We affirm that a person upon whom God exercises his saving work will visibly identify as a follower of Jesus Christ, seeking to represent and reflect the glory of God as expressed in the person and work of Jesus, and will identify with Christ publicly and visibly. (Mt 10:32-33; Heb 10:19-25)

We affirm the length and path of transition to public identity with the church is unique to each Christian, since the Christian life is to be lived necessarily in the context of biblical community. (Acts 2:42-47; Rom 12:5-16; 1 Cor 12:25; Gal 5:13-14)

We affirm our ongoing identification with Jesus Christ will be marked by love and loyalty to God’s Word by the power of God the Spirit. ( Rom 5:2; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 4:6; Phil 2:16; Tit 1:9; Heb 10:26-31, 13:20-21; 1 Pet 5:1-11)

We affirm that although the term Christian is often misunderstood to mean one who is loosely associated with the religion of Christianity or a member of an apparently Christian culture, Christian is nevertheless a biblical, and therefore, useful term referring to an obedient disciple of Jesus Christ. (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16)
We deny that a person who claims to identify with Jesus Christ can continue to identify himself with his previous religious expression, including its socio-religious structures. (Mt 9:15-17; John 4:23-24; Rom 12:1-2; Eph 4:21-23)

We deny a Christian should continue in or be encouraged to stay within his previous religious practices for any reason. (Acts 2:38, 3:19, 19:18, 26:18; 2 Cor 6:14-18)

We deny the notion a Christian may maintain integrity by practicing non-Christian religious forms outwardly while simultaneously honoring Christ in heart and mind privately. (Mt 5:37; Rom 10:10)

**Integrity**

We affirm as foundational to Christian identity is faithfulness in how one speaks about oneself, including who one is and what one does. (Prov 24:26; Rom 8:15)

We affirm a Christian should speak honestly, recognizing that truth is not merely a construct of socio-linguistic structures, but a representation of genuine reality. (Amos 5:10; 2 Cor 2:17)

We affirm that while a Christian does not disclose everything about his Christian identity to everyone he meets, nevertheless a Christian always speaks truthfully. (Eph 4:15; Phil 4:8-9)

We deny it is God-honoring for Christians to represent themselves in a deceptive or underhanded manner. (Prov 14:25; 2 Cor 4:2)

We deny it is wise, acceptable, or necessary to present one's identity or work in such a way that truth is fundamentally compromised. (1 Pet 3:14-15)

We deny it is consistent with the context of Scripture to say that being "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" means it is sometimes necessary to compromise truth for the sake of speaking and acting contextually. (Mt 10:16; 2 Tim 4:2)

**Nature of Religions**
We affirm biblical Christianity is the only religion that expresses the fullness of the gospel message, while acknowledging the existence of truth in other religions since God has given all mankind his general revelation. (Rom 1:18-20; Eph 3:8-10; James 1:27; 1 John 5:11)

We affirm other religions are the byproduct of rebellious mankind influenced by demonic realities that distort Scripture and blind people to the person and work of Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 10:14-22; Gal 1:6-9; Eph 4:17-20)

We affirm the Father is calling people from their rebellion against him in spite of their religion, not by means of it. (John 4:23, 6:44; Eph 2:1-11)

We affirm that God uses ordinary and secondary means to draw people to himself, including nature, relationships, cultural forms, joy and suffering. (Ps 19:1; 2 Kings 5:15; Acts 26:14)

We deny God has created within other religions bridges, stepping-stones, or signposts that are sufficient, authoritative, or unambiguous to bring one into right relationship with the Almighty. (Mt 7:14)

We deny that form–ritual, rite, and practice–can be separated from its function–meaning and purpose–without leading to syncretism. (Mark 7:8; Acts 14:12-14; 2 Tim 3:5)

Commonalities

We affirm that every person is equally sinful and lost apart from a relationship with the one who redeemed us, Jesus Christ. (Rom 3:23-26)

We affirm God’s command to love people of all religious backgrounds. (1 John 4:7-11)

We affirm that every person shares equally the image of God and the dignity that accompanies it. (Gen 1:27)

We affirm Christians and non-Christians wrestle with the same temptations. (Ps 36:11; Is 57:4; 1 Cor 10:13)
We deny the notion that common grounds of spiritual truth knit together Christianity with other religions. (Acts 17:22; 2 Cor 6:15)

We deny the triune God of the Bible is the god of other religions. (Ex 20:3; Col 2:20-23; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9)

We deny special revelation can be found in other religions, let alone equivalent to biblical truth, for Scripture teaches that while all men know of God, their religions suppress the truth of God. (Dt 13:2-13; Josh 24:16; Rom 1:21; John 4:22-24; 1 John 5:10)

Contextualization

We affirm critical biblical contextualization is a cultural expression of the gospel without distortion of the message. (Acts 14:11-18; Gal 2:1-3)

We affirm contextualization of the local church according to biblically valid and culturally indigenous forms—namely, those cultural, ethnic, and linguistic forms that are not anti-biblical. (Is 55:7; Acts 19:18, 20, 26-27)

We affirm a contextualized gospel remains an offensive gospel, challenging the sensitivities of sinful man. (Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:8)

We deny the gospel message ought to be dressed in non-Christian religious clothes, for this fundamentally alters the meaning of the gospel. (Gal 1:6-9; 2 Cor 6:16-17)

We deny that converts may retain religious practices, cultural customs, or identities that are anti-biblical. (Acts 14:15)

We deny culture is the final arbiter of acceptable practices for Christians when the Bible speaks clearly. (Acts 15:19-21; 1 Cor 1:21)