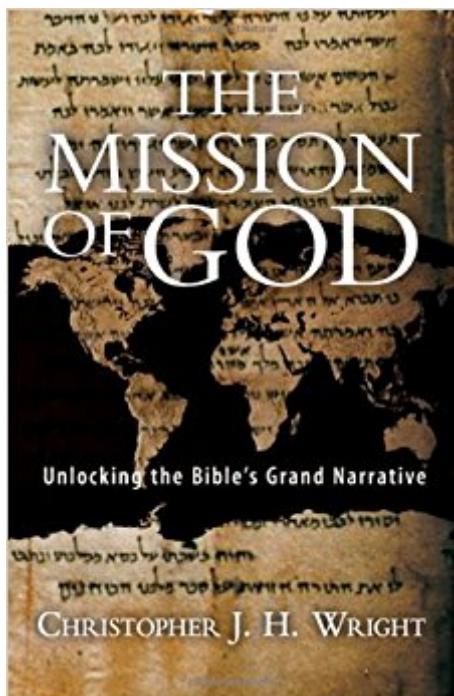


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# The Mission Of God: Unlocking The Bible's Grand Narrative



## Synopsis

Winner, 2007 Christianity Today Missions/Global Affairs Book Most Christians would agree that the Bible provides a basis for mission. But Christopher Wright boldly maintains that mission is bigger than that--there is in fact a missional basis for the Bible! The entire Bible is generated by and is all about God's mission. In order to understand the Bible, we need a missional hermeneutic of the Bible, an interpretive perspective that is in tune with this great missional theme. We need to see the "big picture" of God's mission and how the familiar bits and pieces fit into the grand narrative of Scripture. Beginning with the Old Testament and the groundwork it lays for understanding who God is, what he has called his people to be and do, and how the nations fit into God's mission, Wright gives us a new hermeneutical perspective on Scripture. This new perspective provides a solid and expansive basis for holistic mission. Wright emphasizes throughout a holistic mission as the proper shape of Christian mission. God's mission is to reclaim the world--and that includes the created order--and God's people have a designated role to play in that mission.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Wright has produced a compelling book of paramount importance for mission studies and practice, and contributed greatly to the fields of hermeneutics and biblical theology." (Calvin L. Smith, *Mission Studies*, 2009)"Wright's study, coinciding with . . . a nascent missional hermeneutic of the Bible, amounts to a landmark contribution to that hermeneutic's development." (Greg McKinzie, *Restoration Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (2010))"This is a text that every serious believer ought to

reckon with regardless of academic specialty or ministerial preference. Wright's book forces the reader to consider the very worldview paradigm by which he or she reads and understands his or her Bible, Christian life, experiences, and purpose. Written beautifully in winsome prose the book is both accessible as well as profound. The Mission of God is a book that rightly deserves a place near the top of anyone's must-read list." (Mark Liederbach, *Faith & Mission*) "Wright has truly laid a cornerstone in the edifice of mission, one on which a biblical theology of mission would be wise to build." (Michael J. Glodo, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, June 2009) "Words like 'missional' and 'missiological' have become commonplace in churches looking to make an impact on their communities and the world. While this renaissance of mission orientation has spawned welcome enthusiasm, . . . confusion has also followed. What does it mean to be missional? Christopher Wright's *The Mission of God* provides the answers to these questions and many more. The purpose of [this book] is not simply to show why mission is important or how mission is a vital part of the identity of the Church, but to show that mission, in many ways, is the purpose for the Church and the priority in its identity. Therefore [this book] seeks to read the Bible as a story of God's mission to restore creation and his people's role and mission in that restoration." (Daniel J. Doleys, *Text, Community & Mission* blog, July 8, 2009) "Wright systematically allows God to be portrayed through his own canonical self-revelation. The resultant portrait is glorious and persuasive. The Christian church is indebted to Wright for tackling this major project." (Jo Ann Davidson, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Autumn 2008) "The book refocuses the lens with which we have been reading the Bible and understanding our ecclesial responsibilities. It is well worth reading." (Dianne Bergant, C.S.A., *The Bible Today*, September/October 2008) "This is a book that needed to be written." (M. Daniel Carroll, *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, 18.1) "The volume provides much to admire and to learn from. . . . He has produced one of the best examples of this genre currently available." (Stephen Fowl for *Theological Studies*, March 2008) "Blending cutting edge biblical scholarship with a sensitive missiological awareness and passion, Wright demonstrates that the Bible—from beginning to end—is a missionary book." (EMQ, July 2007) "A short review can only acknowledge the brilliant, balanced scholarship that Wright evidences throughout. . . . [T]his is a must-read. . . . [T]his book is one to be meditated on and prayed through." (International Bulletin of Missionary Research, July 2007) "This book is a fascinating combination of introduction on biblical hermeneutics, biblical theology, and, at the same time, it is a missiology textbook." (The Presbyterian Outlook, August 20, 2007) "One is hard pressed to find much fault with either the conception or the execution of this nicely published and helpfully organized treatment of what is arguably the most important idea in the world. Seldom do works on

mission view these themes so globally and comprehensively." (Criswell Theological Review, Fall 2007)"In this book, church and mission leaders will find a wealth of fresh scholarship exalting God's initiative—and, indeed, more than a bit of subversion." (Jim Reapsome, Christianity Today, June 2007)"A rich and most impressive work. It is a splendid exposition of a comprehensive biblical theology of mission, and will have to be taken seriously by every student of the subject." (Andrew F. Walls, University of Edinburgh)"This excellent book encourages Bible scholars, pastors, missionaries and informed Christians to read the Bible with new eyes, the eyes of God's missional intention for the world that God loves. The author joins others like Walter Kaiser, Johannes Nissen, Arthur Glasser and James Chukwuma Okoye in demonstrating that only a missionary reading of the Bible does full justice to God's self-revelation described therein. I will be using this book as a primary textbook in several courses." (Dr. Charles Van Engen, Arthur F. Glasser Professor of Biblical Theology of Mission, School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary)"To an already impressive list of publications dealing with the Bible and mission, Chris Wright now adds what must surely be his magnum opus. This remarkably comprehensive work does nothing less than point the way ahead for the global Christian movement in the twenty-first century, and in the process it challenges a host of received assumptions in biblical scholarship, Christian theology and missionary practice. I believe Wright's book will be seen as the most important work of its kind since David Bosch's contribution in the 1990s, and, like that work, it is likely to be read, discussed and hopefully applied to practice for years to come." (David W. Smith, International Christian College, Glasgow)"Wright blends Old Testament scholarship, missionary experience and missiological heart in this extraordinary book. He does a marvelous job of framing the questions and detailing the answers in accessible prose. Missiology has long been in need of someone who can offer an appropriate map not just for walking us through mission in the Bible but for leading us more deeply into the Bible through a missiological lens. Chris Wright offers us this bidirectional map in masterful fashion that will become standard reading in the field for years to come." (Scott Moreau, Professor of Intercultural Studies, Wheaton College)"Christopher Wright has made two important contributions. First, he demonstrates that the Bible, from beginning to end, is about God's mission to the world. Second, Wright grounds the meaning and significance of this mission substantially in the Old Testament. Often relegated in textbooks to short introductory chapters that cite a handful of passages about God's concern for the nations, the Old Testament at last receives its full due. This comprehensive study by a seasoned missiologist and Old Testament ethicist demonstrates that the entire Scripture is consistent in its message and thrust. I have waited years for a book like this!" (M. Daniel Carroll R., Earl S. Kalland Chair of Old Testament, Denver Seminary, and adjunct professor,

El Seminario Teológico Centroamericano, Guatemala City, Guatemala)"Beautifully written, Wright's work sees God's mission as a framework for understanding the whole Bible; a key that unlocks the 'grand narrative' of Holy Scripture. It clarifies many difficult issues and is a major contribution to a biblical theology of mission." (Gerald H. Anderson, director emeritus, Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut)"This marvelous book is all I hoped and expected, and more. Chris Wright has spent thirty years combining an academic involvement with the Old Testament and a commitment to God's mission in the world. We are so fortunate to have the mature fruit of a lifetime's reflection on the missional nature of the Bible by this outstanding teacher, scholar and missionary theologian. It threatens to revolutionize what people usually mean by the missional aspect of the Scriptures. And it also threatens to revolutionize understandings of the Scriptures by its demonstration that they are, through and through, a missional document." (John Goldingay, author of Old Testament Theology and professor of Old Testament, Fuller Theological Seminary)"Chris Wright, known for many important studies in Old Testament ethics and theology, has again written a book that deserves wide circulation. At a time when many biblical scholars continue to emphasize the minutiae of diverse traditions, and at a time when the missionary task of the church is either questioned by postmodern critics or diminished by pragmatic pundits, Wright's new book is a reminder of the unity of Scripture, the importance of sound hermeneutics and exegesis, and the fundamental significance of the missionary calling of the church. Wright demonstrates with consistent and passionate argumentation that the missionary mandate of the church does not simply rest on the great commission in Matthew 28, but that the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is the result of the very nature of God and of God's people. This book should be a required text for theologians and exegetes, pastors and students, missionaries and Christians in general." (Eckhard J. Schnabel, author of Early Christian Mission and professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School)"The Mission of God is valuable, not only for its exposition of God's mission, but also for its defense of the unity of Scripture and its development of the themes of the covenant of grace and the kingdom of God." (Nick Smith, Christian Renewal, July 29, 2015)

Christopher J. H. Wright (PhD, Cambridge) is international ministries director of the Langham Partnership, providing literature, scholarships, and preaching training for pastors in Majority World churches and seminaries. He has written many books including commentaries on Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel, The Mission of God, Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit, Old Testament Ethics for the People of God, and Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament. An

ordained priest in the Church of England, Chris spent five years teaching the Old Testament at Union Biblical Seminary in India, and thirteen years as academic dean and then principal of All Nations Christian College, an international training center for cross-cultural mission in England. He was chair of the Lausanne Theology Working Group from 2005-2011 and the chief architect of The Cape Town Commitment from the Third Lausanne Congress, 2010.

"The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative" by Christopher J. H. Wright(2006), InterVarsity Press. Christopher J. H. Wright is the director of international ministries for the Langham Partnership International, known as John Stott Ministries in the United States of America. A doctor of philosophy in Old Testament ethics, Professor Wright has formerly taught Old Testament at Union Biblical Seminary in India and has served as principal of All Nations Christian College, a missionary training school in Ware, England. Dr. Wright has written commentaries on Deuteronomy and Ezekiel and is also an ordained Anglican priest, serving on staff of All Souls Church Langham Place in London, England. In "The Mission of God", Dr. Wright argues for a holistic missional hermeneutic, that takes into serious considering the Holy Scriptures in their entirety, paying particular attention to how the Old Testament acknowledges a biblical theology of mission, which is then carried on through the Gospels and letters of the New Testament. In part one, Dr. Wright explains that in order to show how the mission of God, and the participation of God's people in that mission, operates as a framework for understanding the grand narrative of the Bible, a missional hermeneutic must be discovered through a complete understanding of Scriptures and from that, an extrapolation of God's purpose. This should take place first without superimposing missional ideas or proof-texting of certain passages, both removed from context and also the overarching Biblical theme. By explaining how the shaping of a missional hermeneutic begins with the Biblical authority of mission in the sovereignty of God's action in human history, Dr. Wright then moves on to cover God's providence and sending for mission, "The People of Mission", and the "Arena of Mission" in parts two, three, and four respectively. In regards to both the Old Testament and New Testament, Dr. Wright states that "the process by which these texts came to be written were often profoundly missional in nature" (p.49), indicating that a missional interpretation comes from a missional authorship. Offering a demonstration of how this is true in the Torah, historical books, and wisdom literature, Dr. Wright goes on to affirm a three-form pattern of God's reality, the reality of His story, and the reality of his chosen people in the world, and how they are continued explicitly in the Gospels, Acts, and Pauline Epistles. Ultimately, these three realities are embodied and extended through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Dr. Wright states that "these realities authorize our

action in mission. They make our mission appropriate, legitimate, and indeed necessary and inevitable. The authority for our mission flows from the Bible because the Bible reveals the reality on which our mission is based (p. 54). Through a proper and holistic Biblical hermeneutic, it becomes apparent that the missional bias of the Bible is conceived in the divine purpose of God. Instead of an anthropocentric or ecclesiocentric definition of mission, Dr. Wright calls for a paradigm shift to a theocentric worldview, where the Church is an agent designed to undertake the mission God has been resolving from and into eternity. An unexpected yet positive contribution of this book, is Dr. Wright's tackling of postmodernism. Dr. Wright highlights the fact that Christianity has always existed within multiple cultural contexts. He states, "cultural plurality is nothing new for Christian mission. It is rather the very stuff of missional engagement and missiological reflection" (p. 46). Realizing that cultural relation exists behind, in, and above the Scriptural narrative should give new insights to the current proliferation of voices in dissonant conversation between style and substance. A second favorite strength of Dr. Wright's book is that he declares a holistic reading of Scripture will yield a holistic view of mission. Thus mission encompasses aspects of not only the spiritual realm, but also generates Kingdom impact in the social and political arenas as well. Dr. Wright uses the story of the Exodus to promote a model of redemption when integrated with mission and the Jubilee as a type of a case study on the implications of ethics in mission and as a theology for evangelism. In terms of a critical observation, though Dr. Wright places priority in the ownership of mission in the hands of God, he positions humanity as the primary agent for that mission. Agreeing with Karl Barth's Trinitarian teaching of the missio Dei, Wright fails to explicitly state that the Church is empowered by the Spirit. Tracing the roots of the Abrahamic covenant in Paul's letters, Dr. Wright concludes that like Israel, God's people as the Church, are elected to be a blessing to the nations. Another critique, though perhaps minor, would be Dr. Wright's four worldview questions for all religions. He proposes that the Old Testament answers the fundamental subjects for humans, being such contemplations as: Where are we? Who are we? What's gone wrong? And, what is the solution? The most obvious question missing is "why are we?" If God's intention for humanity is found in his purpose for creation, then His mission should more than adequately address that inquiry. Overall, "The Mission of God" is a comprehensive analysis of the Bible that provides a missional hermeneutic for the Church to be lived out. Though weighty in scholarly research and sometimes excessive with Old Testament rendering, Dr. Wright has successfully produced a theology for mission that is Scripturally based in the metanarrative of the Bible.

I discovered this book while in seminary. After seminary I revisited it because I knew I had to dive deeper into its pages. This book will consume you and here's why. You will understand the Bible as a whole. This book unites the Old and New Testaments together by showing how the biblical narrative is all working toward one thing, the mission of God. Wright is exhaustive, covering every topic and detail in his approach. You could have just this one book in your library and use it next to the Bible. From micro to macro Wright speaks how this approach shapes the life of the everyday Christian and the life of those in the Church. If you want clarity in reading the Bible, I highly recommend this book.

Even though there are many theology books out there about the mission of God, a select few reserve the time it will take to wade through their presuppositions and conclusions. Few modern theological writers have attempted to provide a biblical framework for studying Missio Dei, but Christopher J. H. Wright's *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* frames this study on the meta-narrative of history as God's missiological story. Wright theorizes that the Bible can be read with a missional hermeneutic. In fact, he not only postulates that it can be read that way; he states that this holistic approach is really the only way the Bible's truth can be discovered. When done so, the testaments reveal a fluid continuity between the players, and there is the possibility of seeing the full revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ as the central Servant for God's missional plan beginning before creation and finding its fulfillment in the picture of all nations joining together to bring him glory. It is Wright's stubborn adherence to the foundation of the Bible that makes his tome worth reading. Although this is a human perspective, it seems there have been events that would have thwarted God's original plans, but the entirety of Scripture reveals a beautiful overarching plan that cannot be frustrated. Central to that plan is the image of Christ as the suffering servant foretold in the Old Testament in answer to man's problem of sin. The apostle Paul adopted the same symbolism when he continued to frame the missional narrative for the New Testament church. The story of Scripture is His story, His narrative, not only about His person but about His acts of reaching out to seek, save and serve those He has created. Wright's greatest contributions in developing this hermeneutical approach is his insistence on a missional map or script, a holistic approach to reading that script, identification of key players, and narrative continuity between parts. For a more in-depth review, go to [buckburch.blogspot.com](http://buckburch.blogspot.com) and check out the Book Reviews option on the right side menu.

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