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What Is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission

By Kevin DeYoung



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Social justice and mission are hot topics today: there's a wonderful resurgence of motivated Christians passionate about spreading the gospel and caring for the needs of others. But in our zeal to get sharing and serving, many are unclear on gospel and mission. Yes, we are called to spend ourselves for the sake of others, but what is the church's unique priority as it engages the world?

DeYoung and Gilbert write to help Christians “articulate and live out their views on the mission of the church in ways that are theologically faithful, exegetically careful, and personally sustainable.” Looking at the Bible's teaching on evangelism, social justice, and shalom, they explore the what, why, and how of the church's mission. From defining “mission”, to examining key passages on social justice and their application, to setting our efforts in the context of God's rule, DeYoung and Gilbert bring a wise, studied perspective to the missional conversation.

Readers in all spheres of ministry will grow in their understanding of the mission of the church and gain a renewed sense of urgency for Jesus' call to preach the Word and make disciples.



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Editorial Review

Review

“In what appears to be a growing tension over what the mission of the church encompasses, DeYoung and Gilbert bring a remarkably balanced book that can correct, restore, and help regardless of which way you lean or land on all things ‘missional.’ I found the chapters on social justice and our motivation in good works to be especially helpful. Whether you are actively engaging the people around you with the gospel and serving the least of these or you are hesitant of anything ‘missional,’ this book will help you rest in God’s plan to reconcile all things to himself in Christ.”

—**Matt Chandler**, Lead Pastor, The Village Church, Dallas, Texas; President, Acts 29 Church Planting Network; author, *The Mingling of Souls* and *The Explicit Gospel*

“Christ is the greatest message in the world, and delivering it is the greatest mission. But are we losing our focus? Are we being distracted, sometimes even by good things? Zealous Christians disagree sharply today over the church’s proper ministry and mission. Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert bring us back to first things in an age of mission creep and distraction. Offering balanced wisdom, this book will give us not only encouragement but discomfort exactly where we all need it. It’s the kind of biblical sanity we need at this moment.”

—**Michael Horton**, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California; author, *Core Christianity: Finding Yourself in God’s Story*

“Among the many books that have recently appeared on mission, this is the best one if you are looking for sensible definitions, clear thinking, readable writing, and the ability to handle the Bible in more than proof-texting ways. I pray that God will use it to bring many to a renewed grasp of what the gospel is and how that gospel relates, on the one hand, to biblical theology and, on the other, to what we are called to do.”

—**D. A. Carson**, Research Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; Cofounder, The Gospel Coalition

“DeYoung and Gilbert have put us in their debt with their clear, biblical, theological, and pastoral exposition of the mission of God’s people. That mission, which they rightly understand within the story line of the whole Bible, is summarized in the Great Commission and involves gospel proclamation and disciple making. This superb book will encourage its readers ‘to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship and obey Jesus’s commands now and in eternity, to the glory of God the Father.’”

—**Peter T. O’Brien**, Former Vice-Principal and Senior Research Fellow and Emeritus Faculty Member, Moore Theological College, Australia

“A very timely and eminently engaging book for all those who care deeply about the church’s mission in our day. Again and again, I found myself nodding in agreement as the authors made a key point from Scripture or noted the missional relevance of a given biblical passage. I highly recommend this book, not just as food for thought, but more importantly, as a call to obedient, biblically informed action.”

—**Andreas J. Köstenberger**, Senior Research Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert have written an important book on an important topic. Fair, keenly

observant, startlingly honest, this book is replete with careful exegetical work. Verses are not merely cited; they are considered in context. The length of an idea is considered, all the way from its expression in the local church back to its source in Scripture. The result is a book that is nuanced and clear, useful and enjoyable to read, and that is no small gift from two young pastor-theologians who have already become reliable voices. Open this book and you'll want to open your Bible and open your mind on everything from justice to capitalism, from mercy to love."

—**Mark Dever**, pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC; president, 9Marks

"DeYoung and Gilbert clear the fog that has settled over the nature of the church's mission. Their tone is gracious, the style is accessible, but most importantly this book is marked by fidelity to biblical revelation and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The authors have succeeded in what they exhort us to do: they have kept the main thing as the main thing."

—**Thomas R. Schreiner**, James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Professor of Biblical Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

"DeYoung and Gilbert provide clarity to some of the most complex contemporary issues facing the church. Focusing us squarely on the redemptive nature of the gospel, they ultimately point us not only to the church's mission, but to practical ways to understand and live it. The result is a book that will be of great help to pastors, missiologists, theologians, and practitioners."

—**M. David Sills**, Faye Stone Professor of Christian Missions and Cultural Anthropology, Director of the Doctor of Missiology Program and Great Commission Ministries, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

"Every generation is tempted to augment or diminish, even nuance or redefine the mission of the church. Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert have provided a biblical corrective and protection for our generation in *What is the Mission of the Church?* With a gracious and kind spirit, this book reclaims the ecclesiastical concepts of mission, purpose, social justice, and the Great Commission from those who have redefined these words with a dictionary other than Scripture. Pastors should read this book with their elders, deacons, and leadership teams to wrestle with answers to the most pressing questions about the church in our day."

—**Rick Holland**, Senior Pastor, Mission Road Bible Church, Prairie Village, Kansas

About the Author

Kevin DeYoung (MDiv, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) is the senior pastor at University Reformed Church (PCA) in East Lansing, Michigan. He serves as a council member at the Gospel Coalition and blogs at *DeYoung, Restless, and Reformed*. He serves as Chancellor's Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary and is a PhD candidate at the University of Leicester. He is the author of several books, including *Just Do Something*, *Crazy Busy*, and *The Biggest Story*. Kevin and his wife, Trisha, have seven children.

Greg Gilbert (MDiv, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is senior pastor at Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. He is the author of *What Is the Gospel?*, *James: A 12-Week Study*, and *Who Is Jesus?*, and is the co-author (with Kevin DeYoung) of *What Is the Mission of the Church?*.

Users Review

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Robert Nichols:

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