

# On Mission 2019

*The State of the Global Gospel:  
Present and Future Trends*

## ***Ted Esler - Missio Nexus Too Many Mission Agencies?***

Hi, I want to ask you a rhetorical question. That's actually, I'm hoping, gets at the kind of a bigger issue. But I want to ask a question. I'm going to pause just a little bit and you could think about it for a second, OK? The question is this, how many more mission agencies do we need in the United States and Canada? How many more?

Now think about your first reaction when I ask that question because I have a feeling that some of you out there thinking, whoa, we got plenty of mission agencies! In fact, the air of the mission agency is over. I've heard all sorts of things along that line. And I want just kind of push back a little bit on this narrative that, we have enough mission agencies. Now, if I were to ask you the question, how many big, institutional, market-driven, consumer-oriented, top-down hierarchical organizations do we need to accomplish the Great Commission? Obviously, nobody ever wants that. But if I ask you the question, how many dreams of Entrepreneurs do we need to see realized in the Great Commission in order to see the Great Commission fulfilled? Then of course, it takes on a completely different everything!

You see, unfortunately, we live in an era where there's a lot of deconstruction in missions' circles. I could share with you any number of books that deconstruct the whole mission in missionary paradigm, some quite adamant that the language is extra biblical, which that word is, maybe. And all sorts of reasons why we have to get rid of the paradigm as it exists today. Let me just say that, you know, in some ways, there's truth to that. If we think of the mission world as one filled with bureaucratic organizations, then yeah, let's get rid of them. On the other hand, if we think about what happened in the 1st century, when we think about the explosion of the Gospel as a result of the work of churches and that first missionary band, then, we might see things a little bit differently, especially if we saw our organizations and churches in light of vision in ministry, instead of the institutionalized forms I think that we often think of today.

The form of mission agency that we have today -let's face it- it springs from a tradition and a history that is closely aligned to the corporate -you can't say "corporate America" because, it comes from really, the UK, the concept of boards. I mean, there was a time we called the mission "board" instead of mission "agencies." So, I get some of the concern here, but I also think that we need to remember that most organizations come out of the vision of a founder who gets an idea that others may not have had, or perhaps innovates on something that others are already

doing. And because it's maybe unique, or because of that founder's singular vision, we get very excited about it and others join in and pretty soon something is happening and moving us in the direction of mission fulfillment with the Great Commission. Let's try hard not to simply throw our mental energies behind this concept at all mission agency work. Its institutional bureaucracies doing work. What if instead, we thought of mission agencies as networks of apostolic teams, little "a" apostolic teams out there fulfilling the Great Commission? But it brings a completely different spin on it. In my view is that, we actually need thousands of new visionary Entrepreneurs, each one organizing their vision, whatever it might be, into Gospel fulfillment. Listen, I love networks. I tend to run one actually, Missio Nexus is in fact, a mission network. That word "association," which means we have more defined membership than some networks are going to have. But I would not want to rely on a loose network for things like my paycheck, or evacuation from a war-torn country, or any number of things. These require a little bit more organizational presence, at least, in the 21st century. And so, let's think about how we can get the best of what it means to be organized around a particular mission -vision and mission. And also, the best of what it means to be organic, and to be flexible, and to be human-centered in the execution of our mission. And I think, it's worth just ending with an observation that the 1st century missionary team, went through periods of greater organization and less organization. Now the kind of concepts we have today for 501c3s, or you know, all this kind of business tax deduction. This tax deduction that, I realized, didn't exist in the first century, but certainly, organized missionary work did. So, let's think about praying for many, many more Gospel Entrepreneurs.