

*Sunday School Teacher's Supplement for*

*It's Time...A Journey Toward  
Missional Faithfulness*



*April 15—June 3, 2007  
Wieuca Road Baptist Church*

# An Urgent Call to Christian Mission

*It's Time* Supplement for April 15, 2007

Session 1

## **Scripture Passage:**

*2 Corinthians 5:17–20: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

**Summary Statements:** (To help you get a handle on the lesson truths.)

1. Being an 'ambassador for Christ' is a holistic concept; as "new creations" we are called to participate in God's mission through Christ, namely, "reconciling the world to himself in Christ."
2. God sends Christ; Christ sends the Spirit; the Spirit sends us to infuse the cosmos with God's reign.

**Questions for Thought:** (To help you think of some questions to challenge with a "So What?")

1. Where can you be Christ's ambassador in areas where you already find yourself (work, school, etc.)?
2. In what ways does Wieuca, as a church family, need to respond in *our* community to participate in the liberative, redemptive justice of God's kingdom?

## **Points to Ponder**

As Christians we serve a missionary God. In his book, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, the eminent theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, writes, "It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church as it goes on its way" (64). Mission is thereby understood as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument of that mission.

One of the harbingers of the missional church movement is David Bosch, a South-African theologian of missions. In his book, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, he writes:

The *primary* purpose of the Church's mission can not simply be the planting of churches or the saving of souls; rather, *it has to be service to the mission of God*, representing God in and over against the world, pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world in a ceaseless celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany. (emphasis added, 391)

Missiologist and former missionary to India for forty years, Leslie Newbigin, defines the Christian mission as three fold:

1. Proclaiming the kingdom of the Father
2. Sharing the life of the Son
3. Bearing witness of the Spirit

As Bo Prosser reminds us in the preface to the *It's Time* leader's guide, the missional church is not another program of church growth or member enlargement. "The missional church," he writes, "is a new way of thinking about congregational involvement as we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (6). This 'urgent call to Christian mission' that we will be discovering over the next seven weeks has many facets, but one goal: namely, to call *everyone* at Wieuca Road Baptist Church to follow the missional way. This has implications for the *how* and *why* of church:

- ☉ We pursue a life of contemplation bolstered by service, and worship invigorated by acts of mercy and a concern for justice.
- ☉ We strive to give people a living experience—not only a memory—of Jesus Christ through our bold witness and self-sacrificing compassion.
- ☉ We don't exist for ourselves, but for the benefit of the world.
- ☉ We participate as individuals, small groups, and a corporate body in God's mission to the least and the lost of our world.

# ***It's Time...for Spiritual Formation***

***It's Time* Supplement for April 22, 2007**

**Session 2**

## ***Scripture Passages:***

Romans 8:28–9: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

2 Corinthians 3:18: And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

**Summary Statements:** (To help you get a handle on the lesson truths.)

1. Spiritual formation is the activity of the Holy Spirit, molding us into the likeness of God's most perfect expression of who God is: Jesus Christ.
2. Our task, as one's being spiritually formed, is to create intentional spaces in our lives for the Spirit of God to transform our hearts and minds to that of Christ.
3. Spiritual formation is far greater than an accumulation of knowledge.

**Questions for Thought:** (To help you think of some questions to challenge with a "So What?")

1. What spiritual disciplines (worship, prayer, fasting, etc.) have most greatly facilitated your personal spiritual formation?
2. What activities can you do in your Sunday school class to experience spiritual formation in a corporate setting?

## **Points to Ponder**

Daniel Vestal writes, "As Baptists, we have excelled in calling people to conversion, but we have not been as proficient in calling them to maturity and growth after conversion" (3). He continues, "Many have embraced a popular Christian religion that has adopted an entertainment mentality, created Christian celebrities, and baptized a materialistic culture into the Church" (3). These are stern statements, coming from a noted Baptist leader. Do you agree? Do you disagree?

Part of the good news of the Gospel is that God did not leave us to participate in God's mission of redeeming all creation without any assistance. Rather, God abides with us in the person of the Holy Spirit. This ought to be a comforting realization for those of us who are in Christ—we are not alone.

Here at Wieuca, our invigorated emphasis upon Spiritual Formation and its position of prominence within the life and work of the Church is simple: if the Church—the body of Christ—is to accomplish its mission in the world it must do so under the power of the Holy Spirit. So how do we, as God’s ambassadors in a hurting world, participate in God’s mission? We allow God to mold our hearts and minds so that we begin to think and feel as God does. From Jeremiah, the prophet we read: “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?” declares the LORD. ‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.’”

A church that refuses to be formed spiritually, both as individual members of the congregation and as formative groups, is a church left to its own devices. In other words, we seek God’s formative presence to enable us to go out into the world and be the presence of Christ. If we fail to make room for spiritual disciplines like prayer, service, acts of mercy and justice, worship, etc. we will find our mission puny and weak. Rather than participating in God’s mission we will be baptizing our own mission. Perhaps this is a cause for Vestal’s assessment above?

We need to pursue spiritual formation, relentlessly. Jeremiah 29:13 tells us: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” This is as much of a challenge as it is a promise.

Final Thought: In his wonderful book, *In the Name of Jesus*, Henri Nouwen writes, “The mystery of ministry is that we have been chosen to make our own limited and very conditional love the gateway for the unlimited and unconditional love of God” (44). It’s time for spiritual formation because we live in a hurting world that desperately needs a living experience of Jesus.

# ***It's Time...to Pray***

***It's Time* Supplement for April 29, 2007**

**Session 3**

## ***Scripture Passage:***

1 Corinthians 13: If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

**Summary Statements:** (To help you get a handle on the lesson truths.)

1. If the Church is to follow God into the world, we must first discern where God is moving; otherwise, we will be misrepresenting *our* will as God's, baptizing our desires as God's.
2. Prayer is one of the primary modes by which God communicates with us; therefore, being missional necessitates an avid prayer life.

**Questions for Thought:** (To help you think of some questions to challenge with a "So What?")

1. How can prayer open us up to the needs of those around us?

2. What steps have you taken as a class to encourage one another in prayer?

### **Points to Ponder**

In his wonderful book, *In the Name of Jesus*, Henri Nouwen writes, “If there is any focus the Christian leader of the future will need, it is the discipline of dwelling in the presence of the One who keeps asking us, ‘Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?’ It is the discipline of contemplative prayer” (28). Contemplative prayer opens us up to the heart of God; it sensitizes us to the needs of those in our midst that are suffering from oppression, scarcity, and injustice; and it can slowly conform our will to God’s. In sum, fervent prayer availeth much!

Daniel Vestal lays out several suggestions in his book that are a helpful start to a vigorous prayer life. My friend Tony Jones, in his book, *The Sacred Way*, outlines many other modes of the contemplative life (silence and solitude; sacred readings; praying the Jesus prayer; centering prayer; meditation; icons; spiritual direction; and celebrating the Daily Office). Here is another practice, which I call “Headline Prayer,” that I have found helpful in my own spiritual development:

I get my news through the Internet. I do not subscribe to a paper or watch 11-Alive at 6PM. Instead, I get daily updates from MSNBC.com and BBC World sent to a newsreader that I have installed on my computer. As I read the headlines, I offer brief prayers in response to the news.

For example, today one of the headlines read: “Arab leaders relaunch peace plan.” As I read the contents of that article I offer a short prayer, asking God’s blessing upon the peace negotiations, for the people living in war-torn regions of the world, for the leaders of this summit, that they would exhibit wisdom on behalf of those whom they govern.

That’s it. I then move on to another headline. I have found that this does more than keep me up to date on current events. Because I approach these articles in an attitude of prayer and supplication, I find that God molds my heart and mind to care for these needs that I read about. Suddenly, I’m invested in these world events; I am drawn into the lives of those whom I will probably never meet.

I offer this as an example of missional prayer that can invigorate your care and concern for God’s creation. After all if God is about the business of reconciling *all of creation* unto God’s self, and we are called to participate in this ministry of reconciliation as Christ’s body and His ambassadors, then the life of contemplative prayer will open us up to the Spirit’s activity in the world and spur us along on the missional way.

# ***It's Time...for Churches to Discover and Fulfill Their Mission***

***It's Time Supplement for May 6, 2007***

**Session 4**

## ***Scripture Passage:***

2 Corinthians 5:16–21: So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**Summary Statements:** (To help you get a handle on the lesson truths.)

1. “Missional” is not a new concept, but only an emphasis on what the church should have been about all along.
2. The Church is to take its cues neither from secular culture nor pseudo-Christianities (like materialism), but from God under the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Questions for Thought:** (To help you think of some questions to challenge with a “So What?”)

1. What approaches can your Sunday school class adopt to be missional in a post-Christian cultural context?
2. How can Wieuca Road Baptist Church provide a radical witness that is counter-cultural and Kingdom of God centered?

## **Points to Ponder**

Vestal writes, “Missional churches are ones that see their purpose for existence as incarnating the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and thus extending the mission of God” (19). I can’t put it any clearer than that.

In the most recent edition of *Leadership Magazine*, missional pastor, Bob Roberts, relays nine important things he is (un)learning about the church and its mission:

☺ *I'm learning ...* that mission begins with Christology not ecclesiology. Following Jesus leads us to mission, which leads to churches gathering.

☉ *I'm unlearning* ... my assumption that starting churches naturally leads to mission. It doesn't. Churches default to self-focus unless a commitment to be like Jesus in the world comes first.

☉ *I'm learning* ... that being glocal\* means decentralizing power, decision making, information, all of it. The Kingdom of God means ministry opportunities are available to almost everyone.

☉ *I'm unlearning* ... the American church's traditional focus on a super-star speaker, worship leader, educator, and shepherd, which serves mainly to attract spectators rather than igniting the power of everyone else.

☉ *I'm learning* ... that we serve not to convert but because we have been converted. We serve because Christ has changed us and made us servants to people who are hurting and lost.

☉ *I'm unlearning* ... the assumption that 'Christian' is defined primarily as acknowledging a moment of conversion. Become a follower of Jesus depends on what happens after that.

☉ *I'm learning* ... to love people, which means to see them healed, educated, and given the same opportunities we have.

☉ *I'm unlearning* ... that the Christian faith is all about heaven. I believe the church has denied the future of just waiting for the Second Coming. We need a story that includes the future.

☉ *I'm learning* ... the kingdom will be established not by human power or entertainment, but by realizing God's concern for humanity and the whole of society. (31)

\* "Glocal" is a fusion of the words *global* and *local*. In a world without borders or boundaries, mission becomes glocal and the former distinction between the two diminishes.

# ***It's Time...to Have Passion for the Great Commission***

***It's Time Supplement for May 13, 2007***

**Session 5**

## ***Scripture Passage:***

Mt. 28:18–20: Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

**Summary Statements:** (To help you get a handle on the lesson truths.)

1. Changes in culture mandate changes in our strategies for evangelization.
2. The culture has changed.
3. Therefore, we need to rethink evangelism in ways that are more relational.
4. The Great Commission has not expired; as the church participates in the mission of God in the world, evangelism continues to be an aspect of our commission.

**Questions for Thought:** (To help you think of some questions to challenge with a "So What?")

1. In what ways is Wieuca practicing evangelization in our community and world?
2. What are some ways that your Sunday school class can nurture a passion for the Great Commission in the emerging culture?
3. In what ways do we need to change our evangelization strategies to connect with the Buckhead community?

## **Points to Ponder**

The following points to ponder are adapted from David J. Bosch's book, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, pp. 411-20.

1. *Mission is wider than evangelism.* Mission is the church sent into the world, to love, serve, preach, teach heal, and liberate. "Evangelization is mission; but mission is not merely evangelization" (Moltmann, *CPOTS*, 10).
2. Evangelism should therefore not be equated to mission.
3. Evangelism may be viewed as an essential dimension of the total activity of the Church.
4. Evangelism involves witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do. Evangelism cannot be defined merely in quantifiable terms; rather, it should be seen in terms of its nature, transforming, empowering, and liberating.
5. Even so, evangelism does aim at a response. "To dispense with the centrality of repentance and faith is to divest the gospel of its significance" (413).
6. Evangelism is always invitation; it is a hope we are holding out to the world.

7. The one who evangelizes is a witness not a judge. Jesus will separate the saved from the lost (Mt. 13:24-30), freeing us of this burden.
8. Even though we ought to be modest about the character and effectiveness of our witness, evangelism remains an indispensable ministry.
9. Evangelism is only possible when the community that evangelizes—the church—is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and exhibits an attractive lifestyle.
10. Evangelism offers people salvation as a present gift and with it assurance of eternal bliss. If the hope of eternal salvation takes center-stage then the gospel becomes little more than a consumer product. “It is not simply to *receive* life that people are called to become Christians, but to *give* life” (414).
11. Evangelism is not the same as church extension. “The focus in evangelism should not be on the *church* but on the irrupting *reign of God*” (415).
12. To distinguish between evangelism and membership recruitment is not to suggest, though, that they are disconnected. “Numerical growth is, therefore, in a sense nothing more than a byproduct when the church is true to its deepest calling. Of greater importance is organic and incarnational growth” (416).
13. Authentic evangelism is always contextual.
14. Evangelism cannot be divorced from the preaching and practice of justice. “To win people to Jesus is to win their allegiance to God’s priorities” (418).
15. Evangelism is not only verbal proclamation.

*In awareness of the essentially preliminary nature of our evangelistic ministry, yet at the same time conscious of the inescapable necessity to be involved in this ministry, we may, then, summarize evangelism as that dimension and activity of the church’s mission which, by word and deed and in the light of particular conditions and a particular context, offers every person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a radical reorientation of their lives, a reorientation which involves such things as deliverance from slavery to the world and its powers; embracing Christ as Savior and Lord; becoming a living member of his community, the church; being enlisted into his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth; and being committed to God’s purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ. (420)*

# ***It's Time...to Do Justice and Mercy***

***It's Time*** Supplement for May 20, 2007

**Session 6**

## ***Scripture Passages:***

Micah 6:8: He has showed you, O person, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Amos 5:6–15: Seek the LORD and live, or he will sweep through the house of Joseph like a fire; it will devour, and Bethel will have no one to quench it. You who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground (he who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns blackness into dawn and darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land—the LORD is his name—he flashes destruction on the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin), you hate the one who reproves in court and despise him who tells the truth. You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts. Therefore the prudent man keeps quiet in such times, for the times are evil. Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

**Summary Statements:** (To help you get a handle on the lesson truths.)

1. Mercy and Justice are nonnegotiables for the people of God.
2. Mercy and Justice touch upon every decision we make in our lives (the cars we buy, the houses we live in, the candidates we elect for public office...everything).

**Questions for Thought:** (To help you think of some questions to challenge with a “So What?”)

1. In what ways are you going to fight for justice as a Sunday school and as individuals?
2. In what ways are you going to practice acts of mercy as a Sunday school class and as individuals?

## Points to Ponder

Jim Wallis, in his international best selling book, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*, devotes five whole chapters to the issue of economic justice in America. Share these quotes with your class as touch points for discussion. Wallis writes:

The Republicans look after their wealthy constituents, and the Democrats want to be the champions of the middle class, but neither prioritizes the needs of the poor. Is that because the problems of poverty are disappearing in America? On the contrary, the poverty rate (including for children) has risen over the last three years, more people than ever are without health insurance, increasing numbers of people can't find affordable housing, and the minimum wage hasn't been raised for eight years. (222)

These words were written in 2004. Wallis continues:

The truth is that hungry people are going without food stamps, poor children are going without health care, elderly are going without medicine, and schoolchildren are going without textbooks because of war, tax cuts, and a lack of both attention and compassion from our political leaders. The moral contradictions are too great to ignore. The deepening injustice of America's domestic priorities is increasingly impossible to justify. It's becoming a religious issue. (222)

Last month Michael and I participated in a citywide Homeless Summit, the goal of which is to eliminate chronic homelessness in Atlanta within the next 10 years. This is an identifiable area of justice and mercy that our church family can easily roll up our sleeves and help with. We are strengthening our partnerships with Atlanta Union Mission, Buckhead Christian Ministry, The Stewart Center, and Habitat for Humanity in an effort to do our part in Atlanta...won't you and your class join us?

# ***It's Time...to Rediscover the Baptist Heritage***

***It's Time* Supplement for May 27, 2007**

**Session 7**

## ***Scripture Passage:***

Acts 16:30–31: He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

**Summary Statements:** (To help you get a handle on the lesson truths.)

1. Our Baptist heritage enables missional living by its heightened emphasis on lay leadership and corporate/individual freedom.
2. Missionality is at the heart of historic Baptist identity...and that's something we can be proud of.

**Questions for Thought:** (To help you think of some questions to challenge with a "So What?")

1. Are you proud to call yourself a Baptist? Why or why not?
2. In an era that some are calling "post-denominational" is the appellation 'Baptist' helpful?

## **Points to Ponder**

An excellent book, which I believe every Baptist should read, is Walter Shurden's *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. Here Shurden employs Martin Marty's term "baptistification" to denote the Baptist style of faith. Shurden writes, "Baptistification is a *spirit* that pervades all the Baptist principle or so-called Baptist distinctives. It is the spirit of Freedom" (2). Throughout the book, he explicates four primary freedoms that have proven central to Baptist faith and practice. Below I offer a few points that your class may like to discuss:

☉ **Bible Freedom:** Shurden notes that this freedom refers to freedom of interpretation *under* the Lordship of Christ (10-2). This is important because it implies that Christ himself is the final arbiter of proper hermeneutical appropriations of Scripture. No denomination, church or person supplants Christ's place as an arbiter of Truth. Bible freedom also means freedom "of" interpretation. Shurden avers, "The Bible is open to all believers. If believers are to be guided by Holy Scripture, believers must be free to interpret the Bible" (18).

☉ **Soul Freedom:** Shurden writes, "A strong streak of stubborn individualism weaves its way through the Baptist story, and anyone who deletes it both distorts our history and abuses our understanding of the Christian faith" (24). As beings who are created in the

image of God, we affirm the centrality of the individual who comes “personally, directly, and voluntarily” before God (25). The individual, as an autonomous agent, is given the place of primacy in Baptist life.

☉ **Church Freedom:** Shurden contends, “Baptists have a theology of the church that encourages relationships with non-Baptist Christians. At their best, Baptists have acknowledged that the one Body of Christ does not begin or end with their denomination or with a local Baptist church” (36). “Either the gospel drives us outside ourselves and outside the fellowship of the church into a world God loves or else the gospel has not captured our lives. Christians are not catch basins but conduits of God’s grace and compassion” (42). Baptists have church freedom that includes freedom within the church, from control from other Baptist groups, and for active participation in the larger world.

☉ **Religious Freedom:** Baptist freedom of religion transcends mere passive toleration. It is not a concession whimsically granted but a right ardently fought for. This means that all religious groups—not just Baptists—deserve equal freedom to worship in ways commensurate with their faith traditions without persecution from the state or other religious bodies. This also means that Baptists affirm the separation of church and state and resist any accommodation of church with state (50).

# ***It's Time...for Hope***

***It's Time Supplement for June 3, 2007***

**Session 8**

## ***Scripture Passage:***

2 Corinthians 4:1, 7–10: Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.... But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

**Summary Statements:** (To help you get a handle on the lesson truths.)

1. Hope is central to our life in Christ.
2. Our hope that God will continue the work that God has started in us ought to propel us out into the world to be Christ's presence to those in need.

**Questions for Thought:** (To help you think of some questions to challenge with a "So What?")

1. What signs of hope do you see for the Church in the emerging culture?
2. What signs of hope do you see at Wieuca Road Baptist Church?

## **Points to Ponder**

Jürgen Moltmann writes in his book, *Theology of Hope*:

Eschatology means the doctrine of the Christian hope, which embraces both the object hoped for and also the hope inspired by it. From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day. (16)

In a similar vein, missiologist David Bosch writes about the Christian hope. His words are so powerful, they are worth quoting in full:

Christian eschatology, then, moves in all three times: past, present, and future. The reign of God has already come, is coming, and will come in fullness. It is because God already rules and because we await the public manifestation of his rule that we may, in the here and now, be ambassadors of his kingdom. Christians can never be people of the status quo. They pray, "Your kingdom come ... on

earth as in heaven!” and interpret this both as a petition to God and as a challenge to themselves to attack evil structures around them. The fullness of the reign of God is still coming, but precisely the vision of that coming kingdom translates itself into a radical concern for the “penultimate” rather than a preoccupation with the “ultimate,” into a concern for “what is at hand” rather than for “what will be.” In Christ’s death and resurrection the new age has irreversibly begun and the future is guaranteed; living in the force-field of the assurance of salvation already received and the final victory already secured, the believer gets involved in the urgency of the task at hand. In this sense, eschatology is taking place right now. (508-9)

Daniel Vestel selected a fine title for his book: *It’s Time*. As Christians who live into our present reality with the eagerly expected hope provided by God through Christ, IT...IS...TIME! It is time that all of us at Wieuca Road Baptist Church embrace the missional way as a corporate body of believers, as participants in spiritually formative groups, and as individual ambassadors of God’s reign.