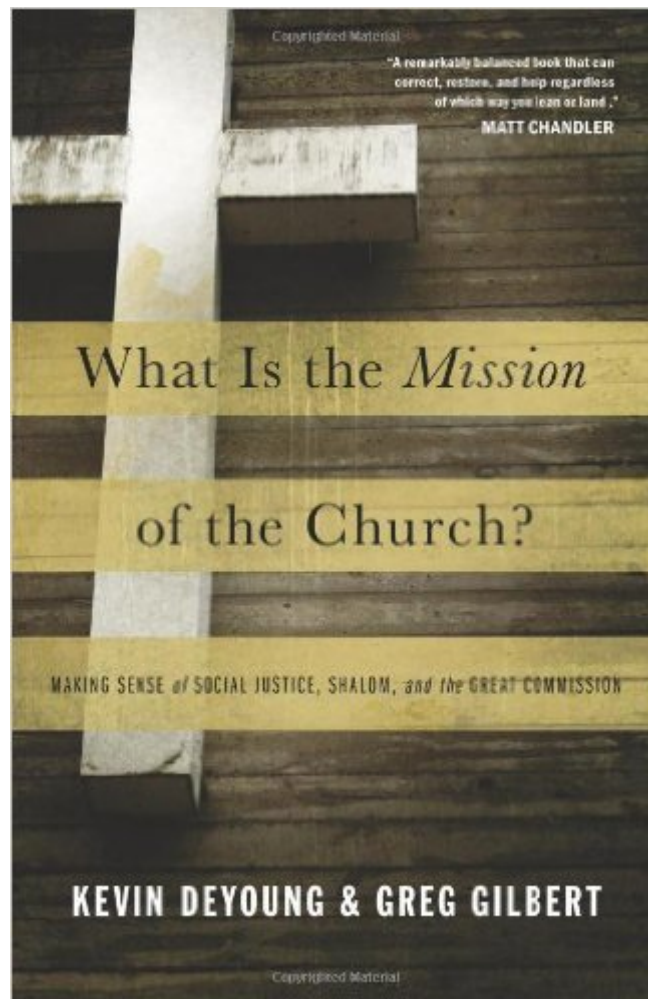


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# What Is The Mission Of The Church?: Making Sense Of Social Justice, Shalom, And The Great Commission



## Synopsis

Christians today define mission more broadly and variably than ever before. Are we, as the body of Christ, headed in the same direction or are we on divergent missions? Some argue that the mission of the Church is to confront injustice and alleviate suffering, doing more to express God's love for the world. Others are concerned that the church is in danger of losing its God-centeredness and thereby emphasize the proclamation of the gospel. It appears as though misunderstanding of mission persists. Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert believe there is a lot that evangelicals can agree on if only we employ the right categories and build our theology of mission from the same biblical building blocks. Explaining key concepts like kingdom, gospel, and social justice, DeYoung and Gilbert help us to get on the same page "united by a common cause" and launch us forward into the true mission of the church.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm not sure whether to give this book 3 or 4 stars... The central thesis is true, but I found this book highly frustrating. I simply don't think it lives up to the praise given by those who endorsed it. First, I should clarify that I listened to the audio version, so have not been able to read footnotes, of which there apparently are many. That said, a few comments: Pro: \* I agree with the main thesis, that the mission of the church is first and foremost the Great Commission. I'm not sure whether I would limit it to only that however, --surely the mission of the church can have a wide angle as well as a zoom perspective, just as the authors note regarding the word "gospel" in Scripture. That said, it is very important to say that only in Christ can one enter the kingdom of God, find shalom, etc.\* There are

many good observations about the Kingdom of God, the biblical use of the word "gospel," etc.\* The authors attempt some meaningful exegesis, sometimes helpfully.\* There is a good warning against expecting too much success in establishing shalom here and now, while still in the "not-yet" stage of redemption history. Cons:\* The text alone (minus the footnotes I couldn't hear) leaves one thinking that John Stott and especially Christopher Wright must be some evil liberal heretics. I didn't notice anything positive said about either man. Wright in particular gets picked on as an example of someone who is confused about the mission of the church. Someone who had never read him (as I have) would get the impression from this book that he believes things that I am sure he does not.\* On the other hand, Tim Keller is quoted positively several times. This is good (in my mind), but curious...

As a pastor for over twenty years you see a lot of fads come and go in the way churches seek to make an impact in our communities and culture. I have never met a pastor (worth his salt) who didn't want to be pleasing to God and make a difference for the sake of Christ in his community and culture. However, I have become more and more concerned as I see pastors watering down the message of the gospel; focusing more on programs than on the message of the gospel; and being influenced more by the culture, than influencing culture with the message of the Bible. Therefore, I wholeheartedly endorse and applaud this latest offering on the "mission" of the church because I think it is an excellent treatment of the relevant biblical passages and how they bear on the issues we are facing in the 21st century on what the mission/purpose of the church should be. It is missional and Biblical; truthful and loving without compromise; theologically profound and culturally relevant. Without giving away the mission of the church as defined and defended in this book, I can say that DeYoung and Gilbert do a fantastic job of discussing issues like helping the poor, economics and social justice, the Kingdom, the gospel, and how a church can make an impact on the world without sacrificing the truth and absolutes. The strengths of this book lie in its simplicity and clarity, exposition and insightful interpretation of the Scriptures, and its very clear explanation and application of the gospel as revealed in the 66 books of the Bible. I recommend this book especially for pastor's young and old, leadership teams of churches, missionaries, and Christians who want to know how they can be purposefully a part of the only organization of which the "gates of hell will not prevail.

DeYoung and Gilbert have given us a biblically sound, clearly presented, well researched, and relevantly desired book on the "Mission of the Church." There are three particular strengths that set

this book apart from other books on this very topic of the Church's relation to mission, culture, and the world. First, the points made in this book are built on Scripture explanation and Scripture application. The authors aim to clarify the misunderstanding and misapplication of various Scripture passages. For example, take the topic of Social Justice and the Poor; the authors aren't merely citing various passages of Scripture to make their point. Instead, they carefully take every commonly used passage of Scripture concerning Social Justice and the Poor, and proceed to explain each individual passage in its own context. At the conclusion of each chapter, the reader walks away with a better understanding of God's Word, rather than a fistful of arguments. Second, this book is well researched. If you desire to read one book on the mission of the church, then DeYoung and Gilbert have read and consulted most if not all of the classic and recent books on this topic. Earlier this year I read a handful of books on the topic of Church and Culture. A few of the more helpful reads were: Tim Keller's *Generous Justice*, David VanDrunen's *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, and James Davison Hunter's *To Change the World*. In this book, DeYoung and Gilbert pull from some of the key points made by Keller, VanDrunen, Hunter, as well as other authors. Therefore, if time is of essence, I would recommend reading just this one. Thirdly, DeYoung and Gilbert wrote with a pastoral approach. This book did not read like an academic monograph.

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