

The christian faith is  
intrinsically  
missionary religion  
essay



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David Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission* makes the point that 'The Christian faith, I submit, is intrinsically missionary... this dimension of the Christian faith is not an optional task: Christianity is missionary by its very nature or it denies its very *raison d'être*'[1]. The author makes us understand as Christian Youth workers it is a fundamental requirement of our belief for us to engage in the mission of God by been a witness to the world.

God's mission which he gave to us in Matthew 28 known as the great commission must be the key and driving force behind the work we do with our young people. As youth workers we need to be aware that in order to fulfil the great commission we need to develop ourselves biblically and have a passion to evangelise every young people in our local community as well as the whole world. Bosch stated that 'There is church because there is mission and not vice versa.'[2]Through its nature and vocation, the church is a missionary community; hence mission is intrinsic to the very life and calling of the church. Moltmann also argues in support of Bosch that 'Mission does not come from the church; it is from mission that the church has to be understood.'[3]Hence our youth club or group exist due to God's wider mission. Our youth group needs to understand that we are called to be the agent of God's missionary task in whatever community we find ourselves and as quoted by Bosch 'God is a missionary God, God's people are a missionary people.'[4]Folmsbee also argues in support of Bosch that 'Mission is an attribute of God that's best understood from God's narrative. God is a missionary God, and therefore mission must be seen as God's movement into the world. That's the exact opposite of how it's often viewed, which is that mission is the primary activity of the church.'[5]In order to

sustain their faith in the mission and in God's work, those in the ministry believe that the mission work belongs to God and that they are simply his instruments working in the world.

In order to discuss how the evangelistic task directed at young people fits into God's wider mission, we need to have a clear understanding of what mission is using Bosch as the main reference point by unpacking his quote The Christian faith is intrinsically missionary. This essay will be looking at a variety of sources drawn from the Bible and Christian literature to establish what is God's wider mission, how we can tailor our assignment toward the young people using Christ ministry as the model for our outreach programme in the Christian youth work.

What is Mission? Bosch stated the term mission assumes ' a sender, a person or persons sent by the sender, those to whom one is sent, and an assignment.'[6]In the book of John 20: 21, we see the missionary mandate of Jesus which he passed to his own disciple ' As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'[7]Christianity has always been an evangelical religion, where believer go out into the wider world and spread the message of the Gospel in order to bring all of humanity into the kingdom of Heaven. Ever since the fall, God's mission on earth is to return a fallen mankind to his presence, fully redeemed. Thus, He sent Jesus to earth to minister to the people before being sacrificed for the sins of the world. In the word of Bosch while citing the work of Hering's, '...mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.'[8]Frost <https://assignbuster.com/the-christian-faith-is-intrinsically-missionary-religion-essay/>

& Hirsch supported Bosch's argument by stating ' we will see the church differently no longer as a religious institution but as a community of Jesus followers devoted to participating in his mission.'[9]As youth worker we need to begin to see our work with the young people as us participating in the mission of God by fulfilling the work of reconciliation and restoration of all creation back to Him and also bringing hope to the world. Any aim different from this thus means that God is not at the centre of our mission but us trying to do our own agenda. It is okay for youth workers to have an agenda but the sole purpose must be for our young people to encounter the good news, Booker writes we need '...to try to connect our 'missions' with God's agenda and activity in mission'[10]. It is very vital that as youth workers that we are very clear about what the mission of God is all about before we engage the young people in it.

Bosch referring to Aagaard writes ' Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the mission Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another movement: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.'[11]Hirsch & Frost argues that we need to '...through the paradigm of the mission Dei to find the sent and sending God.'[12]As part of the evangelistic task, youth workers need to beginning to help the young people find God through Jesus in the work that they do with them, through the teaching, worship, prayer and all our activities. A classic example that the youth worker can use will be

the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6 vs 9 -13, Jesus taught his disciple how to see the father through the model of prayer.

In the pluralistic society there is a need to get the young people to believe in the word of God. However, in an age of rising secularism, the current focus of the youth worker is to reach out to the young people before they completely form a secular/humanist belief system or get taken in by other faiths in their search for meaning. Youth worker need to help the young person to know how to belong in order to get a taster of the relationship with Jesus because in belonging they encounter God which is the whole purpose of the mission Dei.[13]

The Christian mission is about incarnation and crucifixion, and they both go hand in hand. Incarnation is about meeting people where they are with the gospel of the cross. God showed us the example to follow when he sent his Son into the world to pay the price for our sin. The gospel of John chapter 1: 14 states ' The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. ...the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth'[14]Hirsch stated ' if God's central way of reaching his world was to incarnate himself in Jesus, then our way of reaching the world should likewise be incarnational'[15]As youth workers, we need to begin to identify with the young people we are working with or trying to reach by moving into their world so that we are able to clearly see their challenges and struggles in order to know how to effectively direct our missional task of reaching them for God. Frost argues that '...we must take seriously the call to live incarnationally-right up close, near to those whom God desires to redeem.'[16]This was further argued by Hirsch(s) that as youth worker we <https://assignbuster.com/the-christian-faith-is-intrinsically-missionary-religion-essay/>

need to move out of our normal religious zones into our local community and be part of it, this may mean going into the school or anywhere where the young people gathers and guide them to find the redeeming grace of God.

[17]As stated by Dave Newton, ' we need to get alongside young people and their needs in order to demonstrate God's love.'[18]The youth workers will work with them rather than work for them in their journey of making a decision regarding faith. According to Bosch, ' The churches, by and large have an underdeveloped theology of the incarnation [while] the churches of the east have always taken the incarnation more seriously'[19]mission Dei has now been submerged under the liberation theology. The liberation theology is about the people to the structure while incarnation theology is for both the unique message of Christ and the messenger to be incarnated within the culture being reached. Paul summarise the incarnational message in 1 Corinthian 9: 19-23 that for the sake of the gospel he will become all things to every tribe, people or culture as long as he is able to win as many as possible. Graham Cray writes ' Youth ministry has become a matter of cross-cultural mission. It involves entering into the young people's world and honouring them by taking it as seriously as they do.'[20]As youth workers, we need to be creative and imaginative in our missionary work amongst the young people, in the way we present the message of the cross to them; we need ' to help them to find Christ [were they are] and equip them to be agents of his kingdom.'[21]The whole message of the New Testament is Christ making an effect on humanity through the redemptive power of redemption. John 3: 16 show us how the ever giving God through incarnation brought Christ out to the whole world. In summary, ' Incarnational ministry essentially means taking the church to the people, rather than bringing

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people to the church.’[22]We don’t have to do church the way we have always done it[23], youth workers needs to take the gospel to the place where our young people are based in our local community [most especially in the current changing trend in youth culture] that is church needs to be done inside out as the previous trend of let them come to us will not work with the current culture.

Mission as Evangelism is essential for creating communities of believers. Bosch gives a good definition of evangelism when he writes ‘ Mission includes evangelism as one of its essential dimensions. Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin, and inviting them to become living members of Christ’s earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit’[24]25Paul, in his ministry, ensured that the new Christian community would have a solid ethical and moral framework for making decisions. In a world where religious competition was extremely high (with the large number of pagan cults), a theological framework was absolutely necessary to spread the Christian faith that way, parents could be the first to evangelize their young people and pass a complete model of faith downward through the generations. It is possible that such a complete framework led to the eventual dominance of Christianity in Europe and its endurance in modern times when there was no longer any threat of ‘ convert or be killed’ and pagans are no longer burned at the stake. ‘ The thoroughness of Paul’s mission practice is that he was not content merely with evangelism and church planting but was concerned to build mature communities of believers who could think biblically through the

ethical issues they faced in the ambient culture.’[26] Bosch was very clear when he said that ‘ Evangelism is only possible when the community that evangelizes is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and exhibits an attractive lifestyle’.[27] Our youth people do not just want to hear words from us but wants to see us live out our lifestyle in a way that attracts them to the faith we are proclaiming. James 2 verse 18 ‘ But someone will say, “ You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.’[28]

Youth workers need to understand that for their missionary task towards the young people to have impact, relationships must be developed amongst the young people. Jesus our role model kept reminding us of the relationship he had with his own Father, the whole of his ministry on earth flowed from this relationship with the people he encounter (Christians and non Christians alike) as well as his disciples. The whole of the New Testament shows us that relationship is very important in our mission to impact the life of our neighbours and to reconcile the broken relationship with the Father.

Sudworth et al citing Mike Breen writes, ‘ Relationships are the only means we have of enabling and encouraging young people to reach maturity in their physical, emotional, social and spiritual lives.’[29] Youth workers need create an environment or community where they could practice the presence right under the young people’s noses; we need to look for ways to make God present for the young people we are serving. Hirsh made us understand ‘ presence highlights the role of relationships in mission. If relationship is the key means in the transfer of the gospel, then it simply means we are going to have to be directly present to the people in our circle. Our very lives are



our message and we cannot take ourselves out of the equation of mission.'[30]

The kingdom of God was central to Christ wider mission.

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