

Sample Passage – What is Missiology?

From: God's Family Business by Paul York

What Is Missiology?

The three spheres of activity in God's mission can be diagrammed as three circles: God, the people of God, and the peoples of the world. These circles have the potential to partially overlap, which allows us to portray them as a Venn diagram (see figure 1). The circles have a double significance. First, they represent three kinds of individuals (first, the three-in-one Trinity that includes the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; second, God's redeemed people; and third, the peoples or nations of the world). Second, they represent three areas of study and action that are combined to form a discipline called missiology.

Missiology is an interdisciplinary study, which means that it combines elements of narrower disciplines into a new composite field of study and of active missionary practice. The reason missiology sounds a little complex at first is that the world we live in is a complex place. Our tools for working in God's mission in the real world must be able to address the variety and complexity of situations that exist in the human family.

Figure 1. The three circles of Christian mission.

The three groups of individuals described by the three circles are present as main characters throughout the books of the Bible. The three areas of study and action that the circles represent will help us to focus on things we can do today to help us live as the last-days, Spirit-empowered, missionary people of God (Acts 1:6–11).

While most books on missiology focus on the academic study of the three circles, applied missiology goes beyond intellectual conceptualization and description. Applied missiology works to help specific Christian people engage the three circles more effectively by developing their personal experiences, intellectual studies, spiritual sensitivities, and ministerial skills at the same time. Applied missiology brings insights from traditional academic missiology into the active, interpersonal world of missions (Christian disciple making). Historically, Pentecostal or Spirit-filled fellowships of Christians have been more interested in developing their applied missiology than in describing an academic missiology. This means that although Pentecostal Christian fellowships have had a large impact on world missions, they have not written many books about it. This leaves a gap that we will try to address.

The three circles serve as three separate doorways that a follower of Jesus can enter to gain a better understanding of Mission (the overarching mission of God in our world, as well as the more specific mission of the Church among the world's people groups). These three doorways are also the key entrance points into a life actively engaged in Missions (the specific kinds of work done by Christian volunteers and full-time missionaries).