

The content of the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* course is undergirded by an integrated set of core ideas. While there are many other ideas in the course that are part of an orthodox Christian worldview, these core ideas are not commonplace. This document introduces these distinctives. Each of these is expanded in an accompanying document not only to articulate them, but also to differentiate them from other viewpoints. The course is designed to provide these key ideas which are normally lacking in the instruction available to most believers.

We desire to provide a philosophical framework for understanding the curriculum's essential core. We hope this will also serve as a guide to those developing supporting curricula and resources. As the *Perspectives* Movement continues to expand internationally into other languages and cultural contexts, this framework will help those adapting the course to transfer the core concepts rather than merely translating the material.

It is important to note that this is not a summary of the course content (i.e. the specific teaching objectives such as the Kingdom of God, understanding worldview, appropriate contextualization, etc.). Additional tools are currently under development to list content items and relate them to resources used to teach them.

1. God initiates and advances work in history to accomplish His purpose.
2. God calls His people to join Him in fulfilling His purpose.
3. God's purpose is to bless all peoples so that Christ will be served and glorified among all peoples.
4. God accomplishes His purpose by triumphing over evil in order to rescue and bless people and to establish His kingdom rule throughout the earth.
5. The Bible is a unified story of God's purpose.
6. God's work in history has continuity and will come to an ultimate culmination.
7. The Christian movement has brought about positive social transformation.
8. The mission task can and will be completed.
9. The world's population can be viewed in terms of people groups.
10. The progress of world evangelization can be assessed in terms of church-planting movements within people groups.
11. Completing the mission task requires the initiation and growth of church-planting movements that follow social avenues of influence.
12. Completing the task requires effective cross-cultural evangelism that follows communication patterns within cultures.
13. Completing the task requires strategic wholism in which community development is integrated with church planting.
14. Completing the task requires collaborative efforts of churches and mission agencies from diverse cultures and traditions.
15. God calls His people to embrace strategic sacrifice and suffering with Christ in order to accomplish His global purpose.
16. By participating in the world Christian movement, every believer can find a way to live with vital, strategic significance in God's global purpose.

**1. God initiates and advances work in history to accomplish His purpose.**

*Expanding the idea:*

God is the source of mission. Because of His abiding desire and love, God acts with intelligence, emotion and will, moving throughout history toward the fulfillment of His purposes. The Latin phrase *missio Dei*—the mission of God—has been used to describe God at work in history to accomplish what He has purposed. Ultimately mission is not a response to human need but a pursuit of divine purpose.

*What this idea supports:*

Christians can engage in mission activity with the vital legitimacy of knowing that their efforts contribute to the accomplishment of God's global purpose. While Christian mission invariably responds to human need, ultimately it is the reality of God's initiative and purpose that helps Christians avoid the absurdity of being self-sent by their own convictions or compassion.

**2. God calls His people to join Him in fulfilling His purpose.**

*Expanding the idea:*

God authorizes and invites people to join Him in mission and gives them the needed authority and power to carry out His purpose. The mission of God is always greater than the mission task He has given His people to complete. With God, His people pursue promised destiny instead of merely laboring to perform duty. God works with His people in a personal and relational way so that there is intimacy and dignity in the mission task. Even when His people fail to obey Him fully, God still pursues His purpose, sometimes even using the disobedience of His people for His purpose.

*What this idea controverts:*

Mission obedience is never a condition of God's covenantal love. Instead, God's call to mission is a high dignity and privilege for those who respond. God does not utilize people; instead He invites people to become more closely related to Him as they join Him in the mission venture by choosing to fully use their fully engaged intellect, emotion and will. Since mission is always accomplished in personal relationship with God, mission should not be presented as a matter of volunteerism or opportunism.

**3. God's purpose is to bless all peoples so that Christ will be served and glorified among all peoples.**

*Expanding the idea:*

God intends to bless people from every people group on earth. God's blessing brings transformation in every dimension of human life: physical, social and spiritual. As communities of people come to obey and glorify Christ, their communities experience lasting transformation. Conversely, as communities come to experience the blessing and salvation of God in Christ, God is glorified. The blessing and salvation God gives people is obviously of infinite worth. And yet the ultimate reason for blessing and

salvation is for the glory and delight of God. In this sense, world evangelization is more for God than it is for people.

*What this idea controverts:*

Unless the outcome of mission is seen as bringing about something valuable for God, then mission is reduced to an enterprise which benefits people. If mission is understood in such a humanistic framework, then mission can easily be understood strictly as a matter of responding to human needs. Regardless of how wholistic the array of human need may be, if mission is understood in a humanistic framework, mission usually becomes a matter of mobilizing human resources to meet human needs. Mission that is not for God is rarely seen for very long as being from God or by God. True mission is ultimately from God, through God, and to Him again.

#### **4. God accomplishes His purpose by triumphing over evil in order to rescue and bless people and to establish His kingdom rule throughout the earth.**

*Expanding the idea:*

God has judged and fought against evil throughout history. He will ultimately triumph over evil. The greatest stroke of judgment against evil resulting in salvation for people was accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus. As groups of people come to glorify and obey the risen Christ, they find that His kingdom governance brings genuine transformation and substantial measures of God's intended justice to their communities. It is this triumph over evil and the transformation of communities by Christ's effective Lordship that constitutes the blessing of the nations.

*What this idea is not:*

God's people are not mandated to bring an absolute end to every evil. The mandate Christ gives in this age is limited to bringing about communities liberated from evil and blessed in obedient allegiance to Christ. God will ultimately vanquish every evil at the end of the age. A war against evil is not a triumphalistic license to go on conquest against every perceived evil. God's war must be waged with God's ways of suffering with Christ in liberating service.

*What this idea supports:*

As Christians labor to overcome evil in all of its forms and to bring healing to the harm that it brings, they can know that they are co-working with God in His longstanding war against evil. Petitionary prayer is essentially missionary prayer because it pursues God's purpose by asking Him to intervene in order to accomplish His purpose of overcoming evil and establishing His kingdom blessing.

#### **5. The Bible is a unified story of God's purpose.**

*Expanding this idea:*

The most important factor in helping students form a vision and commitment to fulfilling God's global purpose is to help them see the Bible as a unified story of God's work in the world unfolding in real history. The stories and prophetic statements flow together as one unfolding drama.

*What this idea is not:*

This idea is not about simply finding many references to universal themes such as “all the earth” or “every creature.” Nor is it a matter of finding verses referring to “the nations” in every book of the Bible. It’s about a story, not about only finding repeated recurrent words or truths. It is not just a long story. It is the big story. What makes it big is that it is a story about God. This story is reflected, but not fully expressed in what has been commonly called “salvation history.” It’s not ultimately a story about people and how they get saved. It is a story about God, and how He brings glory and followers to Himself from all peoples.

*What this idea controverts:*

Without the Bible as single, unified story, we are left facing a desperate moment in a world of great need, deriving hope from trends and framing mandate around isolated biblical passages. Certainly there are commandments and examples of compassionate action. Bible verses can be used to prove the importance of any number of agendas or causes. But God’s mandate is framed around what He has been and will be accomplishing throughout history. By helping students see God at work in a great, unified story, their lives and convictions can be built on a solid framework of biblical substance.

## **6. God’s work in history has continuity and will come to an ultimate culmination.**

*Expanding this idea:*

We do not move through chronological time as if it were random chaos. From the beginning, God is both master over and participant within His creation. The unfolding of His purpose is central to all of history. If there is continuity in history, then there can also be culmination of history. What God has promised must be fulfilled. What God has purposed He will accomplish. This is the very essence of biblical hope.

*What this idea is not:*

The culmination of history has a strong connection to the idea (Idea 8) that the mission task can and will be completed. However, we need to distinguish between our completing the missionary task and God bringing about the end of the age. God remains the governor of history. While there is some linkage between Christ’s coming and the completion of missionary task, we must be careful not to suggest that by our actions we can somehow control history and “make” Jesus come back.

*What this idea controverts:*

Most students have a modified B.O.B.O. (Blink-On, Blink-Off) view of history, in which God has only been occasionally involved. However, God’s purpose is never abandoned and then restarted again. This idea frees us from the despair of thinking that God is absent or has done all that He is ever going to do.

*What this idea supports:*

We can honor God’s work in and through previous generations. We can work with courageous humility that our efforts continue what others have done and can be continued by later generations. This idea also supports the idea that God is

accomplishing more than what He has given us to complete. We can work with courageous zeal toward the things that God has promised to fulfill, but has not mandated us to complete (for example, justice for the poor, reconciliation of all peoples, an end to biological evil, and many more).

### **7. The Christian movement has brought about positive social transformation.**

*Expanding this idea:*

One cannot hold the conviction that God will eventually make His people to be a blessing for all peoples and also subscribe to the common view that God's people have invariably been a curse upon the nations. God has indeed brought substantial blessing upon the societies of earth. An accurate telling of the long story of God's work through His people will point out the terrible failures of His people as well as the progressive increase of His blessing.

*What this idea supports:*

This idea is important when we emphasize the strategic importance of planting new churches in order to bring about lasting social transformation. This "transformational development" is essential to see how evangelism and social action can and should be integrated.

*What this idea is not:*

We are not trying to deny that mistakes have been made. Students must recognize that significant harm has been done in Christ's name. We are not trying to say that every church will automatically or quickly transform its society.

### **8. The mission task can and will be completed.**

*Expanding this idea:*

This idea is sometimes described with the single word "closure," referring to God's intention that the missionary task be done with a view to finishing it. The term "mission task" or "missionary task" refers to what Christians have been clearly mandated to accomplish in scripture. One way to state that task: to establish Christ-following movements among every people group so that the gospel is eventually proclaimed throughout every people group, giving every person an opportunity to understand the gospel and follow Christ. Most needs and opportunities can be prioritized according to how they might help complete the entire task.

*What this idea supports:*

The concept of unreached people groups only makes sense with the idea of closure. The world's unreached people groups are not the neediest peoples. They are the remaining peoples.

*What this idea supports:*

The conviction that the entire task must be completed becomes an important strategic criterion for mission leaders in allocating mission resources and deploying missionaries. This conviction is every bit as important for individual Christians and

local churches to make strategic choices about lifestyle and labor in order to make their best contribution to completing the entire global task.

*What this idea controverts:*

Some have asserted that the missionary task is an unending effort never intended to be completed. Those who hold this view often dismiss the idea of framing the task in terms of people groups, focusing their efforts on the obviously unending task of conveying the gospel to every person.

## **9. The world's population can be viewed in terms of people groups.**

*Expanding this idea:*

For the purposes of evangelization, it's important to understand how culture, social forces, language, history and other factors work together to form lasting groupings called people groups. The gospel flourishes amidst a people group, and moves with more difficulty between people groups.

*What this idea supports:*

Seeing the world's population as individuals, or even as countries defined by geopolitical boundaries, can be helpful for some aspects of mission. But seeing humanity as a mosaic of people groups is strategically important when analyzing the entire task of world evangelization. Since every people group will require a unique approach and strategy, it becomes important to understand distinctive features of the peoples.

## **10. The progress of world evangelization can be assessed in terms of church-planting movements within people groups.**

*Expanding this idea:*

Since the mission task of world evangelization can be completed, progress toward the finishing of the task can and should be assessed in order to make strategic decisions. Church-planting movements are the best way to evangelize entire people groups. A church is defined as a group of people committed to obeying Christ. "Church-planting movements" describes the phenomenon of churches multiplying as they are given leadership and encouragement. Church-planting movements so effectively multiply congregations that they eventually evangelize entire populations. Church-planting movements are the best beginning points for efforts that result in lasting social transformation. Because indigenous churches are able to reproduce rapidly, it is feasible to complete the task of world evangelization.

*What this idea controverts:*

Highlighting the primacy of the church as an evangelizing force helps students from individualistic societies recognize that evangelism does not depend so much on effective individuals as it does on the power of planting self-reproducing churches. Students from slow-growing, highly institutional churches will recognize that different kinds of churches are needed among unreached peoples.

*What this idea supports:*

Assessing progress toward the completion of the entire mission task is necessary in order to identify the peoples in which the gospel has yet to make a beginning, and to make strategic decisions about missionary deployment. Without condemning churches of any tradition, we present the importance for vibrant, simple church-planting movements among the world's unreached peoples. Because church-planting movements are tangible realities, different mission agencies and churches can strategically co-labor to complete the entire task.

### **11. Completing the mission task requires the initiation and growth of church-planting movements that follow social avenues of influence.**

*Expanding this idea:*

Students need to understand how church-planting movements spread within a people group in order to recognize, value and labor strategically toward that end. The most important dynamics of people movements are forces best described with the vocabulary and concepts from the field of sociology rather than anthropology. Some of these concepts—such as multi-individual group decisions and the influence of family structures—help students grasp the difficulty as well as the feasibility of starting church-planting movements.

*What this idea is not:*

Reviewing the basic principle doesn't mean that students are equipped to do church planting. Instead, they're exposed to the vision of accomplishing the task through church-planting movements.

*What this idea controverts:*

Because evangelical tradition honors the communication of the gospel message, it might seem to many students that evangelizing a people group is only a matter of effective proclamation. However, pioneer church planters actually find that their main task is to help new movements survive, and eventually thrive in their social setting. Without awareness of this practical wisdom, students might focus on matters of communication to a culture and miss the more crucial matters of conversion within culture. Without insight into the dynamics of pioneer church planting, contextualization will be seen as a matter of contextualizing the message instead of seeing the more important matter of helping the resulting movements to grow effectively within their social contexts.

### **12. Completing the task requires effective cross-cultural evangelism that follows communication patterns within cultures.**

*Expanding this idea:*

Effective communication of the gospel requires a readiness to contextualize the message in appropriate cultural forms. Wise gospel communicators make efforts to grasp worldview, beliefs, values and behavior patterns of the people group they are

attempting to reach. Then they can carefully convey the truth of the gospel in ways that are persuasive and reproducible. The discipline of cultural anthropology provides most of the contributing concepts.

*What this idea is not:*

Reviewing the concepts related to this idea (such as finding a redemptive analogy, and communicating at a worldview level) will not provide adequate training in cross-cultural communication. The introduction may avert some the worst-case scenarios, but the main point is to expose students to the complexity and feasibility of effective cross-cultural communication.

### **13. Completing the task requires strategic wholism in which community development is integrated with church planting.**

*Expanding this idea:*

Fruitful efforts of evangelization invariably integrate relief and development endeavors. Development efforts aim to help local people to mobilize local resources to meet basic needs in enduring ways. The long-range fruit is for social transformation in which Christ is recognized for what He has done to bless entire communities and for His kingdom values, which characterize the people known to be His followers. The integration of evangelism and social endeavors should be strategic, by which we mean that the integration is framed on a time line which positions in some strategic sequence some of the various relief, development, evangelization, and transformation efforts. The best strategic approach will sometimes call for social transformation to precede or accompany evangelization efforts. But in most situations, evangelism is essential to infuse the values of Christ's kingdom into the community.

*What this idea is not:*

We are not echoing the common cry for a "both-and" balance wholism. A commonplace platitude regarding a balance of evangelism and social action would say "It's not either-or, but both-and."

*What this idea controverts:*

Without a clear strategic integration, people involved in evangelization efforts find themselves unable to respond to the charge that they only care about people's souls. Would be practitioners can find themselves diverted from wholistic effectiveness by pouring efforts into relief efforts or offer assistance which unwittingly traps people in a debilitating dependence.

### **14. Completing the task requires collaborative efforts of churches and mission agencies from diverse cultures and traditions.**

*Expanding this idea:*

The enormous diversity of Christian streams and traditions has long contributed to world evangelization. The explosive growth of non-Western Christian movements means that Western Christians will likely remain a minority until the end of the age. Many vigorous mission efforts have been emerging from non-Western churches in



recent decades. This idea goes far beyond a passive recognition that many diverse efforts are at work. Students need to see the necessity and long-range wisdom of intentional collaboration and partnership, particularly between Western and non-Western missions and churches.

*What this idea controverts:*

It's very easy to presume that mission efforts must be initiated, funded and controlled by one's national churches and leaders. It's even easier to enter into partnerships with churches and organizations which end up diminishing overall fruitfulness in the long run.

**15. God calls His people to embrace strategic sacrifice and suffering with Christ in order to accomplish His global purpose.**

*Expanding this idea:*

God calls His people, without coercion, to fulfill His mandate in costly ways. This willing readiness to do whatever it takes to fulfill the particular assignment that God gives is best understood as joining with the living Lord Jesus in His ongoing suffering. Living for Christ and His Kingdom purpose will involve intentional sacrifice to live a lifestyle of strategic simplicity, sometimes called a "war-time" lifestyle. Accomplishing the missionary task in most people groups usually involves many years of difficult labor. Christians seeking to worship and follow Christ and to fulfill the task of evangelization in settings of hostility to the gospel will often suffer, sometimes involuntarily, but often willingly and strategically.

*What this idea is not:*

We do not mean to imply that a life consecrated to fulfilling God's global purpose will be a bitter, joyless struggle. On the contrary, there is great joy in living with Christ for the gospel.

*What this idea controverts:*

It's not unusual to find a mentality that missionary task can be accomplished quickly and easily with mass media and clever marketing techniques. Mission strategy should never begin by trying to find the easiest way. Mission can only be accomplished in the authentic life-giving ways of Christ as seen in scripture. Life-giving mission effort invariably means that whole lives are freely given. Short-term mission efforts can be very valuable components of most mission efforts. But in most settings, cross-cultural communication is essential. Such cross-cultural communication usually requires missionaries to have long-standing relationships requiring years of work.

**16. By participating in the world Christian movement, every believer can find a way to live with vital, strategic significance in God's global purpose.**

*Expanding this idea:*

Students are invited to live as "world Christians," following Christ with growing awareness and commitment to His global purposes. That discipleship should shape

every area of life, integrating a believer's life around Christ's global purpose. How that vision and commitment is lived out can be done in a variety of ways. The distinction of senders (supporters or mobilizers) and go-ers (cross-cultural missionaries, located home or abroad) frees people to focus on aligning their lives with God's global purpose instead of making issues of geography and job description a primary matter.

*What this idea controverts:*

A general impression still remains that missions is the business of professional missionaries. Other Christians may have an interest, but feel that they have no compelling part in missions unless they become missionaries. The global culture of materialism assails and corrupts world Christian discipleship. It's unlikely that many students will succeed in integrating their lives for God's purpose without a challenge to live in a counter-cultural way.