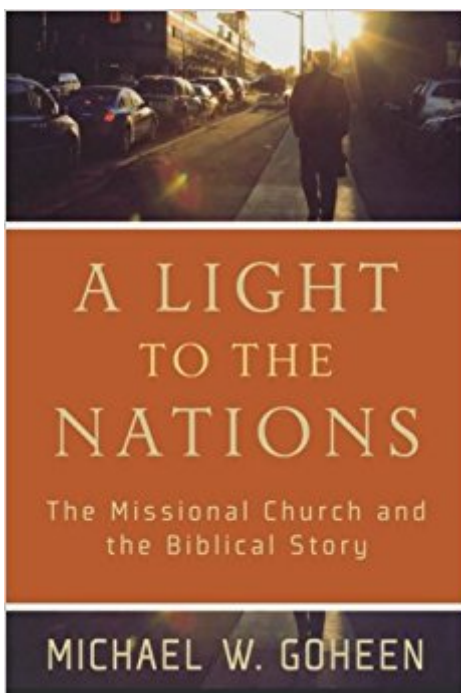


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# A Light To The Nations: The Missional Church And The Biblical Story



## Synopsis

There is a growing body of literature about the missional church, but the word missional is often defined in competing ways with little attempt to ground it deeply in Scripture. Michael Goheen, a dynamic speaker and the co-author of two popular texts on the biblical narrative, unpacks the missional identity of the church by tracing the role God's people are called to play in the biblical story. Goheen shows that the church's identity can be understood only when its role is articulated in the context of the whole biblical story—not just the New Testament, but the Old Testament as well. He also explores practical outworkings and implications, offering field-tested suggestions for contemporary churches.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Missional Impulse in the Biblical Narrative"Goheen expertly traces the continuities of and developments in the Bible's grand story of the people of God, showing that at every stage God's people exist for the sake of God's mission to all the peoples of the world. Here is the biblical depth needed for the contemporary church's reflection on and practice of its missional identity."--Richard Bauckham, University of St. Andrews, Scotland; Ridley Hall, Cambridge"A book that stands out from the crowd and merits careful attention, A Light to the Nations is a much-needed and well-crafted basic text for the biblical study of the missional church. Based on careful reading and interpretation of an impressive range of biblical scholars, Goheen's book engages the scholarly voices that merit serious interaction, lays out the major themes of a biblical theology of the missional church, and

offers an integrative approach that will stimulate further investigation. Certainly it will become a staple of college and seminary syllabi dealing with the church and its mission. Pastors, congregations, and mission agencies will find in this book biblical orientation for faithful mission in a time of rapid and challenging change."--Darrell L. Guder, Princeton Theological Seminary

"A Light to the Nations masterfully calls readers to a renewed missional imagination. Goheen traces the missional theme through Scripture, enabling us to see that his vision is not really new but the rediscovery of the robust, missional ecclesiology that has always characterized the people of God at their best. Goheen leads us into an expansive vision of what it means to be God's called, eschatological people embodying the new creation. If you long to understand what it really means to be a missional church, not as a simple slogan but as our deepest identity, then this book is the indispensable road map. I heartily recommend it!"--Timothy C. Tennent, Asbury Theological Seminary

"Based on the whole biblical narrative, this book is a powerful presentation of what it takes for a missional church in the twenty-first century to be 'A Light to the Nations.' It is both compelling and persuasive!"--Gerald H. Anderson, Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, CT

Michael W. Goheen (PhD, University of Utrecht) is Director of Theological Education and Scholar-in-Residence at the Missional Training Center--Phoenix. He is also Jake and Betsy Tuls Professor of Missiology at Calvin Theological Seminary, as well as Senior Fellow of Newbigin House of Studies and minister of preaching at New West Christian Reformed Church in Burnaby, British Columbia. He is the author or coauthor of a number of books, including *The Drama of Scripture*, *Living at the Crossroads*, and a work on Lesslie Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology.

I can't think of a better book of its kind. The fact that Goheen writes with a specific focus on missional church is a huge and helpful step forward over more generic theologies of mission. I first encountered Michael Goheen a few years back listening to a message of his entitled "The Urgency of Reading the Bible as a Single Story" given at Regent in Vancouver. I've followed his work ever since with great profit. This book, along with his two previous works, "The Drama of Scripture" and "Living at the Crossroads" (written with Craig Bartholomew) actually make a formidable trilogy for those interested in relating the Biblical Story, Worldview, and Missional Church. Goheen gets the necessity of consciously living into the biblical story as the only viable way to avoid being swallowed up by our competing cultural narrative(s). All three books actually belong on the short list of anyone reading missiology these days. "Light to the Nations" needs to be required reading for all

seminarians and anyone hoping to plant or lead a church.

Goheen has written here a very strong work applying the mission of God revealed in the whole Bible to the practice of the church today. I have little to say about the content of the book other than to recommend it highly to anyone who wants to get a better grasp of the Biblical narrative and how it may practically impact ecclesiological practice. I would, however, like to complain that the Kindle format for this 242 page book has NO table of contents. This is unacceptable. Not just no linked table, but not even one that can be reviewed so you can "go to" page numbers. I found this frustrating and hope that the publisher or whoever missed that can fix this problem.

The author presents his argument very convincingly in this book. He argues that the church today has lost its missional calling, but rather than dwell on proving that, he instead sets out to show how the people of God have repeatedly lost their missional calling throughout history. He shows how God's calling has been virtually the same throughout history, and that it is this identity that should shape our churches. While the book is academic and can be a slow read, I like that it is a different take on the missional church. We have so much literature floating around today on the missional church and what it should look like, and to find an academic ecclesiological approach from the biblical narrative is refreshing. I enjoyed reading it. I was a bit dismayed to find him repeatedly referring to centripetal mission in the Old Testament and centrifugal mission in the New Testament, when I believe that both have been and will be present throughout history. Israel was called to be a contrast society, but there are repeated stories of outward movement to reach the nations. His applications at the end of the book are also valuable. They keep the book from being a meaningless journey that leaves the reader to determine his or her own applications. The thirteen qualities of a missional church are clearly personal to him and his journey as a pastor, but also useful for anyone. This book may be applicable to my ministry. As a church planting ministry, we are always seeking to be well-informed on ecclesiology. We need to know exactly what we are planting and how we need to go about planting it! The understanding of the biblical story and the missional calling of God is central to understanding our role as a mission organization in north Texas. As I read the book, I underlined significant points that the author makes regarding recovering our missional identity. We do see a role for ourselves as a mission organization in speaking prophetically to churches about engaging in mission. This book will be helpful in that role as we try to encourage our local churches and spur them on in the same way that Goheen is trying to do with his book. This book is encouraging but not chastising, so it would be a great read for pastors of

churches wishing to identify themselves missionally.

Goheen does a masterful job tracing God's purpose for the whole world through the Biblical Story, showing that He has always intended to accomplish His mission through His people. His final chapter, "What Might This Look Like Today?" is full of insights on how the current church in the West can live in a way that is consistent with the Biblical Story and that faithfully embodies that story in our contemporary culture.

This book is very approachable. Goheen gives great insight into the missional thread that runs through scripture. I was assigned this book for the class Missional Hermeneutics in seminary. I have since recommended it to several people in my congregation. Everyone I know who has read it has gotten a lot from this book. The book has helped shaped the way I read scripture. You don't have to possess a MDiv to comprehend the book. This book provides insight into two very important questions: Who are the people of God? What are the people of God to do as a result of being his? Goheen also offers plenty of practical applications.

This was a great book for Study Class; however, it did not have page numbers, it had locations, therefore it did not work out good for the class that I was taken. When I am buying books for class, I need page numbers.

Very good book. Should read it. Gives the purpose for the church of Jesus Christ.

One of the best texts I've read on the missional call of God to the nations.

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