

## Book Review: 'Borderless Church'

*Reviewed by Michael & Janine Thomas*

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***Borderless Church: Shaping the Church for the Twenty-first Century, David Lundy, Authentic Media, Milton Keynes, UK and W***

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In *Borderless Church*, David Lundy expounds his strong conviction that if the church in the West is to become significant and effective, it needs to reshape itself to interface with the modern world and fall into line with biblical principles.

David admits that little in his book is radically new. However, he is able to draw on his background as a missionary, pastor and educator in many parts of the world. Thus he 'bring(s) interdisciplinary insights as to the purpose of the church which (he) believe(s) have implications for the evangelisation of the globe. At their heart is the thesis that the church exists for mission, not mission for the church' (p. xix). Later on, he rephrases this thesis very neatly: 'the church is not the sender but the sent' (p. 5). All too often, mission is sidelined to being one church activity among many – the responsibility of the mission committee. Sometimes it is seen wholly in terms of sending workers overseas. This is equally true in theological training where mission is not seen as a core discipline alongside Old & New Testament studies and systematic theology. Rather it has been relegated to an aspect of practical theology.

The starting point for mission being central is our understanding of God. After the introduction, there is a chapter on 'God as Missionary'. God is incarnational, sending his Son to redeem mankind. The whole Bible, and especially the New Testament, is missional. Jesus said, 'As the Father has sent me, even so I send you'. The blessings of God, from Abraham onwards, were to reach out from God's people to the nations.

The next two chapters examine the radical changes that have taken place in society in the last few decades. First David looks at globalisation, brought about by a revolution in travel, communication and information technology. We have become a global village. The major cities of the world have become multi-cultural and multi-faith. Members of unreached people groups are no longer found only in remote corners of the globe or closed countries but here on our doorstep in the West. David gives a wonderful example of his wife, Linda, having her hair done in Toronto by a Somali believer who had been led to Christ by her Chinese friend who had in turn been led to Christ by the Filipino owner of the salon. The church needs to have its eyes open to the opportunities – and to be ready to embrace these strangers living amongst us. Borderless churches will seek to be multi-cultural themselves, reflecting the make-up of the community around.

Secondly, David discusses postmodernism, the shift from the certainties and objectivity of modernism, which so characterised the West fifty years ago, to a subjective relativistic culture. A challenge for the church is that anything is tolerated by society except the belief in absolutes. One person's truth is different from another's.

Experience is as important as fact. But with this emphasis on experience comes an openness to the spiritual which was not present in the West a generation earlier.

There follows an excellent chapter entitled 'How the West Was Won'. In it David draws parallels between the culture of the first century and that of the twenty-first (globalisation, religious pluralism, declining morality, etc.) He then uses the Thessalonian church as described in Acts and the Epistles to provide a model of effective church life and evangelism. The 'three hallmarks of a healthy church' (pp. 55-56) are seen as:

- a community where faith was lived out authentically
- missional impact on immediate neighbours and
- a global reach.

This is a perceptive chapter which provides a biblical basis for David's thesis.

Chapter five, called 'Soft Apologetics', encourages, again from a biblical perspective, a pattern of church outreach with conviction, but gentleness. The effective church will have a sense of belonging, worship will be missional, the leadership will equip and empower the laity, the ministry will be holistic and the preaching radical. This is the *borderless church*. We are to adapt our methods to our culture but not our message.

There follow four chapters giving examples of effective borderless churches in the USA, Britain, Canada and 'Lostland'. This last is especially interesting, being situated in a non-Western country where conversion to Christ is illegal. The same principles have been applied. That such a church should have both a local and global outreach should be a challenge to those of us from the West.

Another challenge that David addresses is that of the under-resourced 10/40 window. All too often, when churches do send, they send to familiar mission locations and ignore the tough unreached peoples. To fulfil Christ's command, we must turn our attention to those who have never heard. A further chapter examines the relationship between church and parachurch (mission agencies), suggesting ways that difficulties and misunderstandings can be avoided. David summarises his conclusions in a final chapter called 'The Church's Mission is Not about Bricks and Mortar'. He emphasizes the need for servant leadership if the church is to reach out in the twenty-first century.

*Borderless Church* is a challenging read. It is tightly packed and contains some difficult passages, especially for the lay person (not theologically trained). Nowhere is it stated for whom the book is intended, but clearly, church leaders would be in focus. It would be an excellent text for theology students, emphasizing the centrality of mission in the biblical witness. For the rest of us, it contains plenty of good material that will reward the reader.

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