

## **Guided Essay 1**

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“Mission precedes theological reflection. Theological reflection informs missional praxis. The fruit of theological reflection is missional praxis. Theological reflection is birthed out of missional praxis.” Here is my reflection on the cyclical relationship of missional praxis and theological reflection.

“Theology happens when we pose questions concerning the word of God, the history of the church and the body of Christ, then we began to theologize... Missiology is the reflection on the practice of ministry.” This is a quote from this week’s lecture. The way I understand this statement results in the fact that questions that lead to theologizing stem from a more practical place once we seek to answer them. This practical aspect of theologizing becomes evident when theologians have boots on the ground. In other words, missionaries are theologians who have boots on the ground whether they are local or abroad. When a Christian decides to pay attention to the questions that are being asked around them and they seek to answer those questions by using scriptures to bring clarity to others, they are doing the work of a missionary and a theologian. The terminology “boots on the ground” that I am using in this reflection may seem to be simplistic in nature, but I entail for it to have a much deeper meaning. Theologians who have boots on the ground refers to those who live the gospel in an incarnate way. Jesus emulated for us the concept of what incarnation looks like. He came down from heaven, he took on flesh in a Middle-Eastern context and he spoke the language of the people then. He surrounded himself and immersed himself in the cultural context of a man born in Israel to proclaim a message of redemption for all men and women. Just like Jesus, when theologians immerse themselves in any cultural context as they spread the gospel, they become missionaries who choose to live an incarnate Christian lives.

I do not think that the debate should be focus primarily on the cyclical relationship of missional praxis and theological reflection as that leads to the chicken-or-egg what-comes-first debate. The way that I would sum it up is as follows: missional praxis that is generated from theological reflections is just as valuable as theological reflections that are generated out of missional praxis. In other words, one may decide to do missionary work (boots on the ground) as a result of theological reflections that he previously had. On the other hand, one may decide to invest more of her time and effort into theological reflections because of questions that arise from having boots on the ground. The fact is, it all depends on the context in which one is. Among those two concepts, one can precede the other in no particular restricted order. However, the most fundamental and important aspect is whether or not either approach leads to a life filled with actions that display an incarnation lifestyle.

Great theology is practical. Missionary work is practical in nature. Therefore, missionary work is theology put in action. Or, missionary work is the practice of sound theological concepts. Now, this tangible or practical work can have different shape or form depending on the need in a specific area. We cannot deny that we always have the big Mission, the ultimate Mission, Mission with a capital M. The Mission is the heart of God for all people on the earth from the beginning of time. God is the sole initiator of the overarching concept of Mission. God sees mankind's needs even before the fall and He makes necessary provisions for them. We partner with Him in diverse forms of missions based on our observation, ethnic and geographical upbringing and needs around us and the world at large.