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## Missiology and International Justice Mission Introduction

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## **Missiology & International Justice Mission Introduction**

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International Justice Mission has a pervasive presence, whether that be here on Pepperdine's very own campus or globally in the different countries of the world. It is one of the most prominent modern missionary agencies and within this role it serves as a symbol of Christianity pursuing justice. Because of this important position both within the Christian faith as well as on the global platform, it is imperative that International Justice Mission is analyzed with regard to missiology. Missiology is a practice that thinks through and prays over missionaries and mission practices in order to glorify God through well thought-out mission. Missiology considers "the biblical and theological foundation of mission; the history of the course taken by the missions; analysis of the contemporary context; and the discernment of social, political, economic, and religious trends that will influence the direction of mission in the future" (Shenk 18). Therefore, with the purpose of examining International Justice Mission through the lens of missiology, first the history of International Justice Mission will be discussed. Then the theology of International Justice Mission will be investigated with specific regard to motivation, means, agents, target and goal. Throughout this evaluation, specific attention

will be paid to best and worst practices in order to discern the relationship between the mission of International Justice Mission and the mission of God.

## **History of Mission**

The history of International Justice Mission (IJM) is one that comes out of a response to the mission of God to make Himself known through social justice. In 1997, Gary Haugen founded International Justice Mission in reaction to a study revealing a profound awareness of internal corruption with a paralyzing inability to address this corruption. A group of experts including lawyers, human rights professionals and public officials had surveyed over sixty-five organizations, thus corresponding for about forty thousand workers, with special attention to overseas missionaries as well as relief and development workers. What they found was that although there was a widespread consciousness of corruption within authority, the communities lacked the resources and expertise necessary to address the abuse of power and thus needed “the assistance of trained public justice professionals” for change to come about (Hanson 2011, *What We Do*). International Justice Mission was born out of a need for this change, a change that would fight on behalf of the helpless. Through his experience as a lawyer for the U.S. Department of Justice as well as the United Nations’ Investigator in Charge during the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, the Lord had well prepared Gary Haugen for this new role he was about to take.

Yet International Justice Mission extends well beyond Gary Haugen, International Justice Mission has more than four hundred professionals working to recognize justice for the oppressed in modern times. However one of their main bragging points is not how well equipped and distinguished their American officials are (which they most definitely

are), but rather that more than three hundred members of their staff are indigenous to their respective country. This demographic displays that *ninety* percent of their faculty are “nationals of the countries in which they work”, which in turn reflects IJM’s commitment to long-standing, cultural change (Hanson 2011, *What We Do*). As in the case of any cross-cultural work, work done by the national people will last much longer and take on more significance than change brought by a team of foreign Americans. This presence of native workers is a great encouragement to the mission world, especially when considering Stephen Neill’s text, *A History of Christian Missions*. Neill writes, “a central question in the younger Churches was whether those who had control of those Churches would commit the positions of highest authority and dignity in them to members of the non-European races” (Neill 1986, 388). This question remains pertinent throughout the entire history of Christian mission, as the stereotypical white male missionary has dominated the Christian mindset for far too long. Thus, IJM’s recognition of the need to indigenize the leadership from the beginning is a great success and counts as one of their best practices.

International Justice Mission has another great practice of clearly demonstrating their idealistic goals by means of their logistical demographics. Headquarters of IJM are found in Washington, D.C. but partner offices can be found around the world in countries such as Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Casework alliance offices are located in Peru, Ecuador and Honduras. International Justice Mission has thirteen field offices in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, including Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, Ecuador, India, Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia (Hanson 2011, *Where We Work*). A Christian missionary agency

fighting for justice is especially significant in these countries as Christian mission records, such as *A History of Christian Missions*, catalog injustice by past missionaries in some of these countries. The Church admits its failures with “political chicanery, personal malevolence, and even bribery and corruption. But the Church does not live in these things; it lives in its humble and faithful members” pursuing God (Neill 1986, 47). Ultimately it must be recognized that the Church is comprised of broken people pursuing a perfect God, yet His strength is made perfect in our weakness (*ESV Study Bible 2008*, 2 Corinthians 12:9). The staff of International Justice Mission is similarly made up of imperfect people seeking God’s perfect justice and revelation of Himself.

International Justice Mission deals directly and specifically with the mission of God as justice in an integral way to make God known on the earth. In his aptly titled book, *The Mission of God*, the noted biblical scholar Chris Wright argues that the mission of God is to make Himself known (Wright 2006, 109). And because “the Lord is a God of justice”, then God cannot be made known without justice being incorporated into this mission (*ESV Study Bible 2008*, Isaiah 30:18). Wright argues this very same point on page 44 of his text,

“Where else does the passion for justice and liberation that breathes in these various theologies come from if not from the biblical revelation of the God who battles with injustice, oppression and bondage throughout history right to the eschaton?...Where else, in other words, but from the mission of God?” (Wright 2006)

Gary Haugen, the president and CEO of International Justice Mission, also shares this passion for God to make Himself known through justice. In fact, the nature of IJM’s

work is one that is inherently dependent on God to show up and make Himself known through the process. Haugen describes that the work of International Justice Mission “takes us into areas of work where we don’t know how it’s going to turn out and we know that it won’t turn out well if God doesn’t show up” (Haugen 2008, *Just Courage*). Haugen recognizes that a life dependent on God opens the eyes of the heart to how God is moving and thus how God can be made known. When humans have much more at stake, then they are much more attentive to what happens with what is at stake, and this attention creates the perfect stage for God to demonstrate His awesome power and salvation. Even the Psalmist declares, “I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and will execute justice for the needy” (*ESV Study Bible* 2008, Psalm 140:12). When God is made known, justice is inherently also made known and this reality is the heartbeat of International Justice Mission.

## **Theology of Mission**

There are several components that comprise a missionary organization’s theology of mission and an analysis of these components demonstrate how lofty ideology becomes materialized into daily practice. Therefore a particular analysis of motivation, means, agents, target and goal in relation to International Justice Mission will yield a sense of how International Justice Mission pursues the realized mission of God.

## **Motivation**

International Justice Mission’s motivation is to biblically live out God’s calling for His people and thereby make Him known. When asked what International Justice Mission’s theological or biblical approach was, Mike Masten did not hesitate to respond that “the real cornerstone of IJM is Isaiah 1:17” (Masten 2011). Isaiah 1:17 reads that

God's people need to "learn to do good,/ seek justice,/ correct oppression;/ bring justice to the fatherless, /plead the widow's cause" (*ESV Study Bible* 2008). This biblical grounding is one of International Justice Mission's best practices, since being grounded in God's word is one of the best ways to know God himself. Even though Mike has never worked for International Justice Mission, he is right on line as IJM lists Isaiah 1:17 as one of their core commitments (Hanson 2011, *Who We Are*). Mike Masten, a former president of Pepperdine's very own IJM chapter, proceeds to explain that "Isaiah was an Old Testament prophet whose calling was to hold Israel accountable to seeking justice" and the people of the time "had nothing to do with what God is passionate about, which is loving individuals and seeking justice on behalf of the world" (Masten 2011). Here Mike sounds strikingly similar to Chris Wright in his text, *The Mission of God*. The concept of seeking justice on behalf of the world is echoed on page 99 as Wright writes "that *justice* is the very essence of his [God's] rule and that *this applied as much to Israel as to all the nations*" (Wright 2006). It is crucial "that the justice of God's ways may be known on earth...For this was one of the essential aspects of affirming the universal role of YHWH as sole God" (Ibid). Thus, International Justice Mission's key biblical motivation for doing their work plays an integral role in making God known, not only to God's people but also to the rest of the nations.

### **Means**

International Justice Mission follows a model of victim relief, perpetrator accountability, victim aftercare and structural transformation as a means to achieving its goals of Godly justice. Victim relief is International Justice Mission's first priority and this priority is reflective in their practices. Even if a raid happens to go badly, as was the

case in 2002 and 2003 during a raid that occurred in Svay Pak, Cambodia, as long as there was one girl rescued International Justice Mission “could still count the operation as a success” (Power 2009). Yet while “the police initially dropped off the girls at a home run by social workers,” a week later “the police returned and arrested the girls, on immigration charges” (Ibid). These kinds of tactics are strongly reminiscent of the book, *When Helping Hurts*, by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, who warn against the dangers of good intentions with malpractice. In addition to the devastation of the girls who were deported, the girls that remained within the brothel faced devastation as well. The brothel owners, “suspecting that health and social-service workers had tipped off the police, blocked the groups from providing care” (Ibid). This continual use of police raids without confidence in long-term safety for the victims is one of International Justice Mission’s worst practices. And while there is obviously critical need to evaluate and creatively pursue new tactics, Haugen still holds the mindset that “each one rescued is a blessing” (Ibid). A mindset that focuses on the small victories must be necessary when facing the enormity of the world’s injustice. Individual victim relief is also reflected in International Justice Mission’s practice of individual casework. International Justice Mission only takes on individual casework in order to provide an example for the legal system, but not to rewrite the legal system with the ‘American’ way of doing things. Haugen’s ultimate goal is “to establish protocols of justice that can become official state practice” (Ibid). The continued avoidance of Americans taking over and encouragement of change through local infrastructure is one of IJM’s best practices. International Justice Mission’s means of mission through their priority on victim relief is one that requires grace in order to cover the challenges of combating the world’s injustice.



Perpetrator accountability is a fundamental part of the means of mission for International Justice Mission as well as a unique role of the missionary agency. International Justice Mission emerged in the midst of many missionary agencies that sought to bring relief and comfort to the victims of injustice. International Justice Mission, however, felt the need to break this cycle of violence by holding the perpetrators accountable so that the crimes they were committing would not happen again. This accountability provides not only long-term structural change but also greatly aids in the healing process of both the victim as well as the oppressor. In an interview with Sean Litton, the Vice President of Field Operations at International Justice Mission, Sean gives insight as to what this process is like. For the victim, “it shows them that you do have value and what happened to you was wrong” (Litton 2011). But what might be the most surprising factor of perpetrator accountability is the restoration it offers the perpetrators themselves. Sean says,

“The abuse that they were committing was destroying the people that they were abusing but it was also destroying them. And the hope then is that now that they’re forced to confront it, they weren’t able to stop it on their own, they’ve been stopped, that they’ll repent of what they’ve done, they’ll find healing, they’ll find forgiveness, they’ll find a new life.” (Ibid)

This approach to justice is once again closely related to Christopher Wright’s view of justice in *The Mission of God*. Through the instrument of justice, God is able to make Himself known and bring healing not only to those under oppression but also to the oppressors as noted before (Wright 2006, 99). This incredible power of restoration only belongs to God and thus brings only Him glory. This incredible love for all people, both

the oppressors and the oppressed, could only belong to God and His perfect way of restoration brings justice as well as mercy. A love for both the oppressed as well as the oppressors is another best practice of International Justice Mission. Thus, perpetrator accountability is a crucial component of the means of mission of International Justice Mission to make God known.

Victim aftercare and structural transformation are other imperative components of the means of mission for International Justice Mission. Victim aftercare is a particular area of International Justice Mission's work that relies heavily on God's power and willingness to make Himself known through individual spiritual and psychological transformation. Few can truly understand the trauma that these victims have undergone, thus the ability to counsel them proves extremely difficult. Yet the Bible reads that "we do not have a high priest that is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses...Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need," for "He is mighty to save" (*ESV Study Bible*, Hebrews 4:15-16, Zephaniah 3:17). International Justice Mission pursues the deep commitment to God's healing and reconciliation, and thus "continues to build networks with aftercare and other social service and government providers to ensure long-term care of clients" (Hanson 2011, *What We Do*). Finally, structural transformation has been referenced various times throughout this paper as a key objective of International Justice Mission, it also functions as one of their primary means to effectively combat injustice and seek to make God known. For God is not concerned with momentary relief as much He is concerned with eternal salvation. This is precisely why International Justice Mission remains a Christian missionary agency despite the criticism and why International Justice Mission is

committed to long-term, structural transformation. In fact, their long-term, structural change is one of IJM's best practices because it is one that reflects the long-term character of God, and this well thought-out missionary practice demonstrates missiology. In conclusion International Justice Mission's model of victim relief, perpetrator accountability, victim aftercare and structural transformation, all function as a means of mission to make God known through pursuing justice.

### **Agents**

International Justice Mission is committed to employing Christ-followers who are skilled and informed in legal matters as well as passionate about justice for their agents of change. In their own words, "IJM lawyers, investigators, and aftercare professionals work with local officials to secure immediate victim rescue and aftercare, to prosecute perpetrators and to ensure that public justice systems – police, courts and laws – effectively protect the poor" (Hanson 2011, *Who We Are*). Yet as referenced earlier, Haugen also has an "insistence on hiring only Christians" and this practice has been a major source of controversy for International Justice Mission (Power 2009). In the words of Aryeh Neier, "If you are unwilling to have diversity in your own institution, you betray an unwillingness to allow diversity among those you are attempting to assist" (Ibid). Neier, the current president of the Open Society Institute as well as a founder of Human Rights Watch, is one of the many critics of International Justice Mission among the social justice and human rights agencies. Yet Haugen remains firm in his insistence of solely Christian workers as he feels that the workers at IJM "couldn't do the work [they are] doing without the daily prayers and Christian solidarity" (Ibid). Indeed prayer sessions are a common occurrence during the regular workday at International Justice

Mission (Ibid). This commitment to prayer and to the overall Christian nature of International Justice Mission in the midst of controversy and criticism is one of IJM's best practices. This practice demonstrates a complete dependence on God and acknowledges that IJM could not even begin to do the work they are doing without God. For what true justice can come apart from God? However with specific regards to their choice of agents, IJM takes on the challenge of world religious pluralism. In the context of religious pluralism, there is a strong pressure to be non-affiliated for the sake of equality. Yet above human perceptions of equality is the reality that there is no justice without God and thus an organization for the sake of God's justice must seek after God whole-heartedly. International Justice Mission's choice of agents is how they chose to do so. Therefore even within the agents of International Justice Mission, IJM seeks to pursue God and justice wholeheartedly and thus make Him known.

### **Target & Goal**

The target and goal of International Justice Mission remain consistent with the overall drive of International Justice Mission to pursue justice as a response to biblically living out God's calling. Gary Haugen feels that a part of God's call for Christians is to take risks for the sake of justice. He acknowledges that "these are risky things, but I hope people can come to understand that they are so well loved by God that they can take huge risks with Him. Huge risks, which means that they can do significant things" for the sake of making God known on this earth through justice (Haugen 2008, *Just Courage*). The targets of International Justice Mission are "victims of slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression" (Hanson 2011, *Who We Are*). This choice of target draws purpose from Proverbs 31:8 that commands God's people "to open your mouth for

the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute” (*ESV Study Bible* 2008). The goal of International Justice Mission is “to rescue thousands, protect millions and prove that justice for the poor is possible” (Hanson 2011, *Who We Are*). This choice of target and goal come from the belief that “YHWH is the God who hates oppression and acts decisively against it” and his people are to follow suit, thereby making Him known (Wright 2006, 281). The target and goal of International Justice Mission are aptly chosen for this missionary agency as they appropriately reflect International Justice Mission’s desire to respond to God’s calling by making Him known through justice.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, International Justice Mission is a flawed group of individuals trying to achieve a flawless ideal by means of a flawless God. In terms of missiology however, a more critical and in-depth approach must be taken. Insight into the history of International Justice Mission reveals some of its best practices of placing an emphasis on indigenous leadership in addition to recognizing that a central element of realizing God is realizing justice. Exploration into the theology of International Justice Mission exposed both best and worst practices. In review, the motivation of International Justice Mission displays a best practice of being biblically grounded. The means of mission revealed an in-depth process of victim relief, perpetrator accountability, victim aftercare and structural transformation. One of the worst practices of International Justice Mission as a whole is its use of police raids that oftentimes collectively result in more damage than benefit. However, an analysis of means of mission also revealed the best practices of wanting to indigenize the means of mission, seeking healing for both the oppressed and the oppressors, relying on God’s awesome spiritual power for transformation and seeking

long term change. The examination of the agents of mission raise questions of how International Justice Mission is facing the challenges of living in a world of religious pluralism. Finally an inquiry of the target and goal of International Justice Mission proved them to be right in line with International Justice Mission's commitment to seeking justice in order to make God known. Thus through the lens of missiology, the relationship between the mission of International Justice Mission and the mission of God was more fully explored and examined with the hopes that this analysis of practices will provide for a better, future missiology that glorifies God.

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