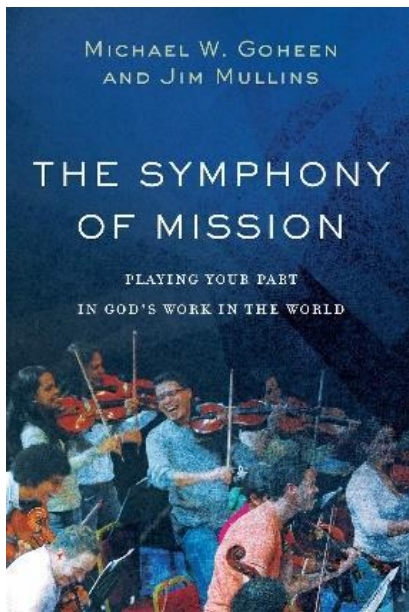


The Symphony of Mission: Playing Your Part in God's Work in the World

By Michael W. Goheen and Jim Mullins

Baker Academic, 2019, 240 Pages

Summary



The book uses the metaphor of symphony to understand and engage in mission. It focuses on three movements of this symphony; namely the stewardship movement, the service movement, and the spoken word movement. These movements of missional intentionality answer three big questions:

(1) What is the church's mission as it participates in God's mission?

(2) What is my role within God's mission? and

(3) What does mission look like in daily life? Seeing the whole Bible as a story of a missional God whose goal is to restore a broken world, the book seeks to move God's people from theological reflection to faithful practice, from wrestling with the idea of mission to participating in what God is doing in mission.

Best Illustrations

This story illustrates how a Muslim came to believe in Christ through an encounter with a community rather than any one person. Jim Mullins narrates the story of his friend Abdul who came to the United States as a refugee and who encountered God's generosity and hospitality through David, who invited Abdul to come live with his family. Next, Abdul encountered the wisdom and compassion of God through Joan, a woman in David's small group who helped Abdul find a job and learn the English language. Abdul had a difficult time understanding what he was reading in the Gospels, but the Spirit used John to explain the good news. This was a team effort. Page 40

Best Idea

There are six things that are foundational to all missional engagement: (1) "with" (mission must include incarnational presence); (2) "from" (mission must be empowered by the Spirit);

(3) “and” (mission must be comprehensive in scope); (4) “us” (mission must be communal); (5) “be” (mission must include a distinct way of life); and (6) “why” (mission must be motivated by love). Page 32

“Work” does not refer only to employment; it refers to any human activity that’s productive and that positively contributes to God’s good world, whether it’s parenting, yard work, art making, civic engagement, or any of the many other ways we can find to contribute to the flourishing of creation. Page 54

Our Recommendation

We recommend this book to mission practitioners, church leaders, and Bible students who want to see the whole Bible missionally and who want to see how Christ followers can live out God’s mission on a daily basis. This book is full of real-life stories and practical applications of the stewardship, service, and spoken word movements, set in the context of the rhythms of everyday interactions.

Best Quotes

“When it comes to the symphony of God’s mission, we must start by listening.” Page 1

“Mission always refers to God’s continuing work to restore creation and to our own active participation in that work.” Page 3

“The most important character in the story of creation is God himself.” Page 5

“The biblical story of creation invites us to imagine a world of shalom, where we delight in God, in one another, and in the nonhuman creation.” Page 6

“Blessing is the human flourishing and delight that come when we live according to God’s creational design.” Page 13

“The Church exists in its prime reality from Monday to Saturday, in all its members, dispersed throughout the fields and homes and offices and factories, bearing the royal priesthood of Christ into every corner of the His world.” (Lesslie Newbigin) Page 26

“Creativity and strategy can never replace the work of the Spirit initiated through prayer.” Page 37

“Before we can participate in God’s mission, we must know that we are beneficiaries of God’s mission. We are not the rescuers; we are the rescued who merely bear witness to others who also need to be rescued.” Page 45

“If it falls on your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, or Beethoven composed music. . . Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well.’ (Martin Luther King, Jr.) Page 49

“Here are the three movements of mission. . . Stewardship: displaying the glory of the Father through the work of our hands; Service: displaying the love of Christ by washing the feet of the Lord; Spoken Word: displaying the power of the Holy Spirit by opening our mouths.” Page 52

“Vocation is integral, not incidental, to the Missio Dei.” (Steven Garber) Page 65

“Work matters because it’s the first task God gives to his people. God created humanity in his own image and blessed them with the opportunity to display his glory, goodness, wisdom, and strength through the work of his hands.” Page 69

“What could display the inherent goodness of work more clearly than the fact that God chooses to work and that it’s the first thing God reveals about himself in Scripture?” Page 73

“Eden is planted, but humankind will cultivate it—that is the fundamental law of creation.” (Abraham Kuyper) Page 78

“Good work can (1) provide a portrait of God’s character, (2) be a lens to focus our view of the brilliance of his creation, (3) help us love our neighbor by providing useful services and products, and (4) provide a preview of the kingdom.” Page 89

“The whole world is a theatre for the display of the divine goodness, wisdom, justice, and power, but the Church is the orchestra.” (John Calvin) Page 90

“The service movement is the call to love our neighbors in a sacrificial, creative, and systemic way.” Page 100

“We are called to be entrepreneurs of blessing, inventors of neighborly kindness, and artists of shalom—employing our whole minds including our imaginations, in loving God and our neighbors.” Page 107

“Love goes beyond the bleeding; it includes pursuing the kind of justice that prevents bleeding in the first place.” Page 115

“Jesus loves to spend time in places of pain.” Page 117

“Three major shifts in concepts and practices are proposed here. . . (1) From generic to craft; (2) From manipulative marketing to gospel storytelling; (3) From reading a script to listening to the Spirit.” Page 124

“Evangelism is the process of re-enchantment, which shows the deep meaning that can be found in the simple stuff of life, rather than a high-pressured pitch.” Page 131

“The human heart is drawn to stories of heroism and sacrifice, because they’re an echo of our savior.” Page 134

“There are at least three intertwined characteristics of proclaiming the gospel: the gospel is centered on Jesus; it announces the good news of God’s reign as the climax of a long story; and it is a message of salvation.” Page 139

“We need to stop thinking about evangelism as ‘bringing people to God’ and realize that God is bringing us to people instead, already working in their lives and inviting us to harmonize with the Spirit.” Page 143

“In Scripture we see three dimensions of calling: the missional calling (the identity we have been given), the occupational calling (the work we must do), and vocational calling (the work we were made to do).” Page 147

“The categories in Amy Sherman’s book Kingdom Calling are: (1) Abilities (What are you good at?); (2) Affections (What do you care about?); (3) Aches (Where do you encounter the brokenness of the world?); and (4) Anchors (What are the realistic circumstances of your life?).” Page 148

“We have all been through seasons of pain that have given us close encounters with specific effects of sin. Those encounters aren’t necessarily random; they may be God’s way of drawing attention to a specific place, people, or problem.” Page 153

“We do not find meaning in our work; instead, we bring meaning to our work.” Page 159

“Give about 80 percent of your time, money, resources, and effort to your life goal; then leave 20 percent available to support others. You need people, and they need you.” Page 161

“It just takes the ability to see three things: (1) the world’s brokenness (problems); (2) your resources (gifts); and (3) some way to use your resources to address the brokenness (creative love).” Page 176

“To help identify the echoes of the biblical story embedded in your context, think about the following: (1) echoes of God; (2) echoes of creation; (3) echoes of the fall; and (4) echoes of restoration.” Page 178

“You may find the following follow-up questions helpful: (1) Stewardship: “How do I intend to display God’s character through my work this week?”; (2) Service: “How do I intend to serve sacrificially this week?”; and (3) Spoken Word: “How do I intend to speak of Jesus this week?” Page 179

“A regular practice of Sabbath-taking is vital to sustaining missional engagement because it helps us refocus on God, recognize our creatureliness, and remember our neighbors.” Page 184

“Eugene Peterson suggests that Sabbath should include at least two things: praying and playing.” Page 186

“This is the way we were meant to pray: (1) praying with all senses; (2) praying in all places; (3) praying in all of life; and (4) praying with all emotions.” Page 190

“Steven Garber talks about our need to make peace with the ‘proximate,’ the here-and-now realities of our lives. He urges Christians to work toward some change, some justice, some restoration, even though we can’t make everything right, right here and now.” Page 192

“This is the hopeful groan of lament, the ability to groan with creation about the deep pain of the hurting world while also responding faithfully to God’s call to pursue shalom in this world now and to look forward to the return of Christ.” Page 194