

## RESTORED AND REUNITED

I am on a very slow journey towards finishing my studies which began seven years ago when I took those first steps through the doors of Luther King House in Manchester. What have I chosen as my subject for the biggest essay I'll have written in my life? Mission. What is it? Whose job might it be? Can we do it? Are we doing enough of it?

I wonder what images "mission" brings to your mind? Trips overseas perhaps? Holiday Bible Clubs? Christian Aid? All very valid, but all lead to the ultimate question of what is the Church's mission? Chris Wright wrote a book in which he says that the whole Bible can be read as a book about mission, but not about the Church's mission. It's about God's mission; His aims, objectives and plans for the world He created. Part of the result of this book is a change in the questions we ask. Not, "What is the mission of the Church?" but "What kind of Church do we need to be to fulfil the mission of God?"

God's mission begins with Him. God wants to be known and creation will work properly only when we all do. We're clearly not in that place, we know that and God's heart aches because of it. All the way back in the beginning, God set out on a plan to address that problem and He did it with a faithful couple called Abraham and Sarah. His plan? To bless all the families of the world. Bringing all nations together into the kind of unity that we often restrict to our hopes for the Church.

How will He do that? Well, there are two big stories that Chris Wright uses, the Exodus and the Jubilee (Chris is a big fan of the Old Testament). The Exodus is the dramatic story of God's releasing an entire people from slavery to Egypt. The Jubilee is the time when people get restored, when they get their homes back, their land back, their families reunited, no matter what's happened leading up to this great time.

Both of these are all-encompassing pictures of salvation. Being changed, not just in a spiritual sense, not just having a soul that lives in the clouds in peace, but being restored in all senses of the word. These pictures talk of families, homes, land, jobs, spirituality, emotion, the works.

What's our mission? To be the kind of church that is doing our bit to help people, communities and beyond with their exodus and jubilee. To help people get out of things that have them in chains and to give them a hand back up into life. In all of that, we are co-workers with God in His mission. His glorious, world-changing mission of love.

**Andy Hall**