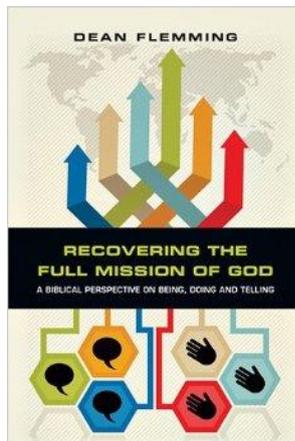


Dean Flemming, Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing and Telling (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013). 288 pages - ISBN 9780-8308-4026-7

In this book, Dean Flemming asks pertinent questions concerning the role of mission in the world, which are worthy of our full attention, reflection and action. These questions are directed at the Church as a whole without forgetting the missional role of individual Christians. Questions such as: How are we to fulfil our God-given mission? Is it by preaching the Gospel or by living the Gospel out that we reach outsiders? Is our mission to convince people to follow Christ or are we to exemplify God's kingdom? In other words, is mission a matter of deeds more than words? The 'being' of Christian living in missiology is not left unanswered, but integrated in all the aspects of Flemming's observations.



Flemming raises these questions because they have not lost their potency. Yet he finds that Christians today have a tendency to insist more on 'doing' than 'telling' and definitely more than 'being'. He brings all these aspects of mission back into focus utilising Scripture, and emphasizing the New Testament, with a central argument deemed to be utilised much more in the classrooms, in Bible study groups, those in ministry, and even the general public looking for substance in Christian mission.

Flemming starts by stating his thesis: *What does Scripture have to tell us about the relationship of being, doing and telling in Christian mission? And how should that form and inform our participation in God's mission today?* The following chapters show how the biblical text evidences God's

missional role for Israel, the Church then and the Church today.

In chapters one and two, the author studies God's mission in the Old testament and particularly the role of Israel in mission through the relationship between living, and telling the narrative of God's salvation; he then moves on to explain how Israel's mission of being, doing and telling can be of help in shaping the Church's mission today. Chapters three and four start Flemming's analysis of mission in the New Testament. He first concentrates on analysing Jesus' mission in the Synoptics. Then a contextual study of the Lord's mission is done for each evangelist in order to give us an understanding of the Church's *Missio Dei* for the 21st century. John's Gospel is the topic of a whole chapter because of the evangelist's presentation of God's mission in the life of Christ and his disciples offering a distinctive portrait worthy of special treatment. Flemming shows in chapter six how the Book of Acts offers missiology models which can be lived out in our own contexts; in short, *Acts is a chronicle of mission and an instrument of mission for the Church* (p. 134). Chapters seven and eight have two concerns relating to Paul's own apostolic mission. First, the missional aspect of telling and living in Paul's life and, secondly, the apostle's expectations of his newly formed congregations for mission. Chapter nine concentrates on 1 Peter, particularly God's people missional identity in living the Gospel and the early Church's attitude toward the unbelieving world. Flemming closes his study of mission in the New Testament with John's vision in Revelation. It basically offers the agenda for the Church in mission today through themes and images; these are, for the author, a deep reservoir for our understanding of God's mission. Flemming finally wraps up his book with a reflection; he particularly looks on how Christian missiology can be shaped through the application of the three main principles of being, doing and telling studied throughout his treatment of mission in Scripture.

Flemming specifies that he is indebted to Christopher Wright's, *The Mission of God* (IVP, 2006) for many ideas of his book. Nevertheless, Flemming's work constitutes a welcome addition to the study of Christian mission because of his emphasis on a holistic approach deeply grounded in Scripture. We cannot forget that Flemming speaks abundantly from the New Testament, as Wright is principally an Old Testament scholar (to simply note a fact). Furthermore, Flemming's treatise of being, doing and telling considers the importance of challenging ourselves in our interrelationships with our unbelieving neighbours: how leaving our comfort zone in postmodernism era can rub against the cultural grain in order to fully embody the whole Christian call to salvation is an important point which the author insists on throughout his writings. Not only that, but he also underlines the confrontational aspect of the missional call as far as the power of darkness are concerned. Flemming does remind us that Jesus' ministry on earth did indeed include aggressive actions to demonstrate the arrival of God's Kingdom on earth. It is therefore imperative that this reality of our missional culture be reappropriated in love to truly emulate the true sense of Christ's own mission on earth for which sacrifice and suffering partake.

Flemming does not forget how our missional duties of being, doing and telling come first from our relationship with God through faith and from the empowering of the Holy Spirit. This fact is well explained and analysed in his treatment of the Book of Acts where he reminds his readers that mission belongs first of all to God, the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2). God is the one who inspires and moves us on his missional behalf; otherwise, it is done in human strength and deemed to fail.

From this thought, Flemming continues with a profound and comprehensive view of mission in the life of Paul to show how the Apostle deeply understood the importance of living out the whole gospel. In Paul's ministry, being, doing and telling Christ's extension of his resurrection was natural every moment of everyday publicly and privately. The author explains how inextricably linked are the three missional principles for transforming and strengthening the Christian life, which needs to influence outsiders from the inside out in words of compassion and deeds of love just as Paul did emulating Christ.

The format of the book is well presented for easy reading and further exploration in the subject. Each chapter can be read on its own without losing track of the main thesis. Supplementary readings are suggested at the end of each chapter for readers interested in deepening a particular biblical segment of missiology. However, Flemming did not write a 'how to' book. This is not aimed at providing particular tips and ideas on how to practically implement missional programs in local churches. For that end, the reader will have to look elsewhere. Nevertheless, some practical examples are found throughout the volume in evidencing and clarifying the author's solid arguments adding to the positive aspects of the volume.

Overall, the book can be said to be an excellent tools in the hands of students, particularly those at undergraduate levels. Flemming's writing will also be appealing to the general public looking for meaningful reflections on God's mission for Christians. His style flows easily without being hermetic or too academic although truthfully and biblically grounded.

Surely, Flemming's call of being, doing and telling in mission confronts Christians to reassess the state of their lives. Yet, it is an invitation to fully embrace a holistic approach which can only benefit our spiritually needing societies as we move closer to the end. I fully recommend this book for all, and I would not be surprised if it becomes a basic text in the classroom.

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