

“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16)
Position Paper of the Workshop on Bible and Mission Study
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The conference theme, **“Integrity of Mission in the Light of the Gospel: Bearing Witness in the Spirit”**, surfaces the need to discern the gospel as the organizing principle of mission and mission study in the twenty-first century. Increasingly **“the gospel”** is receiving attention in theological and missiological discourse. For many the word **“gospel”**, evokes the four canonical gospels and, perhaps too, the apocryphal gospels.

Yet listened to attentively, the New Testament writings bear collective witness to the existence of **“the gospel”** which preceded the written gospels and gave them their unique scope and meaning. This gospel in all its newness and mystery gave content, method and zeal to the Christian mission whose mandate was to proclaim it ceaselessly to all nations. So compelling was this gospel that, for its bearers, it admitted of no other gospel. Its authentic witnesses were prepared to die rather than give it up for whatever reason.

The rediscovery of this gospel in its all-embracing vitality remains a central task of mission today. The workshop on Bible and Mission Study at this IAMS conference makes the search for this gospel the focal point of its study; for on it depends the other elements in the conference theme: integrity of mission, bearing witness in the Spirit.

Salient questions guide this search: What did NT Christians understand by the gospel? What are its major characteristics? What aspects of this gospel do the burning issues of today particularly ask us to highlight and reclaim? Is this gospel with its intrinsic call to mission (to all nations and to the end of time) at odds with the now accepted right of the individual to freedom of worship? If not, how do we in this twenty-first century carry out with integrity Jesus’ mandate to **“make disciples of all nations”**? In sum, what is authentic, holistic and integral mission today (rooted in the gospel)?

Suggested Scripture passages that may serve as springboard for the reflection:

Gospel: 1) Luke 4:18-19; 2) 2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6-9; 3) Gal 2:15-21; Rom 1:1-3, 16-17; 4) 2 Cor 5:11-61; Col 1:15-20

Mission, Integrity of: 1) Matt 28:18-20; John 4:31-38; 2) John 21:15-19; Matt 25:31-46; 3) 2 Cor 4:1-16a; 6:1-13; 4) Mark 7:24-30 (Matt 15:21-28); Luke 1:26-56

Witnessing in the Spirit: 1 Cor 9:1-27; 2 Cor 11:28-29; Phil 3:12-21; Matt 25:14-33; Acts 2:1-21; 1 Pet 3:13-38

Along with these texts, our diverse contexts constitute invaluable resource. They ensure that the gospel finds a fertile soil in life.

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