

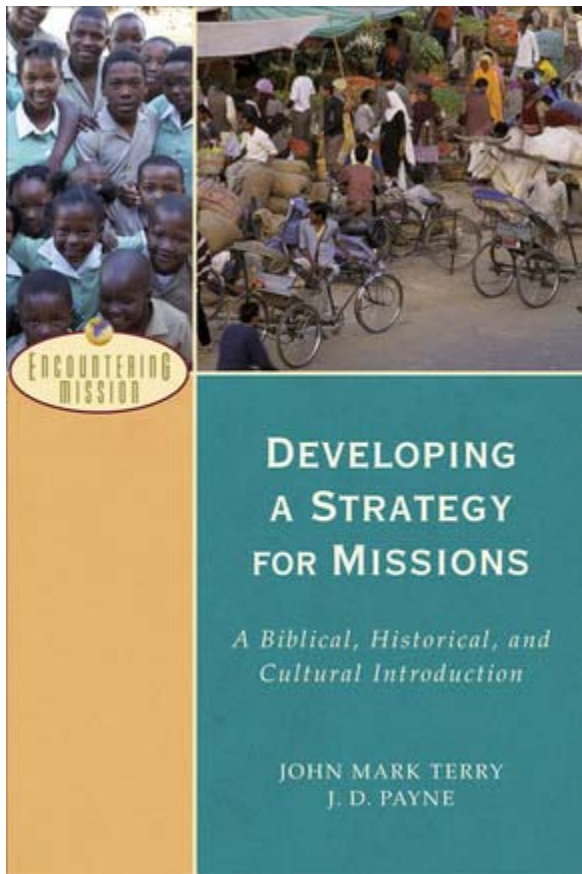
**BOOK REVIEW**

**DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR MISSIONS: A BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL, AND CULTURAL INTRODUCTION**

By John Mark Terry and J.D. Payne

Review by Eric Scholten

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*Developing a Strategy for Missions*  
*A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural*  
*Introduction*

by: John Mark Terry, J. D. Payne

According to John Mark Terry, the stated purpose for the book is as follows: “In this book we show you how to develop strategies to reach the people groups of the world for Christ” (vii).

Terry and J.D. Payne combine their years on the mission field, in the classroom, and in the local church to present a volume that combines theory, history, and the practical steps needed to start from zero believers and move toward a vibrant cluster of churches (viii). The overarching thesis of the book is that the authors believe that the Holy Spirit can guide planning as well as work. This thesis is built off of William Carey's use of the term, "means" in his 1792 "Enquiry". The authors take up the task of explaining Carey's view of means by specifically focusing on the means of strategic planning.

Terry and Payne begin with solid principles, survey the history of strategic planning in the church, and then give precise steps for the strategic planning process. The first five chapters of their book focus on principles needed to think well about a missions strategy. They define what they mean by strategy, offer a broad view of what it takes to develop a missions strategy, deal with objections to strategizing from a biblical perspective, and finally focus on some necessary missiological principles to consider in developing a strategy.

The next large section of the book surveys various missions strategies throughout church history. This very helpful section allows the reader to gain insights from a broad range of missions practitioners. Terry and Payne work from the Apostle Paul to some of today's most significant issues in missions, such as contextualization strategies and frontier missions.

The authors use the final section of their book to give the reader practical steps on how to develop a missions strategy to best engage the people to whom God has sent them. Terry and Payne begin with the basics of cultural research and move toward visioning for the future, forming a team, setting goals, and execution of the strategy. They also include a helpful People-Group Profile template in the appendix.

The authors work hard to defend the need to think strategically. They dedicate an entire chapter to overcoming the objections people might have to developing a missions strategy. The

overall objection that they cite is that strategizing gets in the way of the Holy Spirit's work (8). This objection assumes that strategy and the Holy Spirit are mutually exclusive realities present in the church's work. Terry and Payne offer two thousand years of historical evidence to prove this assumption false. It becomes quite clear that God's sovereignty includes the means by which he brings about his ends. In this case, the means used are the church's strategic plans throughout the years.

The working definition of strategic planning demonstrates the authors' view that the Holy Spirit's presence is imperative for the success of the mission. They state, "Strategic planning is a prayerfully discerned, Spirit-guided process of preparation, development, implementation, and evaluation of the necessary steps involved for missionary endeavors" (13). The missionary's Spirit-led dependence is exemplified in his obedience to Scripture and the regular confession of sin. This dependence serves as a key step for the development and implementation of mission strategy (15).

A challenging theme that the authors describe in detail is the tension between a people-group's receptivity to the gospel and their need for the gospel. These are issues that grow out of the biblical principle of stewardship. While the church is called to preach the gospel to all nations, missionaries must think well about how to invest their limited resources in a certain people group for a limited amount of time. For this reason, Terry and Payne assert that the key question to ask is, "Where are the most receptive people to the gospel message in our area, so we will know where to begin?" (47). They go so far as to make the bold statement, "Unless a team is specifically called by God to a resistant people, it should begin where the Holy Spirit has been working, ripening the field for the harvest" (47).

This is one of the strongest points in the book as it is driven by the clear, biblical principle of stewardship. Ultimately, we want to see people come to faith in Christ. It is wise to

see more people come to faith quickly so that not only will the population of the Kingdom of God increase, but there will also be more potential missionaries to spread the gospel to those still left unreached.

Terry and Payne are cognizant that an indiscriminate focus on receptivity can cause one to fail to walk in obedience to the Great Commission. This would occur if, for the sake of receptivity, a missionary or church chose to withhold the gospel from a resistant or apathetic people-group. The authors make the correct assessment that receptivity is a matter of resource allocation (177). They conclude that in an age when some are very open to the gospel, while others are highly antagonistic, more resources should be sent to the receptive (178).

To balance the issue of receptivity, the wise strategist must consider the need of a people-group. The weight of the Great Commission lies upon the shoulders of all churches. The need to bring the gospel to all peoples demands that missionaries are sent to those places where Christ is not named. Terry and Payne see need as a necessary balance to receptivity. In their chapter, “Discerning Need”, they offer the reader a helpful framework through which one can think through these two balancing realities. The question of where to go and whom to reach comes down to obedience to the Great Commission, calling, and the balance between need and receptivity (191).

One of the strengths of *Developing a Strategy for Missions* is the way that theory and practice are constantly presented as complimentary in nature. The authors accomplish this by including many case studies throughout the book. These case studies are inserted into each chapter and include discussion questions at their conclusion. The practical case studies correspond to the theoretical or historical topic being discussed in the chapter. This format proves beneficial because it not only helps the reader think well about the issues being discussed,

but it also models a healthy way to work through strategic planning, taking a principle and driving toward action.

The authors do as much as they can to achieve their purpose for this book. They have given a biblical, historical, and practical guide for the development of a strategic plan to reach any people-group in the world. Their principles are transferable to any place and time. The success of the implementation of these principles still comes down to their execution. Terry and Payne make this point as they include a chapter devoted to the execution of a strategic plan in which they state, “Without execution strategic planning remains theory” (249).

While *Developing a Strategy for Missions* is a book that all missionaries, church planters, and pastors should read, it may not be the most accessible volume for the average church attendee. I plan to use this book in the future with many in my church, but I will do so after introducing them to some entry-level reading. It is hard to call this a weakness as the authors include so much in this book that nearly everyone who reads it could get some benefit from it. Every church and mission leader, though, should have this book in his library.

At some points, *Developing a Strategy for Missions* reads like a theological textbook. At other points it reads like a vibrant account of history. It concludes by feeling like a workbook requiring the reader to learn a lesson, put it into practice, and come back to learn some more. The goal of this book was to help the reader develop strategies to reach all the peoples of the earth. Terry and Payne achieved their goal by offering a great help to all those who seek to fulfill the Great Commission.