

Book Review

'When Everything is Missions' By Denny Spitters and Matthew Ellison

(2017, USA: Bottomline Media)

Reviewed by Farhad Chermahini

Spitters and Ellison are both missional practitioners with experience as mission pastors and organisational leaders. *When Everything is Missions* is a critique of missional approaches the writers consider unfruitful as well as a 'how-to' manual for thinking about missional engagement in context. The book is accessibly written, although mainly intended for church leaders, and is organised in seven chapters that focus on providing definitions, explaining what mission is and why it is important, who a missionary is, key issues and how to move forward.

Spitters and Ellison believe that to do mission well, leaders need to think thoroughly about mission. To that end, they suggest considering a series of questions to help leaders think through the basics from a biblical theology point of view. Aside from a few overly church-centred questions which attribute mission wholly to the church, Spitters and Ellison bring excellent points to the forefront which equip God's people for mission in a number of practical ways.

Firstly, they invite leaders to reconsider mission in the light of Jesus' life and ministry. Spitters and Ellison frame this by pointing to the Great Commission which can be interpreted mistakenly if based only

on Jesus' teachings to the exclusion of his life. If the Great Commission, however, is considered in the light of Jesus' life and interactions within his context, it can direct the people of God into relational and incarnational missions that represent God as he is: 'compassionate... gracious... and abounding in love...' (Exodus 34:6, NIV).

Secondly, Spitters and Ellison suggest considering what God's compassion and mercy mean for mission. This leads the people of God to take on God's posture of concern for the suffering and misfortune of others, profoundly demonstrated in Jesus' life.

Thirdly, the writers invite readers to think about what it is that motivates them for mission. Thinking along these lines, in the light of the life of Jesus, can lead the people of God to discover and shed attitudes and structures that are unhelpful to mission and replace them with practices that authentically embody God's character even in human weakness and failings.

Fourthly, leaders are invited to consider the implications of practices such as working in isolation from other Christian traditions. This is a significant point that, if implemented with humility and the understanding that

Christians are one universal body of Christ that spans across the ages, can enable the people of God to draw insights from historical and contemporary Christian missions and remain grounded in difficult and destabilising circumstances.

In summary, the book delivers in its attempt to help church leaders and mission practitioners think deeply about mission. It points out the problems that occur when everything is considered mission, directs readers to a biblical theology framework and places mission in the context of historical Christian traditions.

