



## WOW: Word Of the Week

### Missions: Great Commission June 1, 2022

The Barna Group periodically shares a *Barna Highlight* to help inform Christians about the state of the U.S. churches. The Barna Group describes these as “bite-sized findings you can use to become a more informed leader.”

A recent *Highlight* shared information from a research project undertaken in partnership with Mission India. [Additional findings are published in *The Great Disconnect*, a resource for “helping today’s churches and church leaders to a better understanding of the misconceptions and inconsistencies that are hindering the church in fulfilling the Great Commission.”] This information is also posted as an article on my website, and is the featured article on the front page of the website in June.

The graphic to the right summarizes the *Highlight* statistics.

- 85% of “pastors” believe missions is a mandate for all Christians.
- Among “practicing Christians,” only 42% affirm missions as a mandate for every Christian.
- Among “all Christians,” only 25% believe every Christian must be involved in missions.<sup>1</sup>



The research results do not surprise me. I remember a conversation with a Bible professor at one of our Christian universities. He affirmed that the Great Commission was given only to the Eleven and that it should not be understood as a command for every Christian today. I have been involved with church leaders for nearly 60 years. How few leaders are involved in the mission of seeking and saving the lost! Now where are we?

We have a world mission problem! While virtually all ministers, preachers, missionaries, and evangelists see the Great Commission – missions and evangelism – as a mandate for all disciples of Jesus, that belief is shared by a minority of Christians. Even among the most active, involved Christians, between one-third and one-half see the Great Commission as their own mandate (42% is almost exactly halfway between 1/3 and 1/2). Among all Christians, only 25% see mission as a personal mandate.

Welcome to mission work that depends on officially sending professionals.

Welcome to mission work where the primary purpose, or result, is not making disciples and saving souls.

Welcome to mission work focused on meeting physical needs.

We have a local mission outreach problem. Given that the mission field begins at the doorsteps of the church building and our homes, the statistics say something important about the local church. Welcome to churches where evangelism depends on selected ministers. Welcome to churches where the defined role of some ministers does not include outreach. Welcome to churches where leaders are minimally involved in local mission outreach.

We have a problem in the mission field because the U.S. results reported by Barna are being passed on to churches in the mission field. Increasingly, outreach is the work of the missionary, the minister, or the preacher, but not of every Christian! I close with a reminder. When the early church was scattered in Acts 8, the text says that the Christians went everywhere preaching the word. May we return to the New Testament model!

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of the local church, “pastor” usually refers to those with a formal preaching or ministry role. The second group would be the most involved and active members and the third group would represent the entire membership.