Integral mission and shalom: Scriptural reflection and case study towards an operational model

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What happens when integral mission starts from within the biblical testimony, which presents God as the actual Missionary who sends his church? How can this testimony also provide the key concepts needed, and the operational framework to understand and apply in unique missional contexts? The Bible integrates Word and deeds in its most crucial concepts. A thorough understanding of these concepts unlocks much needed perspectives for integral missions. “Peace” is discussed as one example of such keywords and proves the need for an integral approach in missions. Combining these biblical keywords with the outcomes of an extensive empirical survey leads to the plotting of a framework for integral missions. This paradigm is both biblically grounded as well as practically applicable.

The need for a fundamental and operational integral framework

Missiologists, missionary organizations and churches are rethinking the biblical foundations of issues such as integrating Word and deeds when proclaiming the Gospel and structuring the ministry of local churches.

The search for and discourse about a basis-theory for integral mission work indicates how people are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with dualistic thought patterns and arguments when pinpointing the focal point of evangelical mission work. This also holds true for ministry in established, Western churches.

This article aims to demonstrate, by discussing and analyzing shalom as one example of several key biblical concepts, how Word and deeds are integrated in God’s self-revelation, and why an integral approach is needed to avoid separating Word from deeds when proclaiming the Gospel. Thereafter, an overview will follow of the conclusions from an empirical study on integral mission, followed by a proposed framework for integral mission derived from both the biblical key concepts and the empirical study.
Scriptural reflection

Missio Dei

Missio Dei defines the identity, place and task of the church of Christ in God’s mission to the world. The church is God’s instrument in reaching all nations and tribes with God’s Word. Deeds arise from this and lead people to live integrally with their heart, head and voices to glorify God after being reconciled with Jesus Christ.

This means that integral ministry covers every aspect of one’s life such as repentance, growth in faith, the kingdom of heaven, economics, politics, social issues, ethics, technology and science. These aspects have to be addressed in such a way that it leads people to Christ where New Life in Him grows and develops, providing an outlook on the new heaven and the new earth. Preaching the Gospel has to focus on a person’s whole life.

In this ministry, churches are involved in God’s purpose and plan with creation and redemption. God employs the church as his instrument and servant, with a clear goal, focus and vision in a sinful and broken world.

From a missio-Dei perspective, integral mission focuses on eternal life, and thus is not limited to this life. Therefore, integral mission challenges people to discern whether their lives are in accordance with God’s created and redeemed order, and are connected to the coming of the new heaven and earth.

Through Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit, God, for his own glory, is uniting people from every tribe, nation, kingdom, and language to worship him forever in the New World.

Criteria

This article poses five questions as criteria to consider and discuss key concepts from a missio-Dei perspective. The aim is to demonstrate the close connection between Word and deeds in this regard. The five questions are:

- Who is God?
- Why did God create the earth?
- Why did Jesus Christ become man, died and was resurrected?
Why was the Holy Spirit sent to earth?

What is God’s purpose with the church in the world in view of the future?

**Biblical key concepts**

The Bible poses several key concepts as building blocks for integral mission. Using the above-mentioned criteria to understand the relationship between Word and deeds in these key concepts, the substantial importance of their encompassing integrality comes to the fore as well as their interconnectedness. This facilitates a vital understanding and application of integral mission. These concepts are linked inseparably as the threads of a cobweb. In touching a single thread the whole cobweb moves. The concepts are intertwined, but mutually linked. See Figure 1 for a schematic illustration of the mutual relation of the 15 biblical concepts understood integrally under the symbolized umbrella of the *missio Dei*.

These concepts amongst others are: **word, blessing, godliness, co-worker, fear of the Lord, peace, righteousness, justice, fellowship, ministry, poverty, love, image of the Lord, disciple making and witnessing**. The mentioned biblical key words were researched extensively in a recently completed Ph.D.¹
For this article, one particular theme will be highlighted—peace (shalom) and discussed following the above-mentioned criteria.

**Peace—shalom and eirēnē**

Academic publications on missional matters regularly debate the meaning of shalom and the consequences it holds for the scope, nature and purpose of mission. A striking example is the debate about the book by DeYoung and Gilbert on the true nature of the church’s mission and the locus of social justice and peace, as well as the role the Great Commission plays. They emphasize that the Gospel is proclaimed to make disciples; thus, social responsibility has a lower importance. Stetzer, however, rightfully indicates that DeYoung and Gilbert constrict the focus of missio Dei in their view that practical justice for the poor and practical peace do not form part of the church’s missional task.
The Gospel testifies that God reveals himself as the God of peace. This implies: Christ himself embodies, delivers and makes peace (Eph 2:14–16); He calls upon his followers to be peacemakers (Matt 5:19) and as a result, the church is commissioned to live in peace (Acts 9:31). Therefore, it is evident that the holistic dimensions of heart, hands and voices are integrated into the missio-Dei perspective. These aspects are integrated in God’s nature, character, and activity, and are similarly revealed in the ministry of Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the ministering of peace seeks an integrated approach regarding the nature, character, and activity of the church in accordance with the missio Dei.

**God:** Gideon calls the Lord *JHWH-Shalom* (Judg 6:24 ESV)—“The Lord is Peace.” This identification is echoed several times in the New Testament (Rom 15:33; 16:20; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20). The expression typifies God in his nature, being, and character as the God of peace. Peace is thus integrated within God himself. According to Smith and Cornwall it means that God himself is peace and brings peace. The mutual relation of the Triune God is one of godly peace. Paul writes: “the mind of the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom 8:6 ASV).

God’s names reveal his identity: He is God in action. God’s nature is to bring peace, which also is God’s gift to man (Num 6:26). Smith and Cornwall explain that God is peace and bestows the various aspects of peace and wholeness. These include welfare, health, wholeness, favour, perfection, well-being, rest, and restoration as well as the awareness to fulfill one’s responsibility. Peace is grounded in God, because this motive fully integrates with God’s revelation and deeds.

**Creation:** Although the biblical account of the creation in Genesis 1 and 2 does not mention the term ‘peace’, the inference can rightly be made that peace did exist in those circumstances. Keller argues that God created all things in a good, harmonious, mutually dependent and close relationship to one another. As tissue is woven into a dress, harmonious relations shape a community. This interwoven nature makes it clear that peace cannot be limited to a spiritual condition between God and humans, or among people. Without righteousness there is no peace (Ps 72:3-7; 85:9-11; Isa 32:17). The meaning of peace in the rest of the Bible can be expressed as a perfect fellowship between God, humans, animals, and the rest of creation.
This entails a relationship of holistic harmony between all forms of existence.

The heavenly fullness and richness in its various forms were realized—with heart, hands and voices—in the creation, until sin ended the perfect communion between God, humans, animals, and nature, according to Keller.\textsuperscript{11} Therefore, sin can be defined as broken relations, which means the absence of peace in the whole of creation.

Keller\textsuperscript{12} points out that, although \textit{shalom} is translated with \textit{peace}, the term has a much broader meaning. It describes full reconciliation and a state of full bloom in the various dimensions—physical, emotional, social, and spiritual. The reason is that all relations are deemed perfect, good, and filled with joy where the peace of God reigns.

**Jesus Christ:** Christ’s redemption reconciled all of creation with God by making the new covenant a new reality. This salvation-historic event is summed up in the concept of peace, according to Buys.\textsuperscript{13} In John (14:27; 16:32; 20:21) Jesus comforts and encourages his disciples by announcing that He will leave them heavenly peace. With reference to Isaiah 60:17 (NIV): “I will make peace govern you. I will make godliness rule over you,” Carpenter and Comfort\textsuperscript{14} postulate that God speaks about the restoration and glory of his restored people in Zion. God makes a promise that peace and justice instead of corrupt dictators will prevail, to encourage his suffering people. A central feature of the new community is described metaphorically by the word \textit{shalom}. The connection of mental and physical reality in this context is evident.

Peace is an act from God’s being, that he assigns to the sinful human being who is redeemed through Christ (Rom 12:18). Foerster\textsuperscript{15} highlights three concepts of peace (\textit{eirēnē}) in the New Testament, namely a sense of peace and tranquility; a state of reconciliation with God; and the redemption of the whole person in an eschatological sense. All three aspects are present in the act, but the last one forms the basis of peace.\textsuperscript{16}

According to Carpenter and Comfort,\textsuperscript{17} peace does not merely mean the absence of disasters such as war and injustice. Peacemaking particularly ushers in a time, place, and condition, in which the following qualities thrive: love and justice, as well as political and moral uprightness. When God’s peace rests on his people, they enter the highest state of grace.\textsuperscript{18} This
means that God’s people will experience welfare, prosperity, peace, security and safety. For missional ministry from the *missio-Dei* perspective, this integral understanding of peace is essential and opens up multiple views, which leads to a more holistic approach on mission.

**Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit integrates words and deeds in the missional ministry, realizes peace, and thus is proclaimed as the God of peace (Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20). This becomes clear in the Spirit’s actions. He gives obedience, peace, and joy (Rom 14:17); strengthens the believers’ hope by filling them with joy and peace (Rom 15:13); gives them a life filled with joy (Rom 8:6); and guides their daily behaviour by the fruits of peace (Gal 5:22–25). In effecting peace, the Holy Spirit brings believers the experience and awareness of well-being, satisfaction, and completeness, irrespective of their external circumstances.

The Holy Spirit establishes peaceful mutual relations between people (Eph 4:3) as well as between people and God. The Spirit gives believers peace instead of fear (Rom 8:1–2; 8:11, 14–17). The Holy Spirit also brings peace in the mind of people who have to endure difficult situations (Hag 2:5; John 16:5–21; 20:21–22).

By the work of the Holy Spirit, peace emerges in words as well as through deeds. The Holy Spirit integrates the ministry of peace in many practical areas by acts of mercy that bring and establish peace. The benefits that lead to peace granted by the Holy Spirit are not primarily a purpose in itself, but are meant to glorify God.

**Church:** From a *missio-Dei* perspective, the church is viewed as the integral bearer and worker of peace. 1 Corinthians 3:9 depicts the church as a patch of land where God cares through his servants, but over which God himself bestows his blessings. God employs the missional ministry to proclaim his peace in the world by Word and deeds. In the process, humanity will experience and develop peace to its fullest in all contexts of life, be it economics, politics, health or nature.

The church must constantly seek and pray for peace, and act as peacemakers. Several biblical passages confirm this commission (e.g. Eccl 17:1; Matt 5:9; Mark 9:51; Rom 12:18; 2 Cor 13:11; 1 Tim 2:2; cf. Buys). According to these passages, the concept of peace is applied in practice in a variety of ways. Basically it means that mutual peace is addressed in unity,
unanimity, and harmony and is impacting all relationships. In Psalm 85:11–12 David connects love, faith, peace, and justice. These qualities are actualized by words and deeds. Believers’ anticipation of an eternal state of peace has an eschatological focus throughout the Old and the New Testaments.

God employs righteousness and justice to restore peace. Only righteousness can bring true peace. The restoration of the shalom tissue means that believers combine their time, possessions, power, and resources as sacrifice to benefit the life and needs of others. Plantinga’s summary of peace reveals the nature and effect of peace:

In the Bible shalom means universal flourishing wholeness, delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder at its Creator and Savior, opens doors, and welcomes the creatures in whom He delights.

The church is thus the bearer, instrument, and worker of divine peace, and does this by integrating Word and deeds in its ministry.

**Final analysis:** It is evident that peace begins within God—in who He is and what He does. When God brings peace in and through Christ, he integrally reconciles man by Word and deeds to himself, and thereby restores the broken relation with humans. This is worked out in practice through believers various relationships in which are involved. The promise of eternal peace results in the church accepting the assignment to spread this condition here and now, impacting the diverse relationships in which people find themselves. By proclaiming peace, the church helps to realize peace as eschatological beacons and signs of the final coming of the Kingdom. According to the missio-Dei perspective, God already shapes peace in the present as the foreshadowing of eternal peace. God uses the church as instrument of Christ to mold this peace.

There is extensive biblical support and evidence for integral mission. When the outcome of an empirical survey is combined with the missional paradigm of the CGKN, it helps to develop an integral model.
Case study: Conclusions on the CGKN and KwaNdebele

This subsection briefly describes the conclusions reached from extensive archival, literature and empirical research into the CGKN’s fundamental principles and vision on integral mission and its practical effects. Which key issues contributed to their cognitive framework on integral missions, and what lessons can be learnt from its application in the field? What did the CGKN had in mind with its mission, and how did the people and leaders of KwaNdebele respond? All of these questions impact on the concepts of justice, peace and joy. The following issues arose from the conclusions:

- A thorough theological basis and ongoing reflection on integral mission is crucial. This counteracts the dangers of a fractured vision and of ‘policy’ determined by daily issues. Policy and goals need continued revision. This helps to keep the vision focused. An incomplete or ambiguous theological design for integral mission, leads to missed opportunities.

- Without a sound theological basis, goals as such may become the vision. For the CGKN, the goals of church growth and church planting caused disarray when they were confronted with other needs and issues. Many churches were planted, but with too few equipped church leaders to minister them. A lack of a unified vision amongst missionaries caused internal conflicts and confusion among the local people, that affected the peace. Therefore, the motive of servant leadership following Christ’s example is essential.

- A thorough, critical evaluation during and afterwards (Prov 13:18) can help provide a sound basis and encourage continued reflection.

Other aspects affecting the outcome:

- Too rapid expansion of mission projects is laden with pitfalls.

- An essential need, therefore, is to focus on training for self-reliance and self-support.

- Extensive, multi-level, integrally-focused education and a thorough biblical grounding are necessary among the local people.
- The importance of the attitude of the missionary as a serving guest, completely involved in the local language and the culture, cannot be overstated. This follows the kingdom style of Jesus Christ: love for the community, biblical equality, and prophetical and living example through the Word and in deeds.

- A thorough knowledge is needed of the local worldview, society, customs, politics, religions, economy and culture, religions, superstition and ancestral worship, and an apologetic ability to understand and handle these matters. The same applies to local ethical aspects. A cultural imbedded understanding of the meaning and application of the integration of Word and deeds will address multiple problems and issues in this context.

- Cross-cultural communication and information requires ongoing priority. This includes expectations, organization of structures, equality, application of decisions and comprehensible agreements.

- Biblical discipline needs to be facilitated cross-culturally.

- Funds donated from abroad should be allocated only after consultation with the locals.

- Mutuality: Those who serve need to ask how the people whom they help can help and serve them in return. This serves the biblical principle of the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit, which implies a biblical self-esteem of those helped, the servant attitude of the missionaries and reciprocity.

- When understanding the Scriptural reflection on the integral relation of key words such as peace, justice and joy, it becomes evident that the practice of these concepts has an enormous impact on the issues mentioned in the case study. The issues are interrelated. For example, biblical discipline brings peace, justice and joy. It deepens when these issues and the key words are connected—as in the example of the cobweb.

**Operational framework**

The scriptural reflection and the conclusions drawn from it lead to an operational framework for integral mission. Research indicates a need exists to fill the gap between a solid biblically grounded understanding of integral ministry, and the manner in which it should be applied. Many mission
practices take the existing needs or problems as a starting point and then consult the Bible’s guidance on this. The proposed framework starts off with the biblical principles, and integrates these with the outcomes of the empirical study. The result is a paradigm serving the integration of Word and deeds. The framework, depicted in Figure 2 below, combines theory and practice applied to specific situations.

![Operational framework for integral mission](image)

**Figure 2: Operational framework for integral mission**

**Explaining the framework**
The biblical principles firstly are embraced, followed by their practical application. This process is outlined by four major questions: **why**, **who**, **what** and **how**? —posed in this sequence.
Fundamental reflection

Why? (Why is integral mission done?)
Asking why, firstly studies the source, heart, motive and calling of the missionary endeavour. This investigates the inspiration and motivation for the mission ministry. This is the first question to be posed, because it leads the starting point, the heart of integral mission: missio Dei—God’s mission. This motive serves as a solid foundation and focal point, and unlocks perspectives to expand integral mission.

In this process continued prayer is essential.

Flowing from the missio-Dei focus, the six key questions (about God, creation, Jesus, Holy Spirit, church and future) help to illuminate the integral perspective of the 15 biblical concepts (e.g. peace, justice). These concepts are graphically accentuated in Figure 1, with streaks like the rays of the sun spreading its light on the 15 biblical concepts. The concepts are interconnected. Heart, hands and voice point toward the integral approach of the 15 biblical concepts. For example: Understanding the integral biblical meaning of “peace” will provide a better understanding of its practice in a specific situation. For example, peace should be understood and addressed differently in Great Britain than in Syria. The missional approach will differ in both countries, whereas the biblical essence and purpose will be the same.

Practical application and interpretation

Who? (Who must be reached and served?)
This integral biblically-based cognitive process leads to a practical approach. Firstly, the location has to be mapped: Who are the target group? This includes the country, culture, language, religions, customs, demographics, socio-economic context, glocalization, history, literacy and education, worldview. It also entails related issues for example, power struggles, ancestral worship and poverty. As much information as possible is needed on these matters.

The question about the who also sheds light on the way to interpret the integration of Word and deeds in a particular context. The 15 biblical key concepts help to answer this question. This contextualization entails an ongoing and repeated process, illustrated by the recurring arrow in Figure 2
which also features in the next two questions: what and how? Repeating these questions for the duration of the missions project helps to provide an improved strategy on how to reach the intended target. It may necessitate adjusting the practical goals to fulfill the vision more efficiently.

By answering the who question the mission will be more purposeful and deliberate. This logically leads to the next question: what?

**What? (What has to be done?)**

The what question exposes the needs to be addressed. As with who, the 15 biblical concepts help to answer this question. This process works reciprocally because it also answers the question on how every what-item replies to God’s purpose regarding the 15 biblical core concepts.

The research has shown that the following aspects need to be addressed integrally within the context of the criteria and the 15 key words.

- Preaching of the Word: fundamentally, actual up to date, application within the context
- (Integral) prayer
- Missional diaconate
- Theological, Trinitarian education, on multi-academic levels: fundamentally and empirical
- Ethical issues
- Sociological, economical, technological, environmental, ecological and political issues
- Cultural corrections according to Christ’s example
- Intercultural communication and mutuality
- Sacrificial (financial) giving
- Self-reliance and personal responsibility
- Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Leadership development together with local churches
- Church planting, disciple making, witnessing, evangelization
- Interdenominational collaboration within community projects
- Entrepreneurship facilitated in the local community
- Medical and social care: services and infrastructure

This list is not comprehensive, but can serve as an ‘umbrella’ to include other topics.
The **what**-question can focus clearly and biblically, leading logically to the **how** question.

**How? (How must it be done?)**

The prevailing questions investigated the who and what. This entails the policy and people viewed in the context of the 15 biblical concepts and answers the **how** question.

**Policy**

Applicable policy is formulated in view of the integral mission ministry. This process has to be on-going to improve, evaluate, change and develop the whole integral missions project. The biblical principles give direction within a particular context.

Responsibilities are assigned. This also provides clarity and peace in all working relations. Missionaries are given enough space to solve problems and take initiatives, with the support of the sending church or organization. This strengthens self-worth, servant leadership, humbleness and fosters a grateful and dignified attitude.

**Ministers and stewards**

A choice is made for the most suitable missionary to be sent. The mistake is often made to reverse this process by beginning to send willing missionaries, then deciding **what** they should do and only then answering the **who**.

Research points out that integral mission calls for specific and personal biblically-based requirements for missionaries. These characteristics are crucial when the 15 biblical concepts are applied integrally.

**Profile**

The following characteristics apply for these mentioned missionaries:

**Inner disposition**

- Born-again Christian as well as a prophetic and living example and witness in words and deeds, showing spiritual dedication, disciplined in reading the Bible, prayer and fellowship with the Holy Spirit
- Loving compassion for the local community (Acts 20:37, Phil 1:7)
• The attitude of a present guest, but (distinctively) incorporated in the community

• Servant leadership according to the kingdom style of Christ—flexible and willingness to adapt

Professionalism

• Thorough and suitable training with knowledge, wisdom, insight and skills to lead and train (2 Tim 3:16-17) Also a proper and growing understanding of God’s nature, will and plan with the world and what God expects of his followers

• Vision and passion for missional ministry, understanding of goals and strategies to work systematically

• The ability to discern and the courage to point out and tackle error and heresy

• Readiness and competence to learn, listen cross-culturally and to communicate

• Equipped and experienced in personal and organized evangelization, Bible study groups, pastoral care, disciple making, church administration and ministry, especially to the poor

• Willingness to endure suffering and to sacrifice for the sake of the church (Col 1: 24-25)

Personal position

• Partner should be dedicated to mission (when married)

• Personal involvement with, active in and present in the community

• Quality and gifts match the specific calling and instruction in accordance with the decided vision, principle goals and strategies

• Equality, also intercultural, in functions

• Biblical discipline (intercultural), openness to be corrected and beseeched self-criticism and insight in own shortcomings and pitfalls

• Continuous, extensive and thorough evaluation during and at the completion of a mission project.
Conclusion

By applying the basic principles of why, who, what and how to the biblical principles of integral mission within a particular context, a usable model can be constructed for every situation while being faithful and obedient to God. This will increase the quality of human life and glorify God, while biblically respecting and correcting local culture and customs. This framework has a perpetual motion. The road should be taken again and again. It is similar to the upward and forward movement of a spiral. This spiralling motion will intensify the process and enrich residents to live as responsible stewards in a free and healthy environment to the glory of God while fulfilling their calling of his worthy and skilled servants.

1 André Jansen, “‘n Holistiese perspektief op die missio Dei: ’n Evaluering van die sendingwerk van die Christelike Gereformeerde Kerken in KwaNdebale (RSA)” (PhD thesis., North-West University Potchefstroom, 2015).
2 Ibid, 15.
3 The length of this article unfortunately does not allow for a full discussion of all 15 words. An English translation of the PhD thesis is being undertaken.
5 Ibid, 20, 62.
8 Ibid.
10 Ibid, 186.
12 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 F.W. Grosheide, Korte verklaring der Heilige Schrift met nieuwe vertaling: Paulus’ eerste brief aan de kerk te Korinthe opnieuw uit den grondtekst vertaald en verklaard (Kampen: Kok, 1933), 42.
21 Ibid, 8.
24 André Jansen, “‘n Holistiese perspektief op die missio Dei …” (2015), 134-272.
25 CGKN—De Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland, i.e. the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.
26 A former homeland during the apartheid years in South-Africa. Currently part of the KwaMhlanga area in the Mpumalanga province.
27 Cf. 1.
28 André Jansen, “‘n Holistiese perspektief op die missio Dei …” (2015), 313
29 Globalization and localization