

# THE CHURCH AND MISSIONS

## WEEK 6: OUR ROLE IN GOD'S MISSION.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

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- The goal of this six-week class is to zero in on the mission of the church from a Biblical perspective.
- Our schedule will look like this:
  - Week 1: What is our mandate?
  - Week 2: What is the church's role in missions or the centrality of the church?
  - Week 3: What was the Apostle's Paul's strategy for missions?
  - Week 4: Kyle Baker sharing his personal call to missions.
  - Week 5: How has the church historically accomplished missions?
  - **Week 6: How should church members be involved in missionary work?**

### INTRODUCTION

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- This morning I want to finish off what we have been talking about regarding missions. I want to make it really practical to you as a church and then to you and I as individual Christians.
- As we have learned over the past 5 weeks, the work of missions is really up to the church. Christ has given His authority to the church and then commanded the church to go and make disciples.
- As we will see, this command was not given to a superior Christian or to a specific group of Christians. This command was given as a general command for the entire body of Christ to follow.
- Our chief directive that we should be striving to fulfill is making disciples. Whether that is accomplished in your home, in your local church or by going to a foreign place, it is what we should be busy about.

### EVERY BELIEVER IS PART OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

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- As the church we exist for God's mission. So, what is our role? What should we do to be obedient? How are we to get the gospel to people on the other side of the world?
- **Romans 10:14-15** "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!'"

- This passage gives us some instruction. It tells us people are saved through believing in Jesus. The only way to believe is to hear the gospel spoken to them. But the only way someone can go and speak is if they are sent. We long to send people from our church to spread the gospel. We are praying to that end.
- But the truth is every one of us can participate in sending now.
- For far too long, many followers of Christ have seen global missions as a compartmentalized program in the church for a select few called to this purpose. Yet when one looks from cover to cover through Scripture, one realizes that global mission is the purpose for which each one of us has been created. We've each been created, called, and commissioned to play a part in making disciples of all nations. This call to mission most assuredly means making disciples right where we live, among neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances in our communities and cities. At the same time, we work on mission wherever we live with a continual openness to go on mission wherever God leads.<sup>1</sup>
- When Jesus gave the Great Commission in **Matthew 28**, He was not singling anyone out for a specific task. He was giving a command and the authority to the church to make disciples.
- Our mindset should not be that missions is up to someone else or that there are agencies for that. Our desire should be to be involved in making disciples, both here and abroad.

## THREE THINGS EVERY BELIEVER CAN DO

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### Pray

- Every person can have a part in reaching the unreached through prayer.
- No matter when we pray, we should be praying for the salvation of people that we know.
- **Colossians 4:2–4** “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.”
  - Paul here is asking the church in Colossae to pray for him and his ministry. Paul was desiring to take the gospel message to other places but did not want to go where there was no opening.
  - He wanted to be directed by God as to where he was to go. This means we do not just send out people to go anywhere, but that there is direction and purpose to their going. The one who is sent is working with the sending ones.
  - Furthermore, not only taking the message, but Paul also prayed for the clarity of what he was speaking. We can not only pray for the Lord to open doors for us but also that we would know what to say when we get there.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/pray-give-go/>

- Our hope is not to confuse people or convert them to our culture, but to be able to give them a clear presentation of the gospel.
- God uses prayer to accomplish His mission, and it allows us to contribute to both the life of our missionary partners and the people they are reaching with the gospel. We should take this discipline as one the main ways we can support our missionaries. Only God can open eyes and hearts to see and believe, and through prayer, we are asking in dependence on Him to do just that for those who are laboring for Christ.
- We can pray as Paul directed in **2 Timothy 2:25** “...with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth...”
  - Repentance is a supernatural act that needs God to intervene. We should be praying to this end.
- When we pray, we should have specific people and places in mind. While general prayers are good (salvation of the world, everyone in a city repents, etc.), we can see God working when we are praying for our specific missionaries and the specific tasks they are doing.

## Give

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- Another way we participate in God’s mission is through financial giving. Missionaries cannot go unless they are sent, and this requires supporting them financially.
- Throughout the New Testament we see a pattern of churches giving, so the gospel keeps moving to unreached places.
- **Acts 18:5** “But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.”
  - Couple things to talk about in this verse. Firstly, Paul was ministering in Corinth, and we know that he was a tentmaker at this time (Acts 18:3). He was not fully supported by a church, but he was making money with his hands and laboring in the churches when not at work.
  - We know that Paul spent some 18 months in Corinth (Acts 18:11). The only place that he spent more consistent time was Ephesus. He was working on planting a church and winning souls for Christ.
  - As Paul was laboring, God sent him two brothers in the Lord. Silas and Timothy.
  - Where did Silas and Timothy come from? They came from Macedonia. Where was the church located in Macedonia? Philippi.
  - Paul says in **2 Corinthians 11:8–9** “I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.”

- Paul is recounting this scene in Acts 18 to the church at Corinth. He was laboring there in Corinth and was in financial need but did not ask them to support him.
- In God's infinite wisdom, He sent these two brothers to Paul to bring him money.
- He said to the Philippian church in **Philippians 4:15** "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone..."
- The church supported Paul's mission work from Philippi so that he could work in Corinth. They knew that Paul needed money, they had the money to give, and they wanted to support Paul.
- **Romans 15:24** "...whenever I go to Spain--for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while..."
  - Paul was in Corinth on his third missionary journey. He was planning on going to Spain. We have no real idea if he went there or not. But, we do know that he planned on going and that he expected the church in Rome to give him support to get there.
  - They would either support him in his travels to Spain or, at a minimum, take care of him when he was in Rome with food and lodging. I would suspect both are on the mind of Paul.
  - As this letter was written only 7 or so years before Paul's death, he had been around the churches, and he knew what to expect.
- 3 John 1:5–8 "Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth."
  - These verses tell us so much about supporting missionaries.
  - We want to be faithful to the brethren, especially when they are strangers. While it was very dangerous to travel in those days and hospitality often included a home to stay in. In our present day we too can show Christian strangers the love of Christ by our hospitality.
    - This is in the context of missionaries. When we have missionaries visiting, they should feel the same love from us that they would in their own church.
  - We want to send them away in a manner that is worthy of God. We do not want to be skimpy with money or other necessities. We should be striving to support each missionary so that they are not worried about money but are able to do the job that the Lord has put on their hearts.
  - John says they accepted nothing from the Gentiles. Remember in **2 Corinthians 11** Paul said that he did not take from the Corinthians but was supported by the church in Macedonia.

- This is how it should happen. Our missionaries should not be a burden to the people they are ministering to but be supported to labor in the area they live in.
- Perhaps there will come a time when the church is supporting a local pastor or even the one who planted the church. But the fact remains that our missionaries should not be looking for money from the people they are laboring to win for Christ.
- Lastly, John exhorts us to support the men who are going out for the sake of the Name. This is a HUGE criterion for supporting missionaries. We want to know they are going out for the sake of the Name of Christ. Meaning they are sharing the gospel, discipling and planting churches.
- Why is this important? The purpose clause *so that we may be fellow workers with the truth*. We do not want to be partnered with people who desire to have their own glory shown and want to try and make a name for themselves.
- Commenting on this verse “those who show hospitality participate in the ministries of those to whom hospitality is shown (v. 8). Verse 8 gives the same reason to demonstrate hospitality to genuine teachers as does 2 John 10 in forbidding hospitality toward false teachers, i.e., that those who extend hospitality share in the deeds (i.e., good or bad) of those receiving it.”<sup>2</sup>
- In our local church here at MBC, we give from the general offering to our missionaries. If you desire to give to missions, you are obviously free to do so on your own. Our goal is to keep increasing our giving towards missions from the church.
- This is one of the reasons we are brining in so many missionaries for you all to meet and for us to get to know. We want to be good stewards of the money God has granted to us and make sure we are investing in the work of the kingdom.

## Go

- Our prayer is that God will not only allow us to partner with others in missions, but we also desire to send our own! Whether that be short, mid, or long-term, we want to be a church that is going.
- We want to have missionaries that are across the state, country and world.
- If you are unable to go and be an overseas missionary, you can support them through a number of ways that are listed both above (pray and give) and that we will talk about below.
- With that being said, even if you cannot travel, you can still be a light with the gospel in your community. The place you work, the stores that you shop at, and the other places that you frequent. One does not have to be in a different zip code to share the gospel and make disciples.

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<sup>2</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 3 Jn 8.

- We think wrongly when we believe that missionaries are only those who are sent out. We all have a calling and responsibility from Christ to make disciples, where we are located.
- In the normal events of the church there should be families who desire to go and share the gospel in places that are out of their local area. This can be either in or out of their own country.
- As people are being taught the Word, there are going to be some who desire to take this Word to people who may not have direct access to it or perhaps have never heard it. They are going to have a heart to share the gospel and plant a church.

## **PRACTICAL STEPS IN OUR CHURCH**

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### **With our current missionaries**

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- Writing cards/letters...email
- Following what they are doing in the field so that when they come and visit you can talk with them about their mission.
- Be a part of what is going on when they are here.
- When they visit, taking their kids for a night so that they can have some alone time.
  - Many missionaries who serve overseas never have close enough relationships with locals to allow them to watch their kids. It is a special blessing when they come back when they can get some alone time together.

### **Helping us with potential future missionaries**

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- Many of our missionaries have come to us through other people. When you know someone who is going to the mission field, let us know.
  - It is important to understand that not everyone who asks for financial support is going to get it. You have to be prepared to hear “no” or “not right now.”
  - We cannot support every missionary that knocks on our door nor does every missionary align with our mission policy.
- We rely on the church body here at MBC to help us get to know the missionaries when they come for a visit, especially their initial visit. We want to know what you think of them and if you think their mission aligns with what the Bible says and if you think we should support them.
- If there is ever anything that you are questioning, it is important to let us know.
  - I am thankful that we have had some in the church over the past 2 years come and ask us questions about the missionaries that we are currently supporting. This is a “full body exercise.”

## Two focuses for our local missionary endeavor.

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- Church planting
  - Our heart is to see churches planted through the sharing of the gospel and subsequent discipleship taking place.
  - This can happen either here in the US or overseas. This has been the focus of the men that we have been bringing here (and will bring here) to get to know.
  - Church planting is not a one man operation. We are praying that God would raise up a lead man, and his family, to take on the teaching role in the new church. We are also praying at the same time that God would put this desire into the hearts of families in our church.
    - When church planting, it is important that a core group of people go and plant a church.
    - This could be a place where many families are already coming from or a place that is outside of our area but is in need of a Bible teaching church.
- Church revitalization.
  - Similar to church planting, this would take an already existing church and place a lead pastor and his family there to help get the church back up and running.
  - This is also a team effort where a core group would be sent out to serve in the church with the hopes of it becoming a healthy church again.
  - This usually starts with the dying church reaching out for help and then we start to see if it is something that we are able to do.

## HOW WE EVALUATE MISSIONARIES.

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- Here is what we work off at MBC...here is how we prioritize our missionaries here:
- **Church planting.**
  - This will consist of the formation of indigenous, local churches that engage in the worship of God, evangelize unbelievers, and effectively care for believers. This will be done with the end goal of these churches reproducing themselves. For this to take place there must be a strong initial evangelistic strategy, an ongoing gospel witness, and a teaching ministry. The primary means that God uses to accomplish this is a resident, fulltime, pastor/teacher and qualified elders.<sup>[1]</sup>
- **Leadership training.**
  - A close second to church planting is leadership training. It is not possible to plant theologically sound doctrinally robust churches without trained pastors/teachers to plant them. Therefore, the

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<sup>[1]</sup> Ibid., page 10

training of men to effectively handle the Word of God as they lovingly shepherd God's sheep is essential to missions.

- This type of ministry includes training pastors through The Expositors Seminary to be sent out to plant churches as well as sending out teachers with the specific goal of training men who are nationals to become pastors/teachers who will then lead the local church.
- ***Church strengthening.***
  - This ministry consists of building up and equipping existing local indigenous churches so that they are able to evangelize and reproduce churches among their own people in an effective way. Endeavors aimed at strengthening local churches may include shepherding, preaching, teaching, discipleship, and partnering with Christian nationals in evangelism and outreach ministries.
- ***Support roles*** (directly tied to 1-3).
  - Ministries included in this section are ministries that provide various support services to aid those engaged in church planting and equipping ministries. Ministries such as bible translation, women discipline other women and children, administration, medical work, aviation, and other services.