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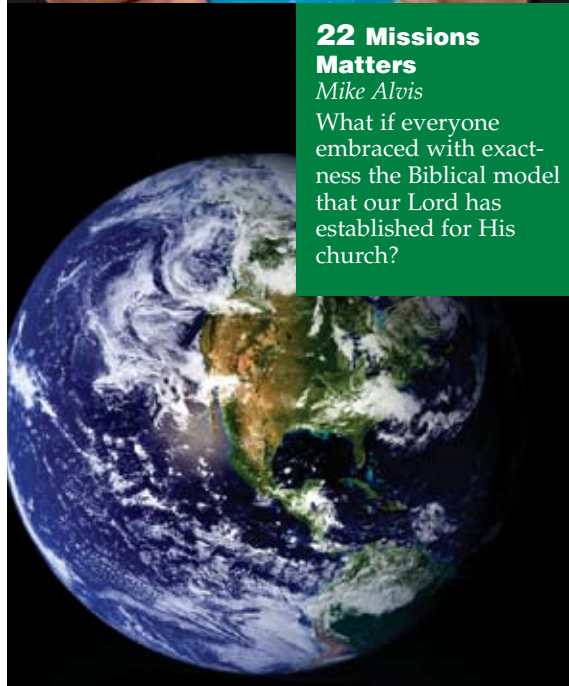
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We are grateful to Dr. Thomas Alvis Jr. for his editorial assistance with this edition of *FrontLine*.

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You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.



**Y**our issue of March/April 2006 was of special interest for me. Being a converted Muslim myself and a missionary to the Muslims in England, I am reminded of the blasphemous teaching of Islam, especially their concept of deity. I am also reminded of the danger Islam poses to the world in general and to America in particular.

I have been in England for several years and that has enabled me to see the extent of the damage Islam has done the UK, spiritually, socially, and politically. Some Muslims openly acknowledge their intention to take over the UK as the first Islamic nation in the West. Regretfully, they are gradually succeeding. I wonder what America is doing to limit the rapid spread of this wicked religion. I believe reaching the Muslims with the

gospel is more crucial today than it has ever been. Thank you for that issue.

*Joseph Abraham  
Pastor of Grace Bible  
Fellowship Church  
Birmingham, England*

**I** read, with some interest, the resolution against the Family Integrated Church movement. Of most interest was the lack of comment on the concept of Family Integrated Worship. Assuming the Bible is infallible, inerrant, and sufficient, how can anyone defend Family Segregated Worship? If this question is taken to Scripture Alone (*Sola Scriptura*), is there any other conclusion than families should worship together? Or, do you (as does the Roman Church), put more emphasis on tradition than Scripture?

*Bro. Donald R. Holmes  
Pastor, New Hope  
Community Church  
A Baptist Fellowship (SBC)*

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## Rethinking Missions

John C. Vaughn

It is not our intention in this issue to question the value of missions—mission boards, missions programs, or missionaries. We do not believe that missions needs to be “rethought” in the sense that we may have it all wrong or that we need to reinvent the concept. We need to rethink missions because **process** can displace **purpose** in any Christian endeavor, including missions. We need to guard our hearts to insure that we are focused on Christ and His Commission and not just the tools developed to fulfill it. We need to rethink our responsibilities and pray for a revival in missions because we serve a Missionary God.

The articles in this issue and in missions publications illustrate what we mean by “rethinking missions.” For example, “The New Faces of Missions” is a thought-provoking article by Dr. Timothy Shorb of International Partnership Ministries. It can be found at [http://www.ipmworld.org/index\\_files/page0018.html](http://www.ipmworld.org/index_files/page0018.html), and is an important part of this discussion. Dr. Shorb’s thesis is that “the majority of cross-cultural missionaries serving God around the world are [no longer] from North America and Europe. . . . The new faces of missions are often dark-skinned, Oriental, and Latino . . . [and this is] part of God’s master plan for world evangelization.” He supports this claim with convincing evidence and appeals for Fundamental churches in America to embrace this reality and use it wisely. He concludes with five practical suggestions that deserve to be read in their context and prayerfully considered.

These suggestions include contin-

ued support of American missionaries, with a shift in some areas from church planting to national leadership development; supporting foreign nationals where possible and appropriate, with due consideration of trustworthy candidates; utilizing leaders from Asia, Africa, and Latin America that have access to fields (especially in the 10/40 Window) where Americans cannot go; realizing the advantages of working through missionaries that need a fraction of the support that Americans do; and questioning the argument of “creating dependency” from a truly Biblical context, rather than assuming it as a valid reason for not supporting nationals.

In countless conversations in recent years and considerable follow-up for this issue of *FrontLine*, it is apparent that many missionary leaders see

this paradigm shift in missions as both practical and Scriptural. Churches that support only American church planters who are going to “open” mission fields could benefit from rethinking their reasons, whether they change their strategy or not. Supporting those who are training national church planters in their own countries and as missionaries to “closed” mission fields is not only being discussed, it is already being done, especially by established Fundamental churches outside America. American mission boards and separatist churches are wise to remember their roots when it comes to “rethinking missions.”

The ranks of the original separatists are thinning, but they taught us why it became bad stewardship to send missions support to denominational programs. Machinery was overtaking ministry; process supplanted purpose. The

money still flowed, but the message became flawed. Missions needs vision more than it needs traditions. We must not assume that faith missions will stay on course without constant revival. We do not dishonor past or present missionaries to ask the simple question, “Is what we are doing the best possible stewardship of the resources God has committed to our trust?”

Further, how will we continue to support soul winners abroad without a revival of soul winning at home? Can the Great Commission be fulfilled from a defensive position? The Muslim world is expanding rapidly, not through conversion but through population growth and emigration. Meanwhile, the “Christian West” diminishes through misguided population control and compromise or outright mockery of the gospel. The West has abandoned its convictions in its craving for comfort. It has become the Mission Field of Islam, and anyone who doubts the potential of the ultimate Islamic conversion technique is in denial. We have dedicated two past issues of *FrontLine* to this fact and suggest again that Fundamental pastors avail themselves of resources to prepare their people. Wayne Bley’s *Behind the Lines* column in this issue is a good place to start, and many should invite him to do additional teaching on the subject.

Yet fear of being overrun by enemies of the gospel will never motivate those who will not fulfill the Great Commission out of love for Christ. That is the real starting point for all “rethinking” of spiritual duties. Spiritual life can come only through Jesus Christ, and revival can come only through renewed love for Jesus Christ. Rethinking missions is just another way of rethinking what Jesus Christ has done for us and, therefore, what we must do in His name.

# Are We Truly Missions-Minded?

Where there is no vision, the people perish (Prov. 29:18).

Andrew Murray in 1901 wondered “why, with millions of Christians in the world, the army of missionaries fighting the hosts of darkness is so small.” His answer is—lack of heart. “The enthusiasm of the kingdom is missing because there is so little enthusiasm for the King” (*Key to the Missionary Problem*, p. 7). Honesty demands that we acknowledge the steady decline of interest and involvement in missions within our local churches over the past twenty-to-thirty years. In recent conversations with several veteran missionary friends, terms such as *dead*, *dying*, *calcifying*, *trifling*, *pathetic*, *waning*, *sicken*ing, and *frustrating* were used to describe missions within Fundamental Baptist churches. None of us enjoys criticism, but unless we are willing to stop making excuses and to consider what is being said, “the missionary program of today and tomorrow will, to put it soberly, fizzle out like a wet firecracker instead of being the mighty missile that Christ intends and requires” (ibid, p. 8).

No vision on the part of a pastor results in no vision within the congregation. No vision within the congregation results in selfish disobedience to the Great Commission by the church. No vision will make the people perish, eventually causing the death of that church as well as the eternal condemnation of those it could have reached. Webster defines vision as “a mode of seeing or conceiving, unusual discernment or foresight.” In the context of missions, vision is missions-mindedness.

A Google search of “missions-minded” and “missions-mindedness” verifies the ready availability of material that would help us evaluate, stimulate, and build missions-mindedness within our churches. But is that happening? Are we actually fulfilling our God-given responsibility to make disciples? How many of us are personally and regularly involved in sharing the gospel of Christ? How many missionaries have been sent to foreign fields from our own congregations? How many souls did they personally win that remained behind to support them?

Undoubtedly, most Fundamental Baptists would claim to be truly missions-minded. We give to missions; we pray for missionaries; we hold Missions Conferences and send teams on short-term mission trips. These actions may reflect a sincere missions-minded attitude, but do we really understand what that means? What would a truly missions-minded congregation look like? How would it behave? Would it be different from what we see in our churches today? Fundamental Baptists pastors are taking a hard look at missions and asking tough questions. That is encouraging. We need to have our thinking challenged, and to “rethink missions” without treating the subject like a “sacred cow.” The burden of my heart is to participate in Christ-honoring discussion of true missions-mindedness by proposing a definition, portraying a description, and presenting suggestions for the practical development of a truly missions-minded ministry.

## Missions-Mindedness: A Definition

“Minded” means “to be inclined or disposed; to have a mind concerned with a specified thing . . . usually used in combination, i.e., narrow-minded, health-minded.” To

be missions-minded is, therefore, to think missions, to talk missions, not only giving to missions, but actually living missions. It is to realize that missions is not an add-on program but that it is the dynamic, driving force of a healthy local church (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:45–48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).<sup>1</sup> The missions-minded church has missions as its clearly focused goal for glorifying Christ.

### **Missions-Mindedness: A Description**

A man who loves sports, a businessman driven with an entrepreneurial spirit, a housewife committed to order and cleanliness, a young lady preparing for marriage—all have in common a passion for the things on their hearts. That passion determines the subject of their conversations, their attraction to certain friends, and the use of their time and resources. When a Christian is passionate about the thing that Christ is passionate about, that Christian will be truly missions-minded.

When veteran missionary friends were asked why they used the strong terms mentioned above, they gave the following reasons:

- Missions conferences have been shortened and are poorly attended.
- There is less emphasis on missions in our schools, churches, and fellowships.
- There are fewer young people surrendering to serve the Lord in full-time Christian service.
- A smaller percentage of our church's financial resources are being directed toward missions.
- Missionary candidates are taking longer to raise support, and many are not staying on the field.

When veteran pastors were asked about the current state of affairs in missions and what their greatest concerns are, they offered strong indictments:

- Missionaries expect more accountability from supporting churches than they are willing to give in return.
- There is an attitude that if it is called "church planting," supporters cannot question the wisdom or legitimacy of a missionary's work.
- Missionaries are often disengaged from actual missions work for years of deputation, and when they get to the field they spend nearly all of their time and energy homeschooling their children.
- Missionaries do not go to the field until they are fully supported, then appeal to sacrificial supporters for funds for every repair or unfunded inconvenience that arises.
- Missionaries come home at great expense for family responsibilities, optional medical procedures, and personal matters far more frequently than in the past.

Please understand that these men have no ax to grind, nor any selfish agenda. These were the candid statements of men with heavy burdens for the work of God—our churches and missions programs. They are veteran missionaries who have traveled among our churches, men

who have spent decades living, breathing, preaching, and teaching missions. They are pastors who have led churches in support of missions, who long to see their young people surrendering to missions. All were thankful for strong missions-minded churches. But all agree that the passion is not up to the Commission.

They were not being cynical when they said, "We need to stop saying missionaries are 'faithful' when we really mean they are 'lazy,'" or, "Most pastors never come to the field to see what is really going on, and some who do act like it is a vacation at the missionary's expense." Listening to them describe the changes they are burdened for, I heard them talk of pastors and missionaries who have a mutual passion for missions—men hungry for a revival of soul winning. They don't care if it's called "discipleship" or "mentoring," they just want to get it done. They describe a missions-minded Fundamental Baptist church as one that has genuine passion for souls—the kind where people are not content to pray and give for someone else to do something about it, but where they are driven to do something about it themselves. They see missions-mindedness as "soul winners at home sending soul winners to the mission fields."

### **Missions-Mindedness: The Development**

A lack of missions-mindedness is due to spiritual immaturity in the church. "To the pastor belongs the privilege and the responsibility of solving the foreign missionary problem" (*Key*, p. 11). Murray emphasized, "Only spiritual men, and a church in which spiritual men have influence, are capable of rightly carrying out Christ's commands" (*ibid*, p. 10). Our pulpit ministries should consistently stir our people to give themselves wholly to God's kingdom work in their own sphere of influence. We are to equip them "for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12).

Here are four practical initiatives that exercise developing spiritual maturity as it builds missions-mindedness:

- Evaluation—Honest assessment of every aspect of a church's involvement in missions. Is missions merely a program, or is it a passion?
- Articulation—Consistent exposition of the Word and clear communication of vision, philosophy, goals, and strategy.
- Education—Teaching missions by every Biblical means: preaching missions from the pulpit, posting missions in plain view, publishing missions on paper.
- Participation—Getting every member involved in missions at home and abroad by every practical means.

Fundamental mission boards offer helpful materials, and other resources are easily found.<sup>2</sup> Read and promote helpful books on missions, such as those referenced below.<sup>3</sup> A must read for those who would be missions-minded is the previously referenced *Key to the Missionary Problem* by Andrew Murray. Passion must include prayer and patience if true missions-mindedness is to come. My prayer is that God will grant us the desire, the wisdom, the fervor, and the commitment to become truly missions-minded.

Murray said it so well:

In the previous pages I have frequently spoken of prayer. . . . I feel that all that has been said will profit little unless it leads to prayer. As we look at the extent of the field, and the greatness of the work that still has to be done; at the utterly inadequate force which the Church has at present on the field, we are crushed. . . . We see our absolute impotence to give life either in the Church at home or the work abroad, and our entire dependence upon the power that comes from above in answer to prayer and faith. We are amazed at the love of our Lord to His people and to the perishing, and the promises He waits to fulfill. We feel that our only hope is to apply ourselves to prayer. Prayer, more prayer, much prayer, very special prayer, should first of all be made for the work to be done in our home churches on behalf of foreign missions. That is indeed the one great need of the day. (pp. 147–48)

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<sup>1</sup> See this issue's article entitled "Missions Matters" by Pastor Mike Alvis for a clear statement of the heart of Biblical missions.

<sup>2</sup> Inclusion in this resource list does not imply wholehearted agreement with these respective ministries.

#### Additional Resources

- *Advancing Churches in Missions Commitment* ([www.acmc.org](http://www.acmc.org)). Among its many resources, ACMC offers a very helpful Missions Assessment Profile (MAP) to assist in the evaluation process.
- Dr. Jerry Kroll, Pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, has a very helpful CD with missions helps and valuable resources ([www.heritagebc.net](http://www.heritagebc.net)).
- *Operation World* ([www.operationworld.org](http://www.operationworld.org)).
- *Unpublished Word* ([www.FirstBible.net](http://www.FirstBible.net)).
- *William Carey Library* ([www.missionbooks.org](http://www.missionbooks.org)).

<sup>3</sup> Recommended books:

- Andrew Murray, *Key to the Missionary Problem* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1979, ISBN 87508-401-X).
- Dave Doran, *For the Sake of His Name* (Allen Park, MI: Student Global Impact, 2002, ISBN 0-971382905).
- John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993, ISBN 0-8010-7124-0).
- James M. Weber, *Let's Quit Kidding Ourselves about Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Moody Press, 1979, ISBN 0802446787).



A Christian in Sangla Hill, Pakistan, holds a smashed portrait of Christ left by a Muslim mob that looted his home and burned down his church.

## REMEMBER the PERSECUTED CHURCH

"Christians in many parts of China, central and south Asia, and across the Middle East are facing great persecution right now. Frontline Missions International is not only standing with them during their hour of need, but also equipping them to reach the most difficult places with the Gospel."

—Pastor Rick Cross, Faith Baptist Church,  
Longmont, CO and FMI board member

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# The Missionary's Task and Qualifications



David Shumate

As a young person I was an avid sports fan. Once I heard the wry observation that if the object of basketball were to get the ball into a hole in the floor, then the highest paid players would all be four feet tall. As humorous a mental picture as this may generate, the principle makes perfect sense. There is a reason that jockeys do not have the same physiques as power forwards, or that excellent accountants do not usually have the same personality as outstanding sales professionals. In any endeavor the nature of the mission determines the qualifications for those who will carry it out.

A failure to follow this principle can hinder the development of an effective missions strategy. Without a doubt the most crucial missions decision that a church can make concerns which missionary candidates it should support. Sadly, however, churches often make this determination in a subjective way, based largely upon the impression that the candidate makes during a single deputation meeting. A major cause of difficulty in determining appropriate missionary qualifications is our failure to articulate a clear idea of what missions is. As a result we have no objective basis for discerning what it will take for a missionary to be successful. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to identify some of the basic contours of the task of missions and the implications for missionary qualifications.

## Missions and the Great Commission

Bible-based mission discussions must begin with the Great Commission. Christian missions must be about *the* Mission.<sup>1</sup> This basic truth protects the church from becoming simply another charitable social institution. It also helps us understand certain general requirements of a missionary, regardless of specific ministry function. For example, since making disciples is a spiritual endeavor, anyone who participates in it must be ministering in spiritual power.<sup>2</sup> In addition, a missionary should be a person who is passionate about and skilled in the presentation of Jesus Christ to the lost. As we will see below, missionaries can and should play different roles in the mission enterprise, but every missionary should be able to do the main thing. A missionary must also be a discipler. Matthew 28:19 commands us to teach (literally "disciple") all the nations, assimilating them into the church and instructing them to know and practice all of Christ's commandments. The end result is multiplication as those disciples make other disciples. A true leader does not merely make followers; he also turns them into leaders (2 Tim. 2:2).

The foregoing suggests that missionaries, regardless of their function on the field, should first have proven themselves in the context of the local church ministry, particularly in the areas of Spirit-filled witnessing and discipleship.<sup>3</sup> A person who will not reach others for Christ at home will not suddenly be transformed into a great soul winner by crossing an ocean. A person who does not know or care to lead

believers to spiritual maturity here will not do so elsewhere. If God's call of missions is really upon a believer, it should be readily apparent both to his pastor and the other members of his church. If it is not, then perhaps the candidate needs to spend further time in preparation, not only in language, culture, and theology, but also in the practical ministry.

## Missions as Sending

Many churches have placed a commendable emphasis on the obligation of the entire church to fulfill the entire Commission. This emphasis may be reflected in signs above the exits of the church saying, "You are now entering your mission field," or in the common motto, "Every member a missionary." The difficulty, however, is that if every member is a missionary in the strict sense of the word, then why have a separate missions program at all? Whereas the mission of the church as a whole is the Great Commission, the program of missions helps fulfill that responsibility in a specific way.<sup>4</sup>

What, then, is the essence of missions as a distinct part of the mission of the church? The key Biblical concept is that of sending. There are several Greek word families in the New Testament that convey this idea. The two most important are *pempo* and *apostello*. Altogether these two word families appear in the New Testament approximately 250 times. In the context of the early church, the unmistakable picture one sees, particularly in Acts and the Pauline Epistles, is one of a church in constant motion—sending workers to all parts of the known world to fulfill different functions to carrying out of the Great Commission.<sup>5</sup>

There are at least two major implications of the foregoing. First, when someone is sent to another place, he is no longer subject to the same level or frequency of supervision as before. The missionary, therefore, must be someone in whom the senders have implicit confidence.<sup>6</sup> This confidence can only be borne out of a relationship in which someone can observe and evaluate the prospective missionary's character and competence.<sup>7</sup> A missionary must be a person of initiative, not dependent on others to get or keep him moving in the Lord's work.<sup>8</sup> The need for reliable leaders for missions says much about the obligation of pastors to make leadership development one of the highest priorities for their ministries.

The second important implication is the cross-cultural nature of much mission activity. As the gospel spread in the first century, it crossed the most significant cultural boundary that has ever existed, that between Jew and Gentile. Certain chosen and prepared men, such as Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, were selected to lead this delicate process.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the history of modern missions, one of the central challenges has been working through cultural differences as they affect the communication of the gospel, the development of standards of conduct among new converts, and the relationship between the missionary and indigenous leadership. A mis-

sionary must be someone who is firmly grounded theologically with a thoroughly Biblical philosophy of the ministry; however, he must also be objective and flexible on matters of cultural preferences and perspectives. It is, therefore, highly advisable that a prospective missionary first prove himself in some kind of cross-cultural ministry setting, if possible under the supervision of his sending pastor,<sup>10</sup> and also that he study, and even serve an internship in, the culture to which he will be sent.

## Missions as a Team Endeavor

Among believers today one often finds a view of missionary call and service that is highly subjective and individualistic. For many, the paradigmatic missionary is one who in the solitude of his prayer closet discerns God's call to an unreached people group in a remote place and undertakes by himself to evangelize them, plant a church, and train future leaders.<sup>11</sup> According to this way of thinking, if a candidate is earnest enough about His call and is willing to live and serve in an unpleasant place, then he is worthy of support regardless of his ministry experience, proven character, or the confirmation of his calling and proposed strategy in the minds of ministry leaders. For the most part, however, the Bible presents a different picture of missionary calling and ministry. Although one does indeed find accounts of the dramatic personal call and

the solo missionary endeavor, the most common pattern is of a group activity, where missionaries are either recruited by churches or other missionary leaders or where the missionary call is confirmed by them.<sup>12</sup>

Not only the missionary call but also the missionary work is usually a collaborative enterprise. Paul, whose missionary work is recorded in the most detail in the New Testament, became the leader of an extensive missionary team. Beginning with Barnabas and John Mark (later replaced by Silas and Timothy), Paul's group gradually grew into an extensive network of laborers.<sup>13</sup> In addition the churches played an active role in endorsing, supporting, and providing accountability for the mission work. Paul as the team leader often appealed to the churches to receive and support his helpers in the fulfillment of their mission responsibilities.<sup>14</sup>

This Biblical pattern demands four things. First, missionaries must be effective team members. It is often noted that conflict among missionaries or between missionaries and indigenous church leadership is a major cause of missionary failure. The missionary should have demonstrated a servant's heart and a willingness to work under authority and in partnership with others in his own local church before going on deputation. Second, the team concept also means that a church must have confidence in the entire team to which the missionary is a part.<sup>15</sup> Before supporting a missionary, a church should make sure that it is fully behind the ministry team and particularly the de facto missionary leader with whom that missionary will

*Not only the missionary call, but also the missionary work is usually a collaborative enterprise.*

be working. The church should also work to gain a good understanding of the overall mission strategy for a given location or ministry.<sup>16</sup> Third, churches should consider the overall personnel needs of a particular field or ministry and be willing to throw their support behind the entire team. It makes no more sense to support a missionary and be unwilling to fund the necessary support personnel than it does for a church to pay its pastor a generous salary but refuse to authorize funds for him to hire a secretary.<sup>17</sup> Finally, missionary candidates should have demonstrated a clear understanding of and capacity to fulfill their anticipated ministry roles on the field. The specific ministry skills required, will vary depending upon the responsibilities within the mission team.

## Conclusion

The foregoing implies that churches, particularly sending churches, must be much more proactive and diligent in thinking through the needs, personnel, and strategy of a proposed missions effort. It also means that they must be much more involved in the overall responsibility of preparing prospective missionaries for service. In return for this investment, however, we gain more confidence in the missionaries that we do support, and we increase their effectiveness on the field.

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messengers are instructive in this regard. Both Timothy and Titus had demonstrated the same spirit as Paul (Phil. 2:20–22; 2 Cor. 8:16; 12:18), and Timothy was Paul's "beloved son, and faithful in the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:17). One brother had a good reputation in the gospel among the churches (2 Cor. 8:18, 19); Paul had many times "proved [another brother] diligent in many things" (2 Cor. 8:22). Tychicus was a "faithful minister in the Lord" (Eph. 6:21). Epaphroditus was Paul's "companion in labour, and fellowsoldier" (Phil. 2:25). Both Tychicus and Onesimus were faithful and beloved (Col. 4:7–9).

<sup>8</sup> "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him" (Prov. 10:26).

<sup>9</sup> The Lord especially prepared Peter for his encounter with Cornelius (Acts 10:9–20). Barnabas, himself a Cypriot (Acts 4:36), was well suited to investigate the ministry among the Gentiles of certain brethren from Cyprus (Acts 11:20–22). When Barnabas himself needed help for the work in Antioch, he went to Tarsus to find Saul (Acts 11:25, 26), whom the Lord had called to go to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21), and who exhibited a keen insight into Greek religion and culture (see Acts 17:16–31).

<sup>10</sup> This opportunity is becoming increasingly widespread as America experiences a continuing influx and geographic dispersion of large numbers of immigrants.

<sup>11</sup> When it is presented this way, one wonders whether the typical, experienced American pastor could fulfill all of these responsibilities without the help of a ministry team. How much more should we be cautious about sending young people, fresh out of Bible college and lacking pastoral experience, to make the attempt alone?

<sup>12</sup> Jesus Christ called Paul in a dramatic way, and the Holy Spirit sent Philip alone to speak to the Ethiopian eunuch. On the other hand, the decision to send a missionary was often made by a leader or leaders (see verses cited in n. 5 above). This is not to deny the validity of the personal call and leading of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps one could say that the subjective sense of calling is necessary, but that it is neither sufficient nor always first in time.

<sup>13</sup> For example, at one point in Paul's ministry we see that his traveling team consisted of Sopater, Aristarchus Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, Trophimus, Luke, and at least one other (Acts 20:4, 5). Different people helped Paul in a ways as varied as going in his place to strengthen the believers (1 Cor. 4:16, 17) and taking dictation (Rom. 16:22).

<sup>14</sup> See n. 7 above.

<sup>15</sup> This concept of a mission "team" is more practical than official. Such a team might consist of a group of missionaries working in collaboration in a location or in a common ministry. Smaller or specialized mission agencies might be thought of as a mission team if their representatives have a tight philosophical focus and if they work together in significant ways.

<sup>16</sup> A pastor should ask himself concerning a missionary who is in a position of leadership, "Is this man someone that I would trust to lead my church if something happened to me?" At the least, the missionary should be sufficiently qualified to lead a stateside ministry of comparable size and complexity to that of his ministry overseas. When it comes to support personnel, the pastor should ask himself whether he would eagerly hire the candidate to serve on his church or school staff. We should be ashamed of ourselves if we would send to the mission field those who we believe could not make it in the American church.

<sup>17</sup> It is notoriously difficult for mission agencies to raise funds for office staff because office work does not seem like "missions" to many people. However, the administrative support required for maintaining a ministry overseas is even greater and more sensitive than that required to operate a ministry in the States, and the consequences of administrative failure can be even graver.

<sup>1</sup> In fact it is fair to say that the Great Commission is the purpose of the entire church, not simply of the mission program. Every ministry should make some discernable contribution toward the fulfillment of Christ's command to make disciples and bring them to maturity in His likeness (Matt. 28:18–20).

<sup>2</sup> "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Earl Nutz for this insight concerning the need for missionaries to learn practical ministry skills in their own culture before attempting to minister cross-culturally.

<sup>4</sup> Thanks go to Mr. Mark Vowels, Director of the Office of Missions at Bob Jones University, for articulating and developing the distinction between missions in the general and specific senses.

<sup>5</sup> The Jerusalem church sent Peter and John to investigate the revival in Samaria (Acts 8:14) and Barnabas to confirm the salvation of the Gentiles as far as Antioch (Acts 11:22); the Jerusalem Council sent Judas and Silas with Paul and Barnabas to the Gentile churches to communicate the council's decision (Acts 15:22); Paul sent Timothy to Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17), to Philippi (Phil. 2:19), and to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2), and he left him behind to minister in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3); Paul also sent Titus to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 8:6, 16, 17; 12:18), and to Crete (Titus 1:4). Once he sent another brother along with Titus to Corinth (2 Cor. 12:18). Paul also sent on missions Erastus (Acts 19:22), Phebe (Rom. 16:1, 2), Tychicus (Eph. 6:21, 22; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:12), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), and others (1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:18, 22; 12:18; Titus 3:12).

<sup>6</sup> "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters" (Prov. 25:13).

<sup>7</sup> The comments that Paul makes commending several of his

# Accountability in Missions

Missions consists of a curious relationship between a pastor and the local church he serves, a missionary, and, in most cases, a mission agency. Before we can address accountability, it is necessary to delineate each party's responsibilities and their relationships with each other.

## Local Church Responsibilities

The Acts 13 account of the sending out of the first missionaries shows that the local church has at least three different roles in the selecting and sending out of missionaries.

The first sending church was *strong in service*. The words "prophets and teachers" indicate the presence of proclaimers, or evangelists, and trainers, or pastor/teachers. The activity of reaching and training converts is the ongoing work of the local church. It is foolish to believe that any church will be inherently good at foreign missions if it is not first engaged and effective in proclaiming and training at home. A perusal of the names of the "church staff" at Antioch shows a wide diversity in origin, race, and culture. This diversity demonstrated a healthy church ready to reach out beyond her borders. The Antioch church was effective in reaching and teaching men, but her priority was her service directly to the Lord in worship, prayer, and fasting.

Because the first sending church was active in service it was also *sensitive in spirit*. While they were busy aiming their service at the Lord, the Holy Spirit personally called them to be active in missions. He directed them to send His choice of servants to the work He would direct them to do. While it is appropriate to quiz a missionary candidate on his academic preparation for the field, the local church's first responsibility in selecting missionaries is determining the call of God on their lives. Fred Moritz, the Executive Director of Baptist World Mission, states it this way:

The local church must discern the character, or qualifications of the missionaries for the work to which they are called. These biblical qualifications (I Tim. 3:1-7; II Tim. 2:24-26; Titus 1:7-9) will become evident

as the prospective servant of the Lord works in his local church.<sup>1</sup>

Note the statement made by the Holy Spirit: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Through the words "separate *me*" He indicates the intimacy of the relationship involved in this process. The word "separate" demonstrates the costly distance between the sending church and the missionary as the missionary leaves for the field. Calling Barnabas and Saul by name shows the reality of a personal call to missions, and the words "for the work" show a call to a specific work. He establishes Himself as the Sovereign Lord of the Harvest with the words, "I have called them." Though the statement implicates the prospective missionary, it is directed at the church. A sense of awe and gravity is placed on the local church by this statement.

The last aspect of the role of the sending church is far-reaching in its responsibility. The Antioch church was *sacrificial in scope*. Note that the first step in the sending process is often considered the last hope for many—they "fasted and prayed." The prayer of the local church at home is critical to the success of the missionary on the field. Paul is often heard pleading with the churches, "Brethren, pray for us." He urges the Romans to agonize in prayer for him (Rom. 15:30, 31). The missionary needs prayer for protection, effectiveness, and ability to return in God's timing to encourage the sending church through a report. Then there is the necessary step of commissioning—they "laid their hands on them." Commissioning a missionary is choosing to approve and determining to meet the logistical needs from the home base. It is imperative not to proceed into this awesome responsibility lightly. It is ultimately each local church's job to see to the accountability of their missionaries. Last is the loving step of sending—they sent them away." Sending a missionary to the field is in part committing to meet the financial obligations.

## Missionary Responsibilities

Acts 13 teaches that the missionary has at least three different responsibilities too. Each missionary who answers

the call must first be *strong in service* in his local church ministry prior to going to the field. “The missionary’s call will reveal itself in his *desire* for the work, his evident *ability* for the ministry, his *acceptance* by the people of God, and his *fruitfulness* in the work” as he works in his local church.<sup>2</sup>

The missionary must also be *sensitive in spirit*. He must first discern that the Holy Spirit is calling him, and then he must discern the specifics of what the Holy Spirit is calling him to do. The emphasis is not so much on a place and position as on an identification of goals and objectives. Some will see the Biblical mandate for church planting and will define church planting and the training of future church leaders as their main goals and objectives. Others will sense God calling them to auxiliary roles. It is imperative for each missionary to identify these goals and objectives so that each church can evaluate them before deciding if they want to become involved in their ministry. It is important to note that discovering the will of God is most often a process rather than an event. Paul and his company were en route to the field when God gave them the Macedonian call. Their goals and objectives did not change, but the place certainly did. While missionaries have a responsibility to their supporting churches, we as the supporters must give them the ability to be flexible in following the leading of the Lord.

Finally missionaries must be *sacrificial in scope*. They face the sacrifice of leaving home and country and the sacrifice of living in and for the ministry to which God has called them. The sacrifice of retaining the accountability to their sending churches through consistent reporting of the activities and results of the ministry is vitally important. Missionaries are sent; therefore, the missionary goes to the field under the authority of his local church. Though missionaries must follow the leading of the Holy Spirit given personally to them, they must never forget the partnership they have entered into with those who send them. They must retain the accountability such a partnership entails and expect God to lead them both in unanimity.

## Mission Agency Responsibilities

Recently a young man told me that if he were going to the mission field he wouldn’t use a mission agency. My response to him was that I probably wouldn’t support him. The responsibilities that are put on the sending church are almost more than most small churches can effectively perform. Though the mission agency’s activity is primarily toward the missionary, its primary service is to the local church.

Through the principles and policies of a mission agency there is “an understood contract between the mission agency and the local church on one hand and the missionary on the other. The mission agency is accountable to the churches to maintain its stated positions and philosophies, and to make sure that the missionaries function in the same manner.” The mission agency also “serves the local churches in the handling of funds,” and “in the appointment process, certifies to the churches that the missionaries it appoints are qualified for missionary service.”<sup>3</sup>

## Conclusion

From the time I have been aware of missions, I have heard complaining about “the system.” From deputation to ongoing accountability, there are perceived problems that folk would like to fix. Without moving to a denominational approach it is difficult to imagine changing “the system.” Every church has individual responsibilities to God and will have to answer to Him for the way they spent their missionary dollars. Though I may not like the way a particular board or missionary does what it does, it is not appropriate to assume I could or should be able to change them.

All of us know of a missionary who doesn’t seem to be very successful, and we may wonder whether he has the gifts to do the work—or even whether he is working. Frankly, the same can be said of many of us pastors. Dr. Moritz wrote to me in recent correspondence, “Missionaries face a lack of success for several reasons. There may be some who should not be on the field, but others labor in incredibly difficult places. I suppose many would have called Carey and Judson ‘unsuccessful’ in their early years.”

For the last several years I have had the privilege of serving on the board of Baptist World Missions and have learned much from the godly men on the board. While there are other boards doing an equally good job, I have grown to appreciate the help BWM is giving to its local churches in this area of accountability. There are annual reviews by field representatives, and every three to six years each missionary meets with a subcommittee of the board. When a problem arises, the first response of the board is to call the pastor of the sending church and ask for his attention to the problem. I am learning the delicate balance of the practical importance of a mission agency helping with the Biblical responsibility placed on the local church.

There are cases where change is imperative, but like my daddy used to tell me, “The only person you have the ability to change is yourself.” As we review the responsibilities that God has placed on each of us in this area of missions, let’s each renew our commitment to the responsibilities that fall on our shoulders, rather than blaming the system. I find that though I am only a little cog in the big machinery of God’s Kingdom, I am a part. As I focus on my responsibilities and trust Him to use me to meet those responsibilities, I can make a difference. May God use each of us in our little areas of service to do our part, and may He use all of us collectively to accomplish His goal in world evangelism.

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<sup>1</sup>*The Local Church Helping Missionaries*, an outline by Dr. Fred Moritz, Executive Director of Baptist World Mission ([www.baptistworldmission.org](http://www.baptistworldmission.org)).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Mission Agencies—Scriptural? Necessary?*, an outline by Dr. Fred Moritz, Executive Director of Baptist World Mission ([www.baptistworldmission.org](http://www.baptistworldmission.org)).

There is a spot near the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, a little marble circle that marks what the ancient Chinese believed to be the very center of the universe. Today this cosmic bull's-eye is just a place for grinning tourists to stand and have their picture taken. However, many ancient peoples had similar beliefs about their realm being at the center of things. Why else, for example, would one say, "All roads lead to Rome"? While it is an interesting idea that the center of the universe is located in Beijing or Rome, I am not convinced. In fact, I think the chair I am sitting in writing this article may just as likely be the true center of the universe! Seriously though, when it comes to missions, I am afraid that for too long, many of us here in America have behaved as if we were at the center of the universe.

In olden days, designating a particular place as the center of the universe was easy because to many ancients, their world was flat and relatively small. After a whole "new world" was discovered, though, little maps grew into great globes, and centers were more difficult to designate. Similarly, in the missions realm, the world is very different from the one that William Carey, Adoniram Judson, and Hudson Taylor lived in. They and other missionary trailblazers inspired their generation to answer the Great Call. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, missionary ranks were filled mostly by those from the English-speaking world: British, American, and Canadian. As they crossed continents and cultures with the gospel, though, things changed. People of every nation, tongue, and tribe were saved through faith in Christ. Churches sprang up, and Christians in many lands began sharing the gospel with their own countrymen. In the twentieth century, political boundaries grew dramatically (there were fifty-five independent countries in 1900 and 192 countries by the end of the century) and so also grew the political barriers to western missionaries. Yet, not surprisingly, the advance of the gospel was unhindered. In the past quarter century, tremendous growth in churches has taken place in parts of Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Of course, the largest growth has been in China in the past twenty years through the house church movement. Today there



## Walking Together

**Tim Keese**

are tens of millions of believers that God brought to Himself largely apart from any western influence. While in the West we could pray for China but not go, behind the Bamboo Curtain the Lord was doing a marvelous work through the Chinese themselves—surpassing in scope and fervency all work previously done in China and producing a truly indigenous church.

Missionary ranks are, therefore, much more diverse than in the past. In many countries indigenous churches are not only firmly planted but some, such as Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, and Ukraine (to name a few), are also sending missionaries to other countries. Of course, the United States continues to be a driving force in missions today, but others are driving, too, and those who are too poor are riding bicycles or walking—but all are answering our Lord's order "go ye."

And so the center of the missions world has shifted a bit. How should American missionaries, mission boards, and the pastors and churches who support them, relate to Christian workers in other countries given the differences between us? It should be a relationship that is not based on our money or our expertise, but one that is characterized by respect and humility. Our approach must be culturally sensitive and our attitude Biblically balanced.

Naturally, "Go ye into all the world and make disciples" means that missions involves working with other people. Often they will be Christians who are very different from us with strange names who speak in strange tongues and eat strange food. We usually refer to such people as "nationals," but really they are just people. When we talk about working with nationals—that is, Christians from other cultures—there may be suspicions, concerns over accountability, and differences over methods and practice. Such responses actually go back to the earliest days of the Church. As Acts unfolds, the "original" Christians (Jewish believers who thought Jerusalem was the center of the universe) grew concerned about the Gentile Christians. Some wanted to impose their Mosaic culture on these Greek and barbarian converts. The controversy which Acts 15:2 describes as "no small dissension and disputation" was so great that Paul and Barnabas had to come off the field

and go to Jerusalem to explain the situation. Peter and the other leaders at Jerusalem wisely saw that the gospel was about Christ and not culture. Rather than impose Jewish legal strictures on these non-Jewish believers, they simply outlined a few simple requirements for Gentile believers for the purpose of purity and unity in the Body of Christ. Then Paul and Barnabas got back to work!

This was not an isolated incident. “Cultural clashes” between Christians in the early Church are recorded throughout Acts. In fact, Paul wrote Galatians in order to deal with the issue in the strongest possible terms. Yet misunderstandings among Christians of different backgrounds and the desire to impose cultural preferences along with the gospel work is just as real in the twenty-first century as it was in the first.

Every church has its own culture that it cherishes—one shaped by tradition and the handprints that mold a ministry over time. Culture provides a level of unity within a congregation that is important. It is only when a particular culture is elevated to be *the* Biblical standard for all Christians and therefore should be imposed on others that the culture is out of bounds. Just imagine how most of us would respond if a Christian of the Krung tribe in southeast Asia told us to leave our shoes and pews outside the church building. We would probably politely tell him to go home! That example is really not much different than when Western missionaries insist on suits and ties or learning English in order to read the King James Bible. Planting an American-style church in foreign soil usually lasts only as long as the missionary and his money. Such church plants, if they survive, are often fragile and fruitless.

The apostle Paul had a different approach. In 1 Corinthians 9:20–23, he said, “Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without the law, as without law, . . . that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake.” And so in the pattern of Paul, in Egypt I must never cross my legs while seated before the congregation; while among the hill tribes of Cambodia, I sit cross-legged on the floor while preaching. When I worship with Christians in Pakistan, we clap as we sing, keeping time with a *tabla* drum. Despite grenade bombings of their churches by Muslim fanatics, their songs and faces are filled with joy and not dread. When I pray with my Christian brothers and sisters in Uzbekistan, we hold our hands open. Using

a *tabla* with singing or lifting up our hands in prayer isn’t Charismatic—it’s cultural—just as using a piano, sitting in pews, and mixing men and women together in church is part of our culture in the West. Within Biblical bounds, no worship culture is better than another—they are just different. These are refreshing reminders that the gospel is for all people in all places.

Working with national pastors, evangelists, and others in the ministry is fruitful and effective. These Christian workers don’t have to learn a new language, adapt to the nuances of a new culture, or spend years on deputation. It is a privilege to come along side them in “joint ventures” starting Bible schools, planting churches, developing radio broadcasts, publishing gospel literature, and laying strategies together for the further advance of the gospel.

It is often the case that Americans may have more formal Bible education than Christian workers in other lands; so we may be called on to help provide Bible training to such men and women. But we must never confuse a seminary degree with superiority. Yes, as a minister of the gospel we should be “apt to teach,” but we should also be “apt to learn” as well. Over the years I have learned so much about prayer, faith, and the power of the gospel from Christians who were barely literate. They have no credentials, but they have Christ and much to teach us about Him in often profound and practical ways. Therefore, sometimes we teach—and sometimes we

are taught. We are not “the boss”; we are just fellow slaves serving the *real* Boss.

Amos’s question, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (3:3) answers itself. Clearly two walking together don’t have to agree on everything. They just have to agree to walk together—to go in the same direction. When working with nationals there must be no compromise of the gospel, but if there is agreement on direction, on the fundamentals, on majoring on the majors and keeping the minors in their place, the relationship will grow into a partnership and then a friendship. President Reagan used to have a plaque on his desk that read, “There is no limit to what can be accomplished so long as no one cares who gets the credit.” When it comes to missions and partnering with nationals, the same is true, except it must be modified—“so long as Christ gets the credit.”

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# The Great Commission Strategy of Training Nationals

Tony Fox

The shattering of the Berlin Wall and the consequent domino effect throughout Eastern Europe during the early 1990s caught the western world off guard, including western churches. All of a sudden we faced missions dynamics we had not experienced before. A large portion of the world in which numerous thriving churches already existed suddenly opened. These churches made it through those decades of trial intact and with increased memberships. However, the Eastern European believers had been deprived of Biblical ministerial training during that period. Consequently, when Communism fell, they did not cry out for the West to send those who would plant churches. They knew that the best potential church planters for Russia, Poland, Ukraine, etc., were already sitting in their own churches. What they did call for was help in training their current and future preachers to prepare them for ministry in their new reality.

During the 1990s many of us who answered that call in Eastern Europe discovered the strategic effectiveness of training nationals for the ministry. National training should not be viewed as something that is in competition with church planting. They go hand-in-hand. Anyone training nationals ought to be viewing the perpetuation of local churches as one of the main objectives for the training they are providing. Rather, the unique dynamic of Eastern Europe, with so many churches already existing, forced us to prioritize strategically. As American missionaries in

new territory, we were looking for the most effective and immediate way we could help further the cause of Jesus Christ in those lands that were suddenly free. The natural soldiers for spiritual warfare were already there and numbered in the thousands—they just needed training.

Biblical precedent for training nationals begins with Paul's discipleship of Timothy.<sup>1</sup> Aquila and Priscilla, taking their cue from the apostle, perpetuate the same activity with Apollos, resulting in effective ministry in Corinth.<sup>2</sup>

Because nationals already know the languages and cultural mentalities of their lands, their effectiveness is ready-made. All things being equal as far as giftedness and training, a national is going to have a greater and more immediate impact on his own people than a foreigner will. If a missionary/trainer spends two to four years training just ten competent nationals, not only will he multiply his capacity by ten, but by ten who already know the language and culture and connect immediately with their own people.

In addition to the linguistic/cultural advantage, training nationals is a wise use of missions funding. Depending on the cost of living of a given area, ten or more nationals can be trained over a one-year period for the cost that would be required to support an American missionary for the same time.

As mentioned above, the ministry of training nationals should not be pitted against that of sending American church planters. Rather, it's a question of assessing what a

particular field needs at a particular time. In areas where there is no or minimal gospel exposure, sending church planters is the priority. In areas where Bible-believing churches already exist, training nationals within those churches is the wisest use of missions' effort and resources. Missionaries who have planted churches understand this and are either involved in training nationals themselves or desire to do so eventually. Anyone who has been involved in the ministry of training nationals can testify to its strategic effectiveness. The Bible college we started in Poland during the early 1990s trained young men from Poland, Russia (from as far as Siberia), Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, and Latvia. Their languages were different than anything we had studied before.

would spend years to learn a Slavic language, training our Slavic brethren for ministry could begin immediately with competent translators. Believing that training nationals would have the paramount immediate impact in Eastern Europe, three of us American missionaries linked with a national pastor and focused on training as our main ministry. This did not preclude our learning their languages, cultures, or being involved with evangelism and church planting. However, concentrating our efforts primarily on training nationals did allow us to have an impact right away in that part of the world during a time when everything was moving rapidly.

The impact took off and grew exponentially. The young men we trained returned to their home countries and in their Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian, and Latvian languages evangelized their fellow countrymen with success. That evangelism soon resulted in several Fundamental Baptist churches in those nations (as far as Siberia). Several of these same graduates also started Bible institutes where, in the spirit of 2 Timothy 2:2, they are training even more men for the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ. In Russia, one of these institutes currently has sixty students.

Moving from Eastern Europe to Asia, I was asked to include in this article a brief explanation about the unique dynamics and potential of the underground church in China in the context of national training. The fascinating history of the house church movement in China is a testimony to Christ's authority over atheistic and oppressive governments.<sup>3</sup> Over recent decades, the Chinese underground church has reached breathtaking numbers. Many statistics are currently floating around, and it is difficult to be precise. The underground network leaders I personally have talked with say they believe 90 million to 100 million believers presently exist in China.<sup>4</sup> Only the Lord knows the actual

number of Chinese believers, but there is no denying the astronomical growth He has caused in China over the past five decades. The combination of this massive host of very committed believers with their booming economic growth may mean that we are looking at the next great missionary force in the history of the Great Commission. In the not-too-distant future, Chinese missionaries fueled by indigenous Chinese wealth will be reaching Asia in a way we westerners never could.

And not just Asia. For decades the underground church in China has had an ever-intensifying burden to take the gospel "back to Jerusalem."<sup>5</sup> The Chinese Christians understand how the gospel has journeyed primarily westward over the last two millennia from its starting point in Jerusalem. They believe the Lord has given them the task of taking the gospel from their geographic standpoint all



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Their consonantal clusters (e.g., *przepraszam* = "excuse me") were difficult for us to pronounce without hurting ourselves or hearing the nationals break out in laughter! Learning their languages, though, was like kindergarten compared to understanding their cultural worldview in order to reach them with the gospel. The disconnects between our cultures and mentalities were huge! Much time would be needed before we could effectively reach them with the gospel and plant churches—time we didn't have in the early '90s as cults, ecumenism, Charismatic teaching, and materialism were quickly infiltrating and scooping up large numbers of victims.

However, an enormous army of young potential preachers was already in Eastern Europe. To them, Slavic languages and cultural understanding came as naturally as breathing. And whereas an American church planter

the way back to Jerusalem as the final leg of the Great Commission circuit. This movement will bring our Chinese brethren through what for years we in the West have been calling “the 10-40 Window”—the area of the world that has the greatest population, but the least light of the gospel. Until now, we western Christians have been looking for how we ourselves could reach the lands of the 10-40 window. Now our discussions are turning toward how we can facilitate the Chinese believers in this task. The “back to Jerusalem” push will bring them through many of the Muslim nations that are so much in the news today. Our Chinese brethren realize they will be persecuted and martyred for these efforts in those lands. However, their answer is that the crucible of persecution through which they have come during the past five decades has prepared them for this very phase of the Great Commission in a way we westerners are not prepared.

The bottom line is that a gargantuan army of incredibly fervent and committed believers is poised to flood the 10-40 Window with the gospel, and they will take with them whatever ministerial training they themselves have received. If they are trained in Biblically based theology and Word-based ministry, they will spread that. If they are trained in Charismatic theology and experience-based ministry, they will spread that. The 1990s in Eastern Europe taught us this reality: whichever western group makes the first training contact with a particular foreign network of churches, that western group’s theology and philosophy of ministry will most likely prevail within that foreign network. At a time when the Chinese church leaders are crying out for training, the need to make first-training contact is urgent.

We American believers live in a context and time of unprecedented resources—one of these being our capacity to provide ministerial training. At a time when that is precisely the need of the hour in many parts of the world, the recognition of using our resources wisely and strategically is dire.

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***The bottom line is that a gargantuan army of incredibly fervent and committed believers is poised to flood the 10-40 Window with the gospel, and they will take with them whatever ministerial training they themselves have received.***

recalls what transpired between his first contact with Timothy and Timothy’s leading that significant church: “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience” (2 Tim. 3:10). Paul also commands Timothy to engage himself in the same ministerial training activity as he himself received from Paul: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2:2).

<sup>2</sup> After Paul spent time with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, he takes the couple with him to Ephesus (Acts 18:18, 19). Sometime after Paul leaves Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla meet Apollos, who apparently was educated in Greek rhetoric back in his hometown of Alexandria, another robustly Hellenistic city (vv. 21, 24). Perhaps they realized the natural

connection Apollos would have back in Corinth, a neighboring city of Athens and one that put a premium on Greek rhetorical skill. Aquila and Priscilla “took him [Apollos] unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (v. 26). The Biblical record testifies to the effectiveness of this strategy for furthering the gospel ministry in Corinth: “when he [Apollos] was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ” (vv. 27, 28).

<sup>3</sup> Before the Communist revolution, the church in China was weak and comparatively small, numbering well under a million. Many of these were “rice Christians”—those who professed faith in Christ in order to receive material benefits. Western-style church buildings were erected by western missions organizations, and the entire Christian movement in China was largely led by westerners. Efforts to develop true Chinese leadership were anemic at best. Within three years of Mao Zedong’s coming into power in 1949, he rid China of all foreign missionaries and demolished their church buildings. The Communist government’s intolerance of religion forced the Chinese church to go underground, where it meshed naturally with the Chinese emphasis on the family. A truly Chinese, rather than western, church emerged.

<sup>4</sup> One of the reasons for this estimation is that the Chinese government, which typically admits to half of what they think is the true number, now publicly states that there are 50 million.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Hattaway, *Back To Jerusalem* (Waynesboro, GA: Carlisle, 2003). Other books of interest concerning China and the underground church are David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publications, 2003); Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin, *God and Caesar in China* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004); Paul E. Kauffman, *China, the Emerging Challenge: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982); and Brother Yun and Paul Hattaway, *The Heavenly Man* (London: Monarch Books, 2002). For perspective on the current political situation in China, see John Bryan Starr, *Understanding China* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001).

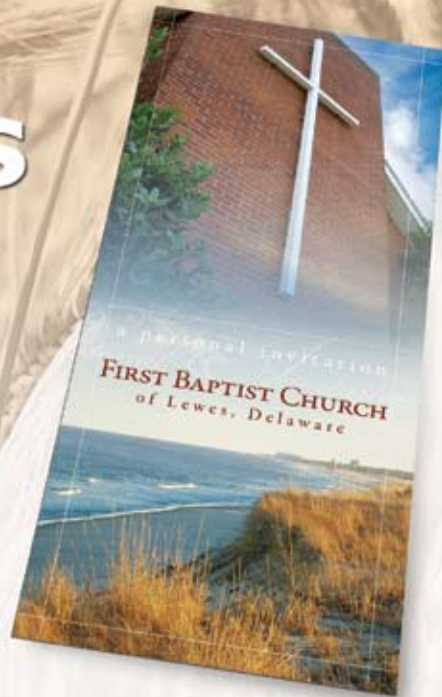
<sup>1</sup> Acts 16:1–3. Years later Paul placed Timothy as the pastor of the Ephesian church—one of the apostle’s dearest, largest, and most strategically located. Just before his death, Paul

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# SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

## First Partaker

### Preach the Word of God Fully: Colossians 1:24–29

Pursuing a career as a minister of the gospel is a wise move according to many people in the world. They see the ministry as a job full of benefits and requiring little work. They joke about the minister working one day each week, spending every afternoon on the golf course hobnobbing with the upper class, and retiring after a life of relative ease. Most pastors have heard more than their share of similar jokes and barbs. Sadder than the world's view of ministers is the reality that some professional clergy order their lives in a way that encourages such foolish opinions instead of laying them to rest.

The true, God-called minister of the gospel knows a far different kind of life. The sincere minister's life is like that of the Old Testament prophet in many ways. The ancient prophet's peers often avoided him because they thought that he was other-worldly. Often the masses rejected the prophet's message because it cut across the grain of their comfortable lifestyle. Sometimes the old messengers of God illustrated God's message in strange ways. Jeremiah did odd things like hiding a brand new belt in the rocks (Jer. 13:4), smashing pottery (Jer. 19:12), or wearing a yoke in public (Jer. 27:2). Ezekiel, in clear view of the public, drew the diagram of a siege against Jerusalem on a brick (Ezek. 4:1) and then lay for several days on his left side, then on his right side (again in public view) to represent God's judgment against Israel and Judah. No wonder people thought the

prophets were strange.

The modern world does not view serious, Biblical pastors much differently. If the critics understood more of the Bible they would be even more perplexed at pastors. Ministers of the gospel see the unseen things (2 Cor. 4:18), conquer by yielding (Rom. 6:16–18), find rest under a yoke (Matt. 11:28–30), and become great by serving (Mark 10:42–44). They are exalted by being humble (Matt. 23:12), become wise by being fools for Christ's sake (1 Cor. 1:20, 21), enjoy freedom by being Christ's slave (Rom. 6:10), and experience abundant life by dying (2 Cor. 4:10, 11). What a paradoxical life they live!

In light of such paradoxes, it is not surprising to hear Paul confess to the Christians in Colosse that he rejoiced to suffer for their sake. What kind of a pastor rejoices in suffering? One who has come to grips with the nature and purpose of the ministry to which God has called him. This kind of pastor understands that he will suffer for the sake of the Church. But he also understands that God has appointed him to the position of steward, and, therefore, he must fulfill his duty faithfully. In verses twenty-four through twenty-nine of the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians (and Laodiceans), the faithful servant of Christ explains the unique privilege of being ordained by God to the gospel ministry.

### God's Servant Will Suffer for the Sake of the Church

The fact that Paul suffered in the ministry is well attested. His suffering is recounted in the Book of Acts and in every letter he wrote except the one he sent to the Christians in Galatia. Does his frequent mention of suffering indicate that Paul struggled with a martyr's complex? Not in the least. It is a reminder that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

*"The husbandman  
that laboreth must  
be first partaker  
of the fruits"  
(2 Tim. 2:6)*

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In verse twenty-four of this text Paul confesses how he endured personal suffering. He expected to face suffering because shortly after he was born again the Lord informed him through the disciple Ananias that he would suffer great things for His sake (Acts 9:16). As Paul learned more and more about his new Master, he must have discovered that Jesus also warned that everyone who follows Him will face the same disfavor the world heaped upon Him (Matt. 10:25).

The concept of suffering in Christ's work is not foreign to any minister who has the slightest knowledge of history. Paul's suffering stood at the beginning of a long line of faithful Christian servants who endured or who succumbed to unspeakable persecution. The Hebrews list of heroes (11:32–37) who suffered because of their faith has grown immensely since the first century. The saints who faced Nero's insanity joined the ranks of the apostles who, according to tradition, gave the last ounce of courage while standing for Christ. Added to them is a long line of martyrs who faced torture at the hands of kings, queens, despots, dictators, and popes. All of these faithful men and women proved Jesus' promise that "in the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33).

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**A pastor does not typically contemplate how he is filling up Christ's suffering when the chairman of the deacons' board asks for his resignation because he has not attracted enough of the right kind of people to the church. At that moment the beleaguered servant of God is more likely to wonder why Christ called him to the task or whether Christ is even interested that he is engaged in ministry.**

Should modern ministers expect something different? There is no promise in Scripture that tribulation or persecution will cease, or even lessen, as time wears on toward the last days. Indeed, Scripture promises that persecution will continue and even increase as sin increases throughout the ages. Recalling the suffering of saints from the past might be challenging, but it is easy to relegate that pain to history. Historic pain does not bother modern preachers. But notice that Paul spoke of suffering as a very personal thing. He called it "my sufferings . . . in my flesh" (Col. 1:24). It is one thing to read about ministers from ages past who endured suffering for the sake of the gospel, but it is something altogether different to face personal battles for the same

reason. Why is "my" suffering in the flesh more intense than the suffering our forefathers endured?

Ministers of the gospel do well to expect some amount of suffering because of the nature of their work. That is not to say that all preachers should make up their minds that they will die as martyrs. That is a highly unlikely scenario at this juncture in American society. However, ministers of truth must expect some amount of resistance from the powers of darkness. Common sense demands that the man who makes inroads with the gospel into the kingdom of Satan must face some retaliation by the Evil One's lieutenants.

The probability of suffering is certain. The proper response to suffering might not be so certain. Paul confessed that he rejoiced at the thought of suffering in his flesh. He must have had the same thoughts about suffering that Peter and John had. When the Sanhedrin threatened them for preaching Christ, "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). To rejoice continually in the face of persecution seems superhuman or, in the eyes of the world, unhuman. Human wisdom dictates that no person in his right mind rejoices regularly while criticism, insults, or worse are hurled against him. According to human wisdom, the pastor who rejoices to stand before a congregation Sunday after Sunday and preach the unsearchable riches of God's Word to people who maliciously slander him is unusual at best. It is far more likely that such a man will resort to complaining that the people are unfair or unkind. Few would be surprised if he concluded that God never intended for His servants to be so abused and walked away from the ministry.

What causes a man of God to respond with joy the way Paul and a host of other faithful servants have responded? Paul concluded early in his ministry that life was not about him. He was not engaged in telling the Good News because it was a great profession. He did not forsake family and friends to declare the gospel all over the civilized world because he hoped it would make him famous. Surely the thought of fifteen minutes of fame never crossed Paul's mind. He did what he did, the way he did it, because he understood that he was "fill[ing] up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in [his] flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. 1:24). Paul did not rejoice at the thought of floating on a plank in the Mediterranean Sea because he was delusional. He rejoiced, in spite of the suffering, because he understood that he was completing Christ's afflictions.

A pastor does not typically contemplate how he is filling up Christ's suffering when the chairman of the deacons' board asks for his resignation because he has not attracted enough of the right kind of people to the church. At that moment the beleaguered servant of God is more likely to wonder why Christ called him to the task or whether Christ is even interested that he is engaged in ministry. Furthermore, the basic understanding of filling up Christ's sufferings escapes us apart from careful study of the matter. How can mere humans

do anything that adds to the work of Christ?

Christ suffered throughout His years of earthly ministry. Finally, men inspired by Satan threw all they had at Him. Contrary to their plans, Christ rose from the dead, walked out of the tomb in victory, and ascended to the Father's throne in heaven. Satan would still love to attack Christ, but that is impossible. Therefore, Satan attacks the people of Christ. The precious saints for whom Christ died, the apple of His eye, now receive all the wicked abuse that Satan's power can hurl against them. Being confident that suffering is the result of fellowship with Christ allows the persecuted preacher to rejoice. He knows that he is being attacked because he is part of the Church, the Body of Christ. Christ's people are Satan's target. He who would lead and care for Christ's possession must expect resistance from the enemy.

### **God Appoints His Servant to Be a Steward of His Mystery**

The persecuted pastor can rejoice in the face of the trouble if he understands that God has appointed him to that end. Paul did not volunteer for ministry. Neither did any other true minister of the gospel since then. Christ interrupted Paul's life and, from that moment, Paul understood that God set him exactly where He planned for him to be to do exactly what He planned for him to do. He became a minister because God had given that responsibility to him.

God's plan does not call for the gospel ministry to be a good profession. God did not offer a position with guaranteed promotions. The business world must make such offers in order to be competitive. But God drafts His servants and gives them a dispensation—a stewardship—to fulfill. Stewards are responsible to manage property that belongs to their master or employer. A true minister of the gospel is engaged in that work because he knows that God laid that responsibility on him. God counts a man faithful, puts him in the ministry, and expects him to faithfully manage His own possession.

If a pastor can grasp this truth it will provide him with a determined focus for life. Paul explained in verse twenty-five that the stewardship that God gives to His chosen ministers is to "fulfil the word of God." It is an astonishing responsibility. It is not the pastor's responsibility to use the Bible as a source for interesting thoughts or tidbits of wisdom. He is not supposed to talk *about* the Bible. He is not supposed to simply repeat what he heard someone else say about the Bible. He is supposed to declare God's message fully. What a stewardship! There are not enough hours in a day, not enough years in a lifetime, for a man to accurately dig out and fully declare the words of God. The pastor's obligation is endless. He can never complete it perfectly in this life, but he must always strive to that end. Paul understood that truth.

While the idea of attempting to expound the entire

message of truth in all its fullness is mind-boggling, Paul's next statement increases the sense of responsibility. Those special men, whom God has chosen to fully declare His truth, are also responsible to manage the message of His mystery. For ages on end God's plan to give the Good News of salvation to Gentiles was hidden. But now God's plan calls for that message to be declared openly, boldly, in every detail. God requires His stewards to give full knowledge of this plan to His saints.

One would expect God to plan for this wonderful news to be declared to sinners, not to saints. He does expect preachers to declare the Good News of salvation

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***Satan would still love to attack Christ, but that is impossible. Therefore, Satan attacks the people of Christ. The precious saints for whom Christ died, the apple of His eye, now receive all the wicked abuse that Satan's power can hurl against them. Being confident that suffering is the result of fellowship with Christ allows the persecuted preacher to rejoice. He knows that he is being attacked because he is part of the Church, the Body of Christ.***

through faith in Christ to sinners (Rom. 10:14–18). However, the preacher must fully explain the marvel of God's glory among the Gentiles to the saints so that they can in turn declare it to needy sinners. It is the most amazing message. It is the message of God's glory. It is the message of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). That message is so incredible that human wisdom rejects it out of hand. The sinful mind seeks to suppress what truth it already has about God (Rom. 1:19). Sinners hate to think about the holy God, His holy law, and His perfect justice that requires Him to punish sin. To add to those truths the fact that God the Son came to this earth in human flesh and was known as Jesus Christ, that He lived perfectly under God's law, and that He paid the price to cover sinners' sins through His willing personal sacrifice is to tell the world more than it cares to hear about. Now, after all of that, if the preacher declares that the hope of glory is "Christ in you," human wisdom will surely reject that. For the most part, the world does not want to accept the reality of Christ living on earth. But even if they must accept the historical Jesus, the idea of that person

living inside of other real people is unacceptable. In the minds of many worldly-wise people, anyone who would declare such a possibility ought to be ridiculed and maybe even put away.

## God's Servant Must Do the Work of Stewardship

The world is not standing with open arms, ready to embrace the message of "Christ in you." Nevertheless, the minister of the gospel must be determined to carry out his stewardship. Paul demonstrated this spirit in verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine. He admitted that he continuously declared Jesus Christ publicly. Preaching in itself generally does not offend most people. The world is not offended by a man or woman who stands and declares publicly that toleration of all lifestyles is good, that helping the needy is noble, or that preserving natural habitat is next to godliness. They don't even mind if someone publicly declares that Jesus of Nazareth was a good man whose pattern of life should be emulated.

Then why do men who follow in Paul's train often face trouble for declaring Christ? The message of Christ declares His sacrificial work of atonement—the work that covers the guilt of sinners. Herein is the rub. Human nature chafes to hear the accusation of guilt because of sin against God. Folks do not think that such a message is very positive. That is why Paul also said that he continually warned every man. No one should escape the minister's serious warning. How can a minister of the truth stand before people who are, like himself, plagued with sin from the day of their birth and not admonish them? If people sit in a pew Sunday after Sunday and the only message they ever hear is about how much God loves them, they are in deep trouble. So is the man who gives the message. Careful study of God's Word leaves the messenger no choice but to warn of the danger of persisting in sin. The pastor who digs into the message of the Bible even a little bit must become a preacher like Paul who warns without ceasing that "the wages of sin is death."

Paul continually declared God's message, continually warned because of God's message, and continually taught. Because he was teaching, it first required that he carefully study the Scripture for himself. Then it required that he diligently and meticulously unfold the truth in terms simple enough for his listeners to understand. Every preacher must use teaching to get the eternal message of God into the heart of each person who hears him. He must lay line upon line and reason upon reason, drawing the truth into a simple statement of wisdom.

Paul believed that the stewardship God gave him required careful, particular study and presentation of the truth to each person God brought before him. A preacher of God's Word must understand the eternal

nature of his work. Like Paul, he must declare Christ, he must warn, and he must unpack God's truth in simple wisdom because he is supposed to present every person who hears him complete in Christ Jesus. Such words should hit the preacher like a shock wave. His duty has frightening ramifications. His stewardship is more demanding than human strength can sustain. The man who grasps the reality of his task, who understands that he is responsible to bring real, fleshly, faltering individuals into complete conformity to Christ's standard, will rely on something more trustworthy and more powerful than his ability to turn a phrase or tell a good story. The preacher who truly understands his stewardship will flee popular programs of church growth, knowing that they will drain away precious study time and leave the people no more like Christ than they were when they began the program. In light of Paul's explanation, the spiritual immaturity of people who hear only a preacher's voice contrasts sharply with the spiritual maturity of people who are fed on the whole council of the Bible.

If preaching, warning, and teaching are so important, why are they not more popular in the ministry? Verse twenty-nine answers that question. Paul revealed that carrying out this kind of ministry requires laboring and striving. The word *labor* means to grow tired or weary. Labor is not just hard work—it is exhausting. The preacher's ministry is supposed to be characterized by it. Furthermore, it is a work of striving. The Greek word for striving gives us the English word "agonize." Systematic preaching, warning, and teaching of God's Word require working with strenuous zeal, struggling with difficulties. It is like entering a contest. This word speaks of the intense amount of energy an athlete expends in competition. Preachers of righteousness are in contention with the powers of evil continually. There is no respite. There can be no letting down. The preacher must draw out the weapons and strategies of God's Word and set them before the people so that they will have a defense against the flesh and the powers of darkness. It is incredibly hard work. That is why many preachers find it easier to borrow a sermon, introduce a novel program, or simply give an emotional appeal week after week.

Paul chose a higher road. He learned to draw on the power that Christ supplied to him. Surely the Christ who lays the duty on the steward whom He called into service loves the servant enough to give him strength for the task. Few preachers have really learned what Paul meant when he confessed, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Pastors who set their mind and hands to this ministry will be greatly encouraged to learn this important lesson. The joy of finding strength in Christ, the confidence of giving out His Word, the satisfaction of watching His people become more like Him are worth all the labor and struggle the preacher must expend to be a faithful steward. ☞

Dave Whitcomb pastors Community Bible Church in Taylors, South Carolina.

# Bring . . . the Books

## Martin Luther—The Man Who Started the Reformation

Since your Imperial Majesty requires a plain answer, I will give one without horns or hoof! It is this: that I must be convinced either by the testimony of Scripture or by clear arguments. I cannot trust the Pope or Councils by themselves, since it is as clear as daylight that they have not only erred but contradicted themselves. I am bound by the Scriptures which I have quoted; my conscience is thirled [bound] to the Word of God. I may not and will not recant, because to act against conscience is neither honest nor safe. I can do nothing else; here I stand; so help me God!—Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms, August 18, 1521

These are arguably the most famous lines Luther ever uttered, marking the climax of his battle against the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church begun almost a decade earlier when he nailed his famous ninety-five theses to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. The outcome was the Protestant Reformation. While some argue our Baptist heritage must be separated from that of the Reformers, none would fail to appreciate what God chose to do through the Reformers to recover for the true Church at large the doctrines of *Sola Scriptura* and “Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.” Therefore, there is great profit for all Baptists to study the lives of the Reformers and appreciate their service to Christ. Such a man who stood boldly and effectively for truth was Martin Luther.

Of the many biographies available on Luther's life, one of the less familiar is Thomas Lindsay's *Martin Luther—The Man Who Started the Reformation*. Lindsay's biography was published in 1900. Professor of Church History at Free Church College in Glasgow, Lindsay was a highly regarded student of the Reformation who also published the two-volume *History of the Reformation in Europe*. Lindsay had access to many sources from Luther's time that are now less readily available to modern writers. Consequently, Lindsay's account includes details about Luther's life and ministry not commonly known through other biographies. Lindsay wanted to do more than add one more biography to the list. He attempted to set Luther's life and contribution in the larger context of Luther's day. Luther's Reformation, he reminds the reader, was more than a religious revolution. It was also a political, intellectual, social, and economic revolution. The Reformation affected everything!


In discussing Luther's birth and upbringing, Lindsay gives a detailed look at sixteenth-century family life for the peasant class (a window worth the price of the book). He recounts the familiar story of Luther's conversion in the context of monastic life, as well as his early ministry at Wittenberg. All of this helps

a contemporary reader understand how the famous indulgence controversy affected both Luther and the people to whom he preached. Luther perceived that the real motive driving the indulgence movement was financial: “I saw that it was money and not doctrine that they cared for at Rome.”

Lindsay's description of the famous five-day debate between Luther and Eck is unmatched in any modern biography of which I am aware. He devotes a significant amount of space to the political and social revolts that ripped through Germany during the Reformation period. While we would certainly grieve over the atrocities of this period of Protestant history, familiarity with this information helps us better understand Luther and his times.

One final segment merits attention. Lindsay provides a helpful and concise understanding of how Luther's Reformation laid the foundation for the Evangelical Church, at least as it existed in 1900. Luther and other Reformers were greatly disturbed by the gross spiritual ignorance of their congregations. After one particularly depressing visit among parishioners of some of his student pastors, he wrote his well-known *Small Catechism* and introduced it with these words:

In setting forth this Catechism or Christian doctrine in such a simple, concise, and easy form, I have been compelled and driven by the wretched and lamentable state of affairs which I have discovered lately when I acted as a visitor. Merciful God, what misery have I seen, the common people knowing nothing at all of Christian doctrine, especially in the villages! And unfortunately many pastors are well-nigh unskilled and incapable of teaching; and although all are called Christians . . . they know neither the Lord's Prayer, nor the Creed, nor the Ten Commandments, but live like poor cattle and senseless swine, though, now that the gospel is come, they have learnt well enough how they may abuse their liberty!

As a Baptist pastor in a predominantly Lutheran area, I wonder what Luther would say were he to visit with most members of the churches that bear his name and claim his theological heritage. May we appreciate Luther's commitment to the authority of Scripture and emulate Luther's attempt to bring that authority to bear in the daily life of those to whom he ministered. 

“ . . . when  
thou comest,  
bring with thee  
. . . the books”  
(2 Tim. 4:13)

Dr. Sam Horn is Executive Vice President of Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

Every human being has burdens. Some have greater burdens than others, but no one is exempt. One's burdens can take a toll on his peace of mind unless he deals with them Scripturally. How does God want the believer to handle his problems? Is it possible for one to keep the peace of God reigning in his heart? In other words, can one really have a life free from worry? Paul answers that question in Philippians 4. In two very familiar verses the apostle gives the secret for keeping the peace of God ruling in the believer's heart.

The apostle Paul begins verse 6 with four of the most challenging words dealing with the practical life of every believer. Paul commands, "Be careful for nothing"! In effect, Paul says, "Here is what the believer has a right to worry about—NOTHING!" One can cast any burden into this vast sea of nothing, all of which God says "Do not worry over."

The English word "careful" has an Old English root, meaning "to strangle or kill bit by bit." The Greek word has the idea of being pulled in two different directions. This is precisely what happens when one worries. His fears pull him one way and his hopes pull him another. The mental gymnastics become a tool of the Devil to rob the believer of his peace. Paul says there is nothing in life over which a believer should be full of care.

Being encumbered with burdens is costly for the believer. It is disobedient to the Lord (Matt. 6:25). It is dishonoring to the Lord as well. Imagine being one of those disciples aboard that tossing boat on the sea (Mark 4:36–41). Questioning the Lord Jesus' shepherding care for them, they asked, "Carest thou not that we perish?" Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter when He responds, "How is it that ye have no faith?" Worrying over one's burdens is also damaging mentally, physically, and spiritually. Luke 10:41 describes Martha, a great worrier, as being "careful," which is the same word used in Philippians 4:6.

Finally, worry is deceitful. It doesn't change anything. One cannot worry and have the peace of God reigning in his heart at the same time. The mind, being pulled in two different directions, must be secured if one is to be free from worry. How?

In the second part of verse 6, Paul gives a second command. "But in every thing . . . let your requests be made known unto God." Here is what the believer has a right to pray about—EVERYTHING! All that is in the vast sea of nothing, over which worry

is forbidden, can be cast into the vast sea of everything, over which prayer is commanded. This prayer is directed "unto God." Paul is turning the heart of the believer from his burden to the God who is greater than the burden. The burden-bound believer must get his focus on God. Jesus, in His sermon on the mount, directed the struggling one filled with care about life to look to the Father who both knows and cares about him.

The believer comes to God "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving." These first two words along with "requests" are all synonyms that speak of making a direct petition. It is interesting to note that the word "prayer" is always used of prayer directed to God, while "supplication" is a word that is also used of man making requests to man. Paul challenges the believer to make those requests with a grateful heart for past mercies. One will never be thankful in the midst of burdens unless he has the same priority that God has for him. God never wastes anything He does: every circumstance He allows into a life is purposed for the spiritual growth and development of Christlikeness in that life.

Obedying these two commands is essential for the believer to have the peace of God reigning in his life. He must worry over nothing and instead pray over everything. Every believer who adheres to these commands has something only God can give: His peace. Money cannot buy it. Intellect cannot contrive it. It is given solely by God as one follows these commands. God's peace "passeth all understanding." There are two possibilities here. This may mean that God's peace is beyond human understanding. It is simply more than any human mind can comprehend. Or it may mean that it is beyond human ingenuity, superior to any planning or scheming that human minds can concoct. This second thought seems to be more in line with the context. This peace will "keep" the heart and mind of the believer. Literally, it stands sentry and guards the mind of the believer. The believer, worrying about nothing and praying about everything, is in a military fortress with God's peace patrolling outside and protecting him. The verse ends by icing the cake—Christ Jesus is the fortress!

These are tall commands, and every believer fails to obey them from time to time. What makes them even more challenging is the thought of where Paul is when he writes these words. He is in prison . . . in the heat of the battle! ☞

*"Rightly  
dividing  
the Word  
of Truth"  
(2 Tim. 2:15)*

# Windows

The lonely prophet Jeremiah, known to us as the “Reluctant, Weeping Prophet,” is one of the greatest illustrators we find in the Scriptures. We can all relate to lessons learned from the clay in the potter’s hand, the pen of iron with a point of a diamond, the scroll, the bonds and stocks, and on the list could go. We cannot read after him without our minds being exercised by these enormous word pictures. They have great power that God uses to indelibly press truth into our hearts and minds, change our thinking, and help us conform to His image.

Spurgeon said to his students, “An illustration is like a window that brings fresh air into a stuffy room.” The “window” that recently captured my attention is found in Jeremiah 17:5–10. We often read, quote, and preach from verse 9 of this chapter, but when we look at the context of the chapter, we find the prophet rebuking and reasoning with Judah because of her apostasy. Apostasy had hardened their hearts and become so abysmal and atrocious that it had been “graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of [their] altars”! God, being so desperate and desirous to reveal this sin to Judah, leads Jeremiah to paint, on the mind of the people, one of his unique and unforgettable word pictures. Being no coward, this courageous preacher touched the very nerve center of Judah’s problem. It stirred them, some to repentance and some to rage! It led to Jeremiah’s persecution and eventually the stocks. How sad for people to be told the truth, to know the truth, but to ignore it and even reject it. In this lesson of life, the Compassionate Prophet uses two types of trees that Judah could easily relate to and apply to their very lives.

## Illustration 1

Jeremiah speaks of the “cursed . . . heath in the desert.” This Hebrew word “heath” refers to the tamarisk, which is nothing more than a dwarf juniper tree, stark and pathetic in appearance. Anyone with half an eye open could see how bleak and barren it was. To look at it was to look at it with shameful pity!

## Application

The heath can represent the life of a believer who is in serious trouble spiritually. As New Testament believers, we are not cursed as were these Jews under Old Testament economy; we are loved by our Heavenly Father, and loved enough for Him to chasten us. The “heath-hearted believer” chooses to root his life in the parched places of the salt lands in the wilderness, which is nothing more than trusting his flesh, going his own way in his own strength. The

arm of the flesh is far away from the rich soil of the Scriptures. This leaves his untrained heart to be in control, trusted instead of the immutable Word of God. His wicked heart “departeth from the LORD,” leaving the only other choice he has, which is to trust himself.

Now we understand why the Holy Spirit put verses 9 and 10 in the text. When a well-meaning believer begins neglecting Bible truth and ignoring Biblical principle, it becomes easy for him to justify his desires and disobey the commands of Scripture. This heath-hearted believer makes decisions while giving no thought to their consequences, much less the suffering he will experience due to choosing his way over God’s way. This stinking thinking will eventually lead to the stench of rotten fruit! This is nothing more than allowing unbelief to produce wrong life choices. This thinking blinds him to the *good* that God brings in his life because his focus is completely on himself. He

*“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”*

*Charles Spurgeon*

***When a good, well-meaning believer begins neglecting Bible truth and ignoring Biblical principle, it becomes easy for him to justify his desires and disobey the commands of Scripture.***

becomes overwhelmed with his desolate circumstances and begins making decisions that will bear the wrong kind of fruit, fruit that does not satisfy and often brings regret. This believer runs on his own energy and emotions until they are completely exhausted. As malnutrition takes over, it becomes very difficult to go on. Having no fruit and being in a place uninhabited by other fruit-bearing believers, he feels all alone. You mix loneliness with a heath-hearted, stinking thinking, desperate spirit, and it spells catastrophe.

## Illustration 2

Jeremiah speaks of the “blessed . . . tree planted by the waters. Obviously there is a difference between being **cursed** and being blessed! The Hebrew phrase “tree planted by the waters” refers to a healthy tree whose root system is deep in the river’s bank, bringing forth fruit in its season. This tree stands strong and sturdy because of the nutrients received from the soil.

## Application

The tree represents the life of a believer who is trusting in the Lord and not in himself. Its roots are in the rich soil of the Word of God. It is obvious to all that God is being trusted in every area of life and allowed to be in control. This person knows his God very well! He is in the Word and in his prayer closet every day. He lives by the river's edge and has learned not to trust in the arm of his flesh or in his own untrained, undisciplined heart. His decisions are based on the principles and commands of God's Word and he refuses to let circumstances or self lead the way. His hope (confidence

and trust) is so embedded in the Word of God that he does "not see when heat cometh." Why? His focus is on the Lord and not himself, his circumstances, his wants, or his needs. He realizes who his God is and he knows Him so well that he casts his dependence upon Him and not the arm of his flesh. He is never alone as he grows in his faith and yields the right kind of fruit.

What a marked difference between these two trees. The chart below gives a side-by-side overview of them. As you review it, ask yourself, "Which tree best represents my life?" Avoid becoming like the heath in the desert and enjoy being a tree planted by the waters.

## Two Trees: Which One Best Illustrates Your Life?

### The Heath Scrub in the Desert

Heath = A malnourished juniper scrub that is stripped, naked, frail, destitute and unable to produce good fruit.

NOTE: This tree represents a life that knows Bible truth, but picks and chooses which commands and principles to live by. He bases his decisions on what he wants out of life, producing bad fruit.

1. He is cursed (5) because:
  - He trusts in man, especially himself.
  - He is rooted in his own strength, making flesh his arm.
  - He has a heart that departs from the Lord.
2. He cannot see when good comes because his circumstances have overwhelmed him (6b).
3. He lives in the parched places (6c) with no fruit, and struggles greatly.
4. He has to deal with wilderness living, and often complains and is frustrated with his lot in life (6d).
5. He is famished in the salt lands all day long (6e).
6. He is alone, not inhabited, and he despises his loneliness (6f).
7. He is cursed, miserable, trusting in himself and what he can do to make tomorrow better.

### The Tree Planted by the Waters

Tree = A healthy tree whose roots are in rich soil by the river; strong, healthy, and able to bear good fruit.

NOTE: This tree represents a life that knows Bible truth and chooses to live by its commands and principles. Even when he wants it different; he yields to the Word, producing good fruit!

1. He is blessed (7) because:
  - He trusts in the Lord and His Word
  - He is rooted by the river, in the rich soil of God's Word.
  - He has a heart that hopes in the Lord.
2. He cannot see when heat comes (8c) because his roots are in the principles of Scripture (8b).
3. He lives by the river and produces green leaves (8c).
4. He enjoys life! His roots are in the river's edge, God's Word, enabling him to make it through the heat of his trials (8d).
5. He is busy yielding fruit in his season (8e).
6. He is never alone, watching his leaves turn green, bearing his fruit (8f).
7. He is blessed, happy, and trusting in his God to be his sufficiency today and tomorrow.

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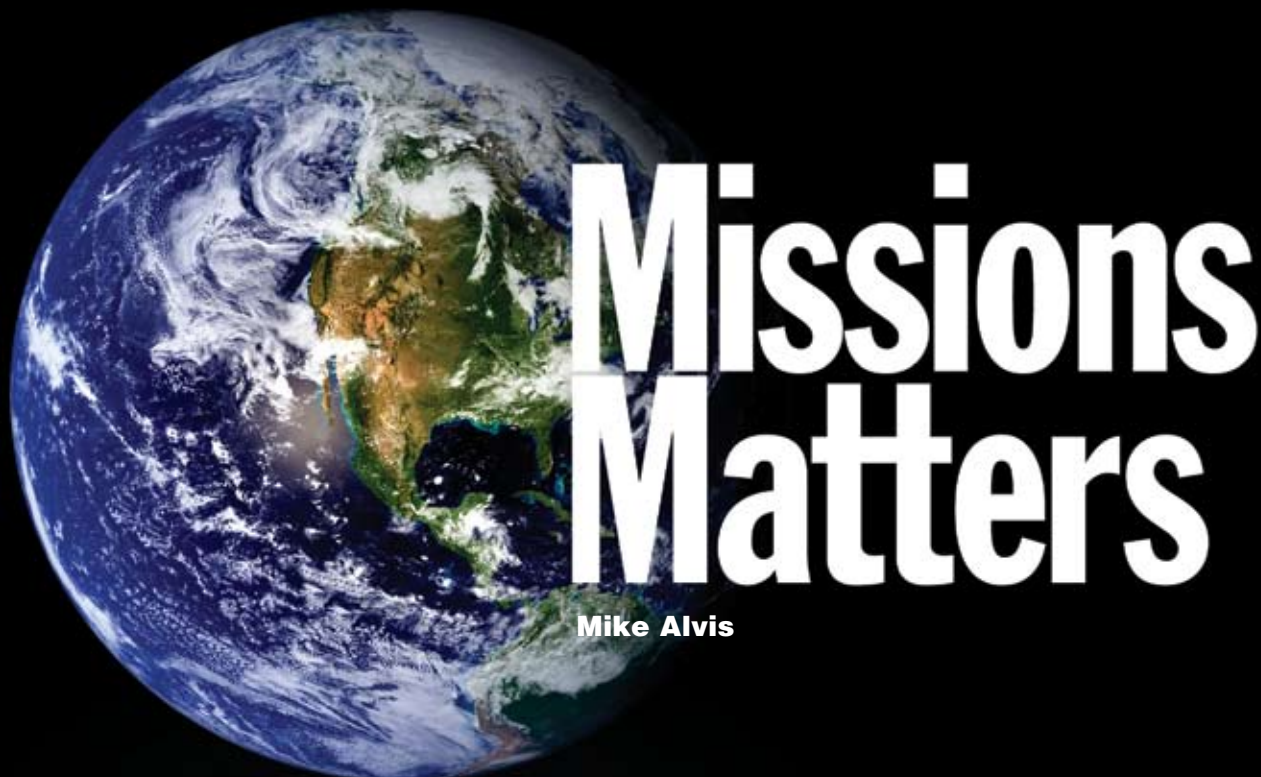
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# Missions Matters

Mike Alvis

**A**lthough we have work to do on our missions programs, the importance of the subject makes even the discussion a blessing. Rethinking missions allows us to give serious thought to a serious matter. Getting back to basics on missions means “getting back to the Bible.” I am personally thankful for the thoughtful articles in this issue of *FrontLine* and for the opportunity to participate. We are taking another look at nothing less than the Great Commission itself. Personal motives, prevailing methodologies, and historical models must be rethought and retaught in every generation. We speak of our “missions program” today with too much emphasis on “program.” May a rethinking of missions expose mere pragmatism and call us back to the Biblical integrity of a Biblical missiology.

Any discussion that calls us back to Biblical thinking must begin with the Bible itself. The Gospels and the Book of Acts are not the only New Testament source of missiology, but they do present five concrete elements that supply the foundation on which we can build. Our mission was commissioned by the Lord Himself. He came into this world to save sinners. He commissioned us to do the same. Missions is the extension of His mission in glorifying the Father by making disciples of all nations.

## The Imperative of Our Commission

Matthew displays Jesus as King, dispatching His subjects under His authority (Matt. 28:18–20). This is *the imperative of our commission*. As they were going, baptizing, and teaching, they were to disciple nations. This is the imperative of missions: to make disciples who understand the kingdom ethic in which subjects live for their new King. This mission is the responsibility of all that are true disciples of Jesus Christ. It is a matter of obedience; it is not optional. If you reject the King, you reject the kingdom.

Let’s not argue the obvious: when you come into the kingdom, you have obligations to the King. Under King Jesus, we serve as an offering of love for our Sovereign, not out of fear. Matthew summarized the Law as loving God and loving our neighbor. This is the mission entrusted to God’s people. Discipling the nations is not a burden to be despised, but a blessing to be embraced. As we rethink missions, we must rethink our love for God. Our love for others flows out of our love for Him, which is the only rational response to His love for us. How can we worship Him, grow in Him, and fellowship around Him if we have little or no interest in what concerns Him most? Making disciples is a temporary privilege; it is terminated when we depart from this world. As our faith and hope are realized, our opportunity and responsibility to make disciples will be ended. Seeking to enjoy the benefits of a relationship while neglecting the primary privilege of the relationship is self-defeating and dishonoring to our Lord. No wonder so many Christians are adrift without a sense of purpose.

## The Implication of Our Commission

Mark’s Gospel adds yet another dimension to our mission. His emphasis is on *the implication of our commission* (Mark 16:15, 16). Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). The implication of our commission is that individual responses to the gospel will result in either total commitment or hopeless condemnation. Jesus leaves no room for a neutral response or partial faith. Man’s response to the gospel either produces spiritual life or ensures eternal death. Jesus reveals the sobering reality of the believer’s mission as one which deals with the eternal souls of men. Just as He had come as a servant to men, we are to serve men by confronting them with gospel realities. Each soul needs to hear the good news, and the response

results in either eternal life or eternal death. This is the sobering implication of our commission.

### The Importance of Our Commission

*The importance of our commission* is evident in Luke 24:45–48. Jesus opened the understanding of the disciples by saying, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.” God’s plan for missions includes firsthand witnesses attesting to the saving grace of God. No one else is equipped to accomplish this task except those who have experienced salvation through “repentance and remission of sins” (24:47). Paul’s admonition in Romans 10:14 emphasizes this responsibility: “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” The Sovereign God chooses to use frail humanity to carry out His mission on earth. He uses firsthand witnesses who have responded to his grace to testify of eternal life to those in darkness. The Son of Man left us on earth to bear testimony to His saving work, not only through our works, but by our words.

### The Impact of Our Commission

In the fourth Gospel, John reveals *the impact of our commission*. The resurrected Lord commissioned His disciples with these words: “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21). Jesus dispatched His disciples under the authority delegated to Him by his Father. They were dispatched to sound forth eternal declarations of revealed truth: “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John 20:23). The impact of our commission is made the same way, as we make profound declarations concerning the singular way to eternal life. When a listener comes to rest in the finished work of Christ through repentance and faith, we can declare with authority that his sins are under Christ’s blood. Conversely, a refusal to trust Christ alone gives us the authority to declare that that individual remains at enmity with God.

The truth of John 14:6 is the foundation of our message: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Jesus is the way to God, the truth about God, and the life of God. No one ever knows God apart from being introduced by His Son. This is the impact of our commission! There is a singular way to salvation. Jesus declares that no man will ever know the Father apart from a trusting relationship with the only begotten Son of God. The world discourages us when its citizens dismiss the gospel by saying, “You believe you are the only ones who have the truth.” The Bible encourages us tell men, “You must believe in the only One who is the Truth.”

### The Initiation of Our Commission

Finally, we see *the initiation of our commission* in Acts 1:8: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Just before His ascension, Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit’s descent, which would initiate the apostles as witnesses to “the uttermost part of the earth.” As the apostles were promised God’s Spirit, Christ spelled out the extent of our commission. “Every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9) are included in this mission initiated by God’s Spirit.

As we can see, the mission of Christ’s church is clearly and concretely expressed by our Lord Himself. These foundational statements declare the Biblical missiology of individuals, churches, and missions organizations. All missions activities must be scrutinized to determine their legitimacy based upon these texts. The elasticity that so often exists with the term “missions” could be brought

into check through faithful submission to the Scriptures. All missions matters are to be dictated by the Lord of Glory because missions is central in His preparation of a bride for Himself. What matters to Him must matter to us.

As refreshing as it is to see a rethinking of missions, if our foundation is awry, we will accomplish little in adjusting our course to honor our Lord. Discussions of personal motives, prevailing methodologies,

and historical models must occur in a Biblical context. Creative ideas and proven practices mean little apart from a clear, Scriptural foundation. Every program, including the missions program, must be examined from time to time, but failure to begin with the Commission of Jesus Himself will produce only confusion and static energy. The Master left us with the mandate, the message, the model, and the methodology for Great Commission living. Our need is to bring our agenda into adjustment with His and faithfully carry the torch in our leg of the race.

We cannot help but wonder what would be the outcome if each individual, church, educational institution, and missions organization would embrace with exactness the Biblical model that our Lord established for His church. No doubt, if His mission were embraced afresh as our mission, the constant pursuit after man-centered ministry would wane and the satisfying fulfillment of Christ-centered ministry would prevail. *Great Commission living* would replace *self-consumed existing*, and God would be glorified. Fulfillment would be found in actively pursuing the purpose for which we were created, redeemed, sanctified, commissioned, and left on this planet. Glorifying God includes pursuing the purposes for which He left us here. It is time that His mission became our mission again.

Mike Alvis has pastored Heritage Baptist Church in Smithville, Ohio, since 1993.

*Discipling the  
nations is not a burden  
to be despised,  
but a blessing to be  
embraced.*

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We afterwards believed that the death of our eldest child, a daughter, was sanctified to our benefit, in inducing us with less reluctance to let go the hold which our affections had upon people and things in the regions of civilized society, and in enabling us to trust all . . . to God.  
—Isaac McCoy

I have long sought the Truth, but without finding it. I have traveled far and near, but have never searched it out. In Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, I have found no rest. But I do find rest in what we have heard tonight. Henceforth, I am a believer in Jesus.  
—Mr. Ni, ex-Buddhist leader, upon hearing the gospel from Hudson Taylor

Long ago I read somewhere the following: "Before he can be greatly used, a missionary must go through a 'missionary baptism' (a crisis in which he finally accepts the fact that God is just in declaring that those who have never heard the gospel are lost and condemned). . . ."  
—Rosalind Goforth

In our lives it is well to remember that God's supervision is so blessedly true that at any given moment we may stop, and whether we face suffering or joy, we may say, "For this cause came I unto this hour."  
—John Stam, missionary martyr to China

If Jesus Christ is God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him. —C. T. Studd

It is not mere preaching the gospel which will do what needs to be done. . . . Our life must be one of visible self-sacrifice.  
—Hudson Taylor

The power of the world, the spirit of its literature, the temptations of business and pleasure, all unite to make up a religion in which it is sought to combine a comfortable hope for the future with the least possible amount of sacrifice in the present.  
—Andrew Murray

O if it may please the dear Redeemer to make me instrumental of leading some of the females of Burma to a saving acquaintance with Him, my great object would be accomplished. . . . I shall rejoice to have relinquished my comforts, my country and my home.  
—Ann Judson

All my desire was the conversion of the heathen; and all hope was in God.  
—David Brainerd

Men who teach are apt to lie around all day Sunday doing nothing. . . . Missionaries should go out every

Sunday, holding meetings, preaching, winning souls. I know they feel the natives should do it and that their work is to train them. That is true. But let me tell you something. The natives will never do it unless the missionary sets the example.  
—Oswald J. Smith

O for Brainerd's humility and sin-loathing dispositions!  
—Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Have been vividly aware of seeking the praise of men today—in visitation, in prayer and other ways—and tonight the Lord Himself speaks from Matthew 6. O Lord, make me to forget myself. . . . My God . . . what dost Thou see in me? Purge! Tear off the shell and smash it to bits. Honestly, Father, I do not *now* want to be seen. Hide me in the brighter light of the Son within.  
—Jim Elliot

Our notion of sacrifice is the wringing out of us something we don't want to give up, full of pain and agony and distress. The Bible's idea of sacrifice is that I give as a love-gift the very best thing I have.  
—Oswald Chambers

I have never made a sacrifice. We ought not to talk of sacrifice when we remember the great sacrifice that He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us.  
—David Livingstone

He and I had long talks over God's Word and work, frequently pausing to pray about the matter we were discussing. He seemed never out of sight of the Mercy Seat.  
—Robert P. Wilder on William Borden

I am not [at present] reaping the harvest; I can scarcely claim to be [even] sowing the seed; I am hardly ploughing the soil; but I am gathering out the stones. That, too, is missionary work; let it be supported by loving sympathy and fervent prayer.  
—Robert Bruce, early missionary to the Muslims of Afghanistan and Iran

Once I was fairly rich; once I had a wife and children; once I tasted freely of the pleasures of this life. But all these things I gladly resigned . . . and went forth to preach the gospel to the Saracens. I have been in prisons. I have been scourged; for years I have striven to persuade the princes of Christendom to befriend the cause of converting the Moslems. Now, though old and poor, I do not despair; I am ready to persevere unto death.  
—Raymond Lull, stoned to death at Bugia, Africa, in 1314

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

## Be Not Weary

**Sandra K. Hartman**

**I**n your Christian walk have you ever planted a spiritual seed? By that I mean, witnessing or leaving a tract? Did you wonder whether anything ever came of that effort? Did that tract you placed end up in some needy soul's hand . . . or in the trash? Did the words of the gospel you shared really make a difference in someone's heart?

Sometimes we go for days, weeks, months, even years and never see any fruit from the seeds that we have sown. It makes you wonder: Should I continue trying? Does it matter?

I'm here to tell you, don't give up! I have discovered that sowing even the tiniest seeds matters!

I was riding my bike one summer afternoon on a street near our house; when a car pulled over to the curb ahead of me. A woman stepped out and approached me.

"Do you remember me?" she asked as she neared.

After a moment's hesitation I said, "You're Karen!" She smiled and nodded. "How have you been?" I asked, wondering why she had gone to all the trouble to stop and talk to me. Karen had been a friend in grade school, but after that we'd seen little of each other.

"I'm better than I've ever been in my life!" she replied with a big smile. "I got saved last week!"

"That's wonderful!" I exclaimed. I was happy for her, but still I wondered, why go to all the trouble to stop and tell me?

"Isn't it great? I met a lady at work and she told how I could be saved and asked me if I wanted to pray the sinner's prayer. I was ready to do that, and just as soon as I finished I told her about you and that I was going to find you and tell you!"

I must have looked blank because she said, "Don't you remember in junior high when you asked me if I was saved? I have never forgotten that question. It has haunted me for all these years."

I frantically searched my memory and came up blank. I did not remember actually say-

ing those words to her, but I did remember, as a shy twelve-year-old, having a desire to witness to the other girls in my gym class. It became especially urgent after one of the girls was killed in an automobile accident. I had often thought of inviting that girl to church, but I'd been too afraid. After that I'd decided I had to witness no matter what. Nothing came of it at the time, and I concluded that they all thought I was just a little insane.

But here she was, standing in front of me, a born-again believer—and I had had a part in that! God had used the question that a scared twelve-year-old had asked. His Holy Spirit had reminded her again and again of that question. And then when another Christian had approached her with the gospel, she had been ready and willing to be saved. The seed planted long ago had finally yielded its bounty!

Many times we cannot know what the Holy Spirit will use, but if we are faithful to plant the seed, it will eventually find a heart that is tender. Then God will see it to fruition.

Don't give up! Keep placing those tracts everywhere and take that opportunity "to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isa. 50:4). "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). And never grow "weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Gal. 6:9).

Sandra Hartman is a semi-retired Christian schoolteacher and a freelance writer living in Rockford, Illinois.

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## Good Preaching vs. God-Honoring Preaching

**Jerry Sivnksty**

As I travel across the country as an evangelist, I have noticed a disturbing trend that grieves my heart. It has to do with churches that use contemporary Christian music: they've gotten rid of the hymnals and instead flash their music on large screens to the background of worldly beats. Then the minister gets up and preaches in such a way that the people are enthralled with his speaking abilities. Church attendance rapidly increases to the point that they must have two or three services to accommodate the crowds.

Those who have observed these services have noticed three main things. First, the dress is very casual. Second, the music has Christian words with worldly beats. Third, the preaching is good. In fact, people have said to me, "The music is terrible, the casual dress is disturbing, but the preaching is really good—it's staggering to see the crowds!" How do we deal with this matter from a Biblical standpoint?

My answer is that these churches may have good preaching, but it is not God-honoring preaching! The Word of God says in 1 Corinthians 14:33, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." This shallow contemporary Christian music that imitates the world's style, feeds the emotions, and lacks doctrinal truth is not of the Lord—and don't tell me that this is just my taste! The music of the world and the message of God stand in direct opposition of each other. But many churches have decided to incorporate the world's music with Christian words for the explicit purpose of reaching the unsaved for Christ. This has caught on like wild-fire, and many churches are embracing this means of outreach. Their mindset is to get rid of anything that seems "churchy" and create the atmosphere of a coliseum; their services are big gatherings with a lot of lively music coupled with good preaching. Let's take a closer look at the kind of preaching these churches exhibit.

The main characteristic of "good" preaching is that it is inoffensive. There's a large church in the Midwest whose sole purpose is to draw huge crowds; therefore, they don't preach about sin or anything negative. Are these preachers capable men? Yes, they are! Many of

them have great intelligence and charisma; they are polished speakers who know how to sway the crowds and keep them spellbound by their preaching. They are "good" preachers, but they are not God-honoring preachers.

Someone reading this article may be saying, "How can you be so judgmental?" The answer is "Because the Bible says so!" Second Timothy 4:2 says, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." You cannot preach the Word of God without these four elements—reproof, rebuke, exhortation, and sound doctrine. Shallow preaching will never reprove or rebuke anyone! It will always be neutral so as not to create a disturbance. This has never been true of God-honoring preaching.

John Wesley preached against sin with such fervency that a man hit him in the side of his face with a brick. When King David sinned with Bathsheba, it was the prophet Nathan who confronted him with his sin and said in 2 Samuel 12:7, "Thou art the man." When King Saul disobeyed God's command, Samuel rebuked him: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Sam. 15:23).

No matter how gifted a man may be, he who tickles the ears of his hearers is not a God-honoring preacher. Second Timothy 4:3 says, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." "Good" preachers will preach things that are warm and cozy and that won't disturb the heart's comfort zone. God will never accept pragmatic preaching that seeks "any means" to reach people. These preachers' philosophy is, "Whatever it takes! If it works, I'll use it. If a rock band will draw the crowds, I'll use it." Dr. Bob Sr. used to say, "It is never right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right." May the Lord challenge ministers to not be "good" preachers but rather to be God-honoring preachers.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at P.O. Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at [evangjsivn@aol.com](mailto:evangjsivn@aol.com).

**H**ave you ever wondered, *Why letters?* Why didn't the Apostles compose doctrinal essays and theological treatises that addressed how the Christian faith relates to various issues and topics? Obviously that's not how the Spirit directed them. But that's the point. Why didn't He direct them to do so? Think how valuable *Paul's Systematic Theology* would have been! Why did God decide to breathe out so much of His revelation for subsequent generations in the form of *letters*? Understanding how epistolary literature functions (and doesn't function) is vital to reading, interpreting, and applying it accurately. Though Luke wrote most of the NT (proportionally), Paul penned the lion's share of the NT epistles; so this column will be tailored to the Pauline Epistles in particular.

## Function of Epistles

Understanding the distinctive and complementary role each portion of the NT plays is important for interpreting it in part and in whole.

■ *The Gospels provide a historical introduction to the Person and Work of Christ.* These books announce who Jesus was and what He came to do.

■ *Acts records the historical proclamation of the Person and Work of Christ.* This book describes the propagation of the message of the Person and Work of Christ.

■ *The Epistles furnish the interpretation of the Person and Work of Christ.*

- The Gospels and Acts are primarily historically *descriptive*, but provide little theological or doctrinal *explanation*. That explanatory role is left to the Epistles.

- Acts records Paul's initial evangelistic preaching in several cities, and then describes his sometimes lengthy stays with the converts there. Why does it include no record of Paul's teaching once they became believers? The omission seems odd. "But they who hold that the scheme of Scripture as a whole is of the Holy Ghost will not ask that question; for they see that this omission is part of a plan, which provides this information for us in a more worthy and perfect way; namely by placing in our hands the collection of Apostolic Epistles" (T. D. Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*).

- The Epistles are designed to *explain* the Person

and Work of Christ—the practical ramifications of how the faith is fleshed out in the context and questions of our daily life experiences and relationships.

■ **The Revelation** portrays the *consummation* of the Person and Work of Christ—where all this is headed in human history and beyond.

## Facts About Epistles

*Nine NT books are called "epistles," so the word is a Biblical term.* Epistles (letters) were almost as common a commodity then as they are today. They were usually penned on papyrus sheets, folded and tied and often sealed with a wax seal.

*Often an amanuensis (secretary) was employed* (Rom. 16:22; 1 Pet. 5:12). Rather than imagining Paul bent over a desk perfecting his syntax and polishing each statement into its final form, we should imagine him dictating aloud to an amanuensis [ah-man-yoo-EN-sis], perhaps pacing the floor in the process. His use of a secretary adds an intriguing and human dimension to our concept of the inspiration process. The Holy Spirit was breathing out His words through Paul's mouth as he paced and breathed out *his* dictation to an amanuensis.

*All of Paul's epistles were signed* (2 Thess. 3:17). This Pauline policy ("The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write") presents a problem, however. Only three of Paul's epistles actually include this statement (1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17). What about the rest of his epistles? A "signature" does not necessarily refer to appending one's name but to some distinctive phrase or final notation in the sender's own handwriting. Often the "signature" was simply the final word of the letter ("Farewell"), penned by the sender's own hand rather than the secretary's. Paul's "signature" probably refers to the closing salutation, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." Some variation of this appears at the end of all of his epistles.

*Not all letters written by the apostles were divinely intended for the church.* What did Paul mean by "all my epistles" (2 Thess. 3:17)? This was only his third letter (after 1 Thessalonians and Galatians)—or was it? Paul wrote other letters that we do not have in the NT (e.g., 1 Cor. 5:9). How many other letters this prolific correspondent wrote, and to whom, is anyone's guess.

*NT epistles were delivered by hand by believers, often within a period of days from when they were written.*

# TESTAMENT EPISTLES

Somehow we have come to imagine that letters took weeks or months to arrive. This is certainly a misconception. The NT letters were usually, if not always, delivered personally by a trusted carrier (e.g., Tychichus, Epaphroditus). Sea travel was regular across the Mediterranean; a trip to Corinth from Ephesus (from which Paul penned 1 Corinthians) took less than a week by sea.

*Epistles were shared among churches* (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27). Rather than a letter to a specific church, Ephesians was almost certainly a circular letter to the churches in Asia Minor. (Several factors suggest this, including ancient manuscript evidence and the fact that it is the only letter that addresses no localized problems and includes no personal greetings of any kind—a curious omission to a city where Paul had ministered for several years.) Clement's letter to the Corinthians (ca. A.D. 95) assumes their familiarity with citations from Ephesians and Hebrews.

*Epistles are not always easy to understand* (2 Pet. 3:16). This passage incidentally implies the circulation and reputation of Paul's epistles at quite an early stage in NT history; 2 Peter dates to the late 60s.

*Epistles, as a genre, are a new mode of Biblical revelation.* Despite isolated examples (e.g., Jer. 29), letters did not constitute a significant or separate literary genre of revelation until the NT. Bernard notes the distinction between the prophets and the apostles: "The Prophets delivered oracles to the people, but the Apostles wrote letters to the brethren." However, there is more similarity between prophets and apostles than meets the eye.

The prophets' audience was confined to a small geographical locale; they didn't need to write to them. But the apostles ministered to a body of believers unconfined by geographical boundaries and *not* immediately accessible to them. In other words, the geographical and logistical difference between the ministry of prophets and apostles necessitated this change in method of communication.

In important ways, however, the NT Epistles parallel the OT prophets. This makes even more sense once you remember that the Biblical sense of "prophecy" is not merely or even mostly prediction, but primarily *proclamation*. The OT prophets and the NT apostles were God's designated spokesmen doing the same thing in different eras—addressing His people in very practical, historically occasioned situations. The content in both cases is predominantly proclamation of truth, along with a measure of prediction.

*Epistles are occasioned and responsive writings.* Few NT epistles were spontaneous correspondence (Ephesians is a

notable exception). Most were prompted by some event or problem or need. Epistles apply theological truth to practical issues driven by actual situations. We have all written and read letters. But have you ever read another's letter to someone else? That is essentially what you are doing when you read a NT epistle. Reading an epistle is like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. Hearing only one side of the conversation sometimes places us at an interpretational disadvantage; but *it is a disadvantage that exists by divine design*. God is the one who chose to extend His revelation in this epistolary form that dictates how we read and understand the epistles. Could it be that His choice of that form of revelation, scattered throughout a collection of personal letters written to address specific situations, is intended to furnish a paradigm for how we disciple NT believers? The epistolary method is to train God's people to think through theological and practical problems Scripturally in order to arrive at Biblical decisions.

Despite the important parallel between OT prophets and NT apostles (both being engaged in prophetic preaching to God's people), the NT *method* of prophetic preaching takes a distinctive route from the OT prophets. Bernard correctly notes that unlike the OT prophet, the NT apostle rarely appeals to visions or to "the unanswerable formula, 'Thus saith the Lord.'" Instead, "he confutes by argument rather than by authority, deduces his conclusions by processes of reasoning, and establishes his points by interpretations and applications of the former Scriptures." But "why all this labor in proving what might have been decided by a simple pronouncement from one entrusted with the word of God? Would not the apostolic declaration that [a certain] statement was error, and that such another was truth, have sufficed for the settlement of that particular question? Doubtless! But it would not have sufficed to train men's minds to that thoughtfulness whereby truth becomes their own, or to educate them to the living use of the Scriptures as the constituted guide of inquiry."

The NT Epistles excel in *instructing* and *training* God's people to make Biblical decisions based on Biblical thinking. But why is this distinction between OT and NT so marked? Why didn't God employ this kind of instructional method with OT Israel? There are probably several reasons for this. The nature of the Old Covenant economy was one of Law, which functions by "pulling rank" and laying down God's demands and expectations (cf. Gal. 3:19, 23, 24). The expanded illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit also gave to NT believers a capacity of enlightenment that the OT believer does not seem to have

Continued on next page

## At-a-Glance Continued

enjoyed. Even the "reasoning process" employed in the epistles leans heavily on the authority of OT Scriptures, in teaching how to *reason Scripturally*. A classic example is Paul's instruction to the Corinthians regarding eating meat sacrificed to idols. Paul could have settled this question in one verse by citing the Jerusalem Council decision on this very topic a decade earlier. But he never mentions that; instead he spends three chapters appealing to them to think through the reasons and ramifications with him (see 1 Cor. 10:15ff.). This is the genius of the epistles.


### From Epistolary Theology to Systematic Theology

The Pauline letters have played a decisive role in the formation of Christian theology over the centuries . . . The theological impact of Paul may blind us to the most striking feature of his writings. He never wrote a systematic theology in which all the elements of his thought are related together and presented in a coherent and logical fashion (Thomas Schreiner, "Interpreting the Pauline Epistles," in *Interpreting the New Testament*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery).

Why not? Any attempt at a systematic and comprehensive expression of truth is conspicuously absent from the NT. (Even Romans leaves out far too much to be considered comprehensive.) If God had intended to give to us an *inspired* systematic theology, He certainly could have done so; and who would have been a better candidate for the task than Paul, the cogent thinker whose writings have been the cornerstone of systematic theologies ever since? That hardly means that systematic theology is inappropriate; it is an indispensable tool for organizing and conveying truth. But it does mean that God committed the task of systematic theological formulation to an uninspired process. It also suggests that God did not consider systematic theology to be the best form for conveying truth to the Church. Instead, Schreiner continues, the Spirit directed Paul to write

letters to churches (or individuals), and these letters were addressed to particular circumstances faced by the churches. The Pauline letters are not theological treatises in which a full-fledged theological system is elaborated. . . . Paul's letters were directed to contingent situations, but his advice for particular communities stemmed from a coherent gospel.


That means that systematic theology is possible and appropriate, but only as authoritative and comprehensive as the Biblical theology that supplies its building blocks.



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## Missionary Status in Venezuela

On October 12, 2005, President Hugo Chavez declared that he was expelling the 160 New Tribes Missions missionaries from his country, citing their alleged ties to the CIA and their alleged exploitation of indigenous communities. On October 28, 2005, nearly 3000 indigenous people representing ten tribes gathered in Puerto Ayacucho to rally in support of the NTM ministry among them. Jose Cayupares, a tribal spokesman, is reported to have said that they were present to send a message to the Venezuelan government “that we do not share in

the October 12 decision of President Chavez.” Since then, Venezuela has ceased granting visas to any foreign missionaries coming to their country. (<http://headlines.agapepress.org/archive/11/22005d.asp>)

However, on November 14, 2005, the Venezuelan Ministry of Justice and Interior issued a resolution that gave New Tribes Missions ninety days to withdraw from the tribal areas where they had been serving for thirty years. NTM subsequently filed legal documents with the Venezuelan Supreme Court to annul the resolution, while complying with the resolution by pulling their staff out of the tribal areas.

Later, on February 3, 2006, the Supreme Court accepted their appeal and agreed to hear the case in the coming months. However, the high court denied NTM’s request for a stay order that asked for the missionaries to remain in tribal locations while the appeal is being considered. NTM has been accused of providing basic health care and literacy classes only to those who agree to become Christians. However, NTM denies that accusation, stating that “giving health care and teaching literacy is never contingent upon a person adopting the Christian faith. Such care and education is part of the missionaries’ concern for the people being ministered to.” (<http://www.ntm.org/news/3258>)

## House Churches in China

“No one except God knows how many Christians there are in China, but 100 million (out of the total population of 1.3 billion) is a commonly-offered guesstimate. The rapid, recent spread of Christianity among urban professionals poses a particularly difficult problem for a government used to jailing uneducated rural people but unwilling to persecute those who are engineering China’s rapid economic progress. Right now, Chinese Christianity is surging.” (Marvin Olasky, “Inside the World of House Churches,” <http://www.townhall.com/opinion/columns/marvinolas-ky/2006/06/22/202202.html>)

## Landmark Study Expected to Shape Global Mission Strategies

The *Christian Post* reports that Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) announced recently the release of its landmark study (Operation ACCESS!) on global evangelism barriers and opportunities in some of the most unreached and remote areas of the world. Operation ACCESS! is a five-year global research project that surveyed 364 remote sectors in 64 countries where isolated people have little or no access to the gospel. It is the first geographic study of its

kind focusing on transportation and communication barriers. Fifty-two percent of all sectors were found to have significant barriers to reaching people there. Sixty-six percent of all sectors had little or no ministry in place to help meet the needs of the people. Eighty-seven percent of sectors face the problem of being inaccessible by roads. With three out of four people never having heard the name of Jesus, extensive research was conducted in an effort to provide mission agencies worldwide with unprecedented and critical information to help shape evangelism strategies. (Compiled from *Religion Today Summaries* by Crosswalk.com, accessed June 8, 2006, and [www.maf.org/uploads/images/XPkF1SuBFkuGeyT2sQ/oa\\_fastfacts.pdf](http://www.maf.org/uploads/images/XPkF1SuBFkuGeyT2sQ/oa_fastfacts.pdf).)

## Interfaith Dialogue on Conversions to Produce Code of Proper Conduct

At a meeting in Rome on May 12–16, 2006, the Vatican and the World Council of Churches launched a three-year joint study project for the purpose of compiling a code of proper conduct for handling religious conversions and proselytizing. The Rev. Hans Ucko, director of the WCC’s Office on Inter-Religious Relations and Dialogue, stated, “We hope to produce a code that will ensure that believers [*sic*] commitment to their

faith never translates into denigration of another.” Ucko explained that the concept of producing rules for proselytizing stems back to questionable methods used several years ago by Christian missionaries in India that had generated problems. Another example cited was the attacks on local Christians that arose in Sri Lanka after the tsunami, resulting from attempts by foreign missionaries to win converts among Buddhists. However, the problem is not limited to Christians, Ucko further related. “In some parts of the world, Muslims also work to make non-Muslims embrace Islam.”

Participating in the dialogue with the Vatican and the WCC were twenty-seven participants from Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and indigenous religious traditions. “The issue of religious conversion remains a controversial dimension in many interconfessional and inter-religious relations,” Ucko commented. The introductory report made this bold recommendation: “All should heal themselves from the obsession of converting others.”

Freedom of religion also includes the “equally non-negotiable responsibility to respect faiths other than our own, and never to . . . vilify or misrepresent them for the purpose of affirming superiority of our faith.” (Compiled from the *Presbyterian News Service*, accessed May 10, 2006; World Council of Churches Press Release, <http://www2.wcc-coe.org/pressreleasesen.nsf/index/pu-06-04.html>; and <http://news.scotsman.com/latest.cfm?id=702552006&format=print>.)

## NOTABLE QUOTES

**P**reaching takes blood, sweat, tears, and a lot of time. As feeding people a good meal satisfies the one who prepares it as well as the one who eats it, so preparing a Biblical message through prayer and study brings joy as it feeds both preacher and hearer. We must work hard to see visitors come to church. We must work harder to feed them God’s truth when they come so that they will come back. As hard as it is to get someone to come the first time to church, it is harder to get them to come back. We preach God’s Word to glorify God and see lives transformed into His image.—Matthew Recker

**I**t is His work, not mine nor yours, and yet it is ours not because we are engaged in it, but because we are His and one with Him whose work it is. —Hudson Taylor

**A** hundred times a day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends on the labors of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the measure as I have received and am still receiving.—Albert Einstein

**S**howed them that if the heart be directly and chiefly fixed on God and the soul engaged to glorify Him, some degree of religious affection will be the effect and attendant of it. But to seek after affection directly and chiefly, to have the heart principally set upon that, is to place it in the room of God and His glory. If it be sought that others may take notice and admire us for our spirituality and forwardness in religion, it is then abominable pride. If for the sake of feeling the pleasure of being affected, it is then idolatry and self-gratification. —David Brainerd

**I**n the vast plain to the north I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been.—Robert Moffat

**I**f a commission by an earthly king is considered a honor, how can a commission by a Heavenly King be considered a sacrifice? —David Livingstone

**A**ny church that is not seriously involved in helping fulfill the Great Commission has forfeited its Biblical right to exist.—Oswald J. Smith

**N**o reserves. No retreats. No regrets.—William Borden

Compiled by Robert Condict, Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International Advisory Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

## The Resistance Belt

The Resistance Belt is the name applied to those restricted-access countries that stretch from Northwest Africa eastward to Asia that have been most resistant to the gospel. This is the darkest, neediest, and most difficult region to reach on the face of the earth. This region is called the 10/40 Window because it is a rectangular-shaped area that extends from 10 to 40 degrees above the equator. This part of the globe comprises between fifty and sixty countries that are the home to over four billion people who desperately need the gospel but are held in darkness by Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Communism. The Window contains the majority of the world’s least evangelized megacities. Of the top twenty cities on this list, two-thirds of the cities are in the Belt. Ninety-seven percent of the people in the least evangelized countries live in Resistance Belt; 82% of western missionaries work outside of the 10/40 Window; and only 1.2% of all missions giving is targeted towards the countries within the Resistance Belt. Focused intercession and new strategies are needed to penetrate these restricted access countries with the power of the gospel. (Compiled from [http://thinkwow.com/surgeup/10-40\\_window.htm](http://thinkwow.com/surgeup/10-40_window.htm) and <http://ocf.berkeley.edu/~samkong/mis-sion/real.php>.)

This news is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International.

## Rethinking Missions for the Next Generation

Pearson Johnson

In this installment of *FrontLine*, which is encouraging us to “Rethink Missions,” we would like to share three of the top issues we are concerned with and often asked about. We also want to encourage you as pastors to interact with your young people about these issues so that they rethink missions with your wisdom and experience to guide them.

### Rethink the Abilities of Our Brethren around the World

Recently, our church had the privilege of having Pastor Julio Montez from Monterrey, Mexico, as one of our special Summer Bible Conference speakers. Through an interpreter, we heard of his passion for planting missionary-sending churches in Mexico by Mexicans. They are accomplishing the work, as they have seen a number of churches launched. At least two articles in this issue address this very subject: our brothers in many other countries are doing an excellent job of evangelizing and planting churches. Some are even sending out foreign missionaries!

Our churches have the opportunity to glorify God for how He has gifted such brethren. We ought to seek God’s will about being involved in their work in new ways such as pastoral training and leadership development. The next generation is aware of these trends. We need to rethink our role in some traditional mission fields, and we need to be willing to broaden our perspective on the abilities of our brethren around the world to accomplish the work themselves.

### Rethink the Independence of the Independents

With many pioneering mission opportunities opening before us, mission boards and churches should do their best to coordinate Independent Baptist mission efforts. Boards should share resources and churches should encourage roundtable discussions in efforts to reach or teach certain groups. Missionary Tony Fox and our pastor, Dave Doran, have provided a great example in this regard through their work to gather representatives from various colleges, seminaries, boards and churches in efforts to train pastors overseas.

Combined efforts are needed not only for pastoral training overseas, but also for pioneering mission efforts. Coordination for urban church planting and

ethnic or religion-specific outreach here at home would strengthen Fundamental Baptist efforts. Instead of seeing who can be the first board or church to move forward in a particular mission endeavor, let us rethink our independence and network with likeminded ministries for maximum impact.


### Rethink our Sources of Practical Help

The other day a young couple preparing for the mission field sat across the table from us. We were discussing the adjustments they would face and their need for support from home and on the field. The country to which they are headed has no Fundamental Baptist missionaries, but there are other Americans and English speakers of other nationalities that have already learned many of the practical matters. These would no doubt include people that the missionaries would not yoke up with in ministry, but who could save them many dollars and hours with simple suggestions on driver’s licenses, housing, medical care, basic necessities, and services. Contact with those who have learned to live in the country that is the missionary’s field of service might even become prospects for their future ministry. We would not expect the missionary to “separate” from lost people who could offer this kind of information, but if a missionary who understands and practices ecclesiastical separation needed to ask someone he knows to be a non-separatist believer a practical question about survey work, government relationships, aviation, cultural adjustment or advice on day-to-day living, what then? While we are rethinking missions, perhaps we should rethink how we can prepare missionaries for such an encounter lest they assume that separation means “no contact whatsoever.” And, for that matter, we need to rethink the difficulty that missionaries who understand these realities have when they try to explain them to the folks back home.

Rethinking any issue takes discipline, and it is bound to put us on the edge of our traditional comfort zones. It will prove to be a helpful exercise, so long as our foundations are maintained and built upon, not torn down. Let’s rethink missions together for the sake of Christ and the work of the next generation.

Pearson and Ben can be reached at [pjohnson@intercity.org](mailto:pjohnson@intercity.org). They would welcome your input and interaction.

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# Chaplain News

**Brian Palmer, Battalion Chaplain**

Thank you for the packages from FBFI. It is not the items that they contain that are important—it is being remembered. Of course, the items were received with joy and will be shared with the same joy! The school items will be used in some of the Iraqi villages that some of my soldiers are close to. Most Iraqis are fairly neutral to us, many are enthusiastic, and some just plain hate us and wish us dead.

I do not mind the rockets and mortar bombs—I can usually hear the rockets coming or the mortars being fired and take cover. (It is incredible what your ears can hear; motivation is the key!) I absolutely do not like it when the road in front of me explodes. Call me old-fashioned, but I believe that asphalt and gravel should not defy gravity.

My ministry is going well, but I spend more time than I want to taking care of our wounded. I would prefer it if no one got hurt. We are now in Ramadi, a place you will hear about in the news reports. It is not always good to be in a place in the news. Please remember us in prayer if you do hear reports from Ramadi; we covet and need your prayers.

With all I have seen and been a part of here, my faith has been strengthened. I now have a renewed sense

of the importance of the gospel for a dying world. I say that because the world is literally dying around me. I am learning what is truly important and what is not. People here must make the choice about what is worth dying for (a road, a bridge, a building, getting a sniper, supporting a friend). I had to determine in myself that the gospel of Christ is so important that it is worth the risk of my own life to bring this message to places that are not completely safe. I have been with enough people dying to know that the gospel of Christ is more precious than I could ever have known before coming here. Salvation through Christ is life to those who are dying. This message is too important to sequester in safety; it must reach all, especially those in dangerous places.

That is why I am here. It is my privilege, duty, and honor to deliver this message here. Despite the hardships involved, my life here is fairly good. I have a sense of purpose and opportunity to minister to soldiers. I wish I was with my family. I miss Ivey and the two boys, Nathaniel (3) and Micah (1). I try to talk to them often and send them small videos of me either reading stories to them or just talking. I used to send small snippets from my

digital camera, but now I have a DVD video camera that was given to us to record messages for our families. This gives thirty minutes of recording time! My life has gotten much better just being able to send messages home.

My accommodations are also good. I am in a concrete building that keeps me safe from incoming bombs and rockets. I have an office in which to talk with soldiers and do my administrative work. My sleeping quarters are spacious compared to what they could be. I am well off here. It is really hot, but I also have AC in my room. The electricity is usually reliable; a few nights ago a mortar bomb hit the generator and we were without power until it was fixed. They fixed it quickly, though.

I do have some requests. I ask for your continued prayers for my ministry opportunities to witness and stamina to keep pressing forward. I also ask for prayers for my family—they bear the brunt of this deployment, worrying about me, having only Mommy to raise them for a year, and not being able to play with Dad for a year. This must be worse on them than it is for me, and it is tough on me. Please keep them in your prayers. I will press on and do my best to not disappoint the FBFI family.

**Dr. Michael D. Sproul, President**

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## Front Line Strategies

Wayne Bley

**O**f all the concerns a soldier has, knowing where the lines are is one of the most important. Being behind the lines can mean that we are safely behind our own lines—but in the battle for truth and the struggle for souls, we are literally behind *enemy* lines. Certainly we must defend the faith, but our mission will never be accomplished in a defensive posture.

It is not politically correct to couch evangelism in military terms today, but many of our great hymns and Biblical metaphors do just that. When we talk about “targeting” a specific group for evangelism, when we use phrases such as “crusade” or “like a mighty army” or even “soldiers of Christ,” we are often misunderstood. A world in “conflict” with the Great Commission would have us be something less than “conquerors.”

Enemies of the gospel—who certainly need it—have no such concerns. Knowing that is part of knowing our enemy. Before you take offense, consider that our enemies today want to *defeat* us, while we want to *win* them. That should be the Christian response to Islam. Fanatical Islam seeks to defeat Christianity. Christians should seek to win individual Muslims. Religious fanatics are seeking physical victory through terrorism. Christians must seek spiritual victory through evangelism, but ignorance of what we are facing puts us at a serious disadvantage. Carl von Clausewitz, in *On War*, his classic work on military strategy, defines war as “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.”<sup>1</sup> Terrorists seek to do that to us. Satan does too.

Before military hostilities began,

Satan had already employed another of Clausewitz’s maxims: “The war must be fought in the interior of the country.”<sup>2</sup> Biblical Christianity is seen by many in the “Christian West” as the more threatening enemy. Western civilization can no longer recognize its enemies; it struggles to find the lines. In the fourth century BC, Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War*, “Know the enemy, know yourself; your victory will never be endangered. Know the ground, know the weather; your victory will then be total.”<sup>3</sup> To continue the military metaphor, unless we know and understand our enemy and take the battle to

the interior of his country, spiritual victory is already endangered. Will America become the Masada of the West? Will we silence ourselves in spiritual suicide? Will we hide, or will we “go”?

Muslims are taking the interior of Western

nations not only through immigration but also through a birthrate far beyond that of the host nations. They have a strategy that is working well. They know us far better than we know them. Muslims have both the right and the intention of using our political process to gain legitimate authority. Keith Ellison, a state representative from Minnesota’s 5<sup>th</sup> District, may become the first Muslim Representative in the US Congress. Can we ignore the fact that every faithful Muslim seeks the replacement of current local, state, and national law with sharia law? What if a thousand New Evangelicals came forward to join your Fundamental Baptist church this Sunday with the stated intention of firing the pastor and taking over the church? Wouldn’t you much rather have them join *after* you had won their hearts to the truth? While bureaucrats babble about “spiritual genocide”

we have an enemy that has moved on to homicide through suicide!

Our troops need some discipline. Muslims are obligated to pray five times per day; we are told to “pray without ceasing”—though many hardly pray at all. Muslims need prayer rooms where they work; we can pray anywhere, anytime. They bow their heads in vain; we must do more than shake our heads in response. One of the front lines for missions in the twenty-first century is wherever Islam is: Every Muslim is a target for evangelism.

Today, there are more American Muslims than there are American Episcopalians, Jews, and Presbyterians. Mosques are being built at a pace that exceeds construction of other houses of worship. We ought to have a “behind the lines” mentality instead of a “behind the times” mentality. Our time may be short, but the Lord’s arm is not shortened. We stare in disbelief at how quickly our politicians compromise our Constitution, while we compromise our Commission. We will not take missions seriously in the twenty-first century without rethinking our strategy regarding Muslims. They believe they have the pure truth but that the Bible is corrupt. They are encouraged in this deception by the corrupted lives of professing Christians. We have no option but to rethink our mission and our lives. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

There may never have been a more important time to be “behind the lines.” To win Muslims to Christ, we must *live* what they must come to *believe*.

<sup>1</sup> Ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press: 1989), p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 480.

<sup>3</sup> Trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford University Press: 1971), p. 129.

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