

LESSON 12

LEADING A CHURCH IN MISSION INVOLVEMENT

Introduction

Aim

To understand the importance of a church's being missionary and how it can become involved in mission work.

Thought questions

1. Why should Christians be concerned about the people of another nation?
2. Should a church attempt to reach the people of other nations before it has witnessed to all the people of its own nation?
3. Is missions primarily the responsibility of men or women?
4. Why are women more interested in missions today than men?
5. Is preaching the gospel or meeting the needs of the poor the more important missionary activity?

The Biblical Emphasis on Missions

The Old Testament

The doctrines of creation and the fall of man in Genesis 1 through 3 form the theological foundation for missions: God created men of every nationality and race for fellowship with Himself; man as creature is dependent on God and is made in the image of God—he is given the capacity to enter into a personal relationship with God. Genesis 3 describes man's alienation from God because of sin. The following eight chapters emphasize the relation of all mankind and the inability of man to re-establish his relationship with God. A summary of the doctrines of these chapters which are basic to missions are:

1. Man as creature is responsible to God who has made him the crown of creation and given him the capacity of fellowship with his Creator.
2. Pride originated as a result of man's superiority to other creatures. This pride caused man to covet equality with his Creator and to express this desire in rebellion.
3. Man's rebellion resulted in the destruction of his relationship with God, who sustains him, and thus brought about death. Man's rebellious actions are described as "missing the mark" (sin).

The doctrines that are basic to missions in Genesis 1-11 are:

1. Man as _____ is responsible to God his _____.
2. Man's _____ caused him to covet _____ with his Creator.
3. Man's _____ destroyed his _____ with God.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

4. Although man attempts to appease his Creator while continuing in pride and rebellion, he fails to regain life and to restore fellowship through his own efforts.
5. Since all men have been created by God, all nations are of equal importance in God's sight. God desires all men to be redeemed.

Genesis 12 introduces God's plan of redeeming sinful men of every race and nationality. God chose to make His righteousness and grace known to all the world through one man. Abraham was called by God to separate from the idolatry of his father's house and journey to a land which God would show him (see Gen. 12:1-5). God promised to make a great nation of the descendants of Abraham. This promised blessing carried the responsibility that Abraham would in turn be a blessing to all families of the earth. Since neighbouring nations worshipped idols which could not bless them, the blessing bestowed upon Abraham by Yahweh would be observed by the worshippers of false gods. The idol worshippers would be attracted to the true God whom Abraham worshipped. After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham was to make known to the nations of the world that the righteous God judges and punishes people for their sins. Before Abraham, the world was agnostic (not knowing God). Through Abraham, God revealed Himself anew to one nation, and that nation's responsibility was to share the knowledge of God with all nations.

God's missionary plan for Israel becomes more apparent in Exodus 19. After demonstrating His power through the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, God revealed that those who had experienced His goodness were to respond by obeying His voice and keeping His covenant: "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Exod. 19:5). Israel's selection as God's peculiar treasure above all people was related to the fact that all people of the earth belong to God. Israel was to be a kingdom of priests (a priest represents the people before God) and a holy nation (holy means separated into God's service). God's plan was for Israel as His servant to bring all the people of the earth to the knowledge and worship of Him.

A detailed treatment of Israel's missionary obligation to the world cannot be given in this brief lesson. The Scriptures mentioned previously show that, at the time of Israel's origin and development into a nation, God's design was for her to be a missionary nation. In Second Isaiah, the great prophet of the exile emphasized the same theme. In his day, Israel had come to interpret her peculiar relationship to God to mean that she was God's favourite people. During the exile, many Israelites

Continue the doctrines basic to missions (Gen. 1-11).

4. Man cannot regain _____ and restore _____ with his Creator by his own efforts.
5. God as Creator of all men desires for all _____ to be _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

God revealed himself to A _____ who in turn was to share his knowledge of G _____ with all n _____.

(Abraham, God, nations)

In Israel's missionary role, she was to be God's peculiar _____ because all the earth belongs to _____.

(treasure, God)

Match by drawing lines.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 1. kingdom priest | a. separated into God's service |
| 2. holy nation | b. representative of the people before God |

(1--b, 2--a)

questioned whether Yahweh was overpowered by the gods of the conquerors or whether He had forsaken Israel because of her sins. Since the wickedness of Israel was no greater than that of pagan nations, some questioned why God would punish her more than the Babylonians. Isaiah answered that God permitted Israel to be taken into captivity and stripped of her power and wealth in order that the power and goodness of Yahweh could be demonstrated in His deliverance of the helpless Jewish captives from Babylon. Israel would be the "suffering servant" who was despised and rejected of men. When God delivered the slaves, the power and grace of Israel's God would be obvious to all nations; therefore, the servant suffered on behalf of the sinful nations. God's plan of redemption was to bring all nations to submission and faith through His servant Israel.

Isaiah interpreted God's plan for Israel in captivity to be that His deliverance of helpless I _____ would demonstrate God's p _____ to help all nations and would result in all n _____ coming to faith in G _____ through I _____.

(Israel, power, nations, God, Israel)

The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 had an ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ and His Church. Jesus is the Suffering Servant who died for the sins of men, and the church must deny itself and suffer in carrying the gospel of its Lord to all the world. The Church is the "holy nation" (set-apart servant people of God) which is to serve as a "kingdom of priests" with reference to all the earth which belongs to Yahweh.

The New Testament

Although Jesus Himself ministered primarily to the house of Israel, He commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel to every person. In answering the questions of the disciples concerning the end of the world and the time of His return, Jesus said that the gospel must be preached in all the world. He taught His disciples that people from every part of the world would enter the Kingdom. The Book of Acts and the New Testament epistles reveal that the disciples gave maximum effort to spreading the gospel to every part of the world. The emphasis in the Old and New Testaments is the same: those who have received a knowledge of God are responsible for sharing it with others of every nation.

In the New Testament, we learn that--

1. Jesus commanded His disciples to preach the _____ in all the _____.
2. He taught that people from every part of the _____ would enter the _____.
3. Acts and the epistles indicate that the disciples gave maximum effort to spreading the _____ to every part of the _____.

(1. gospel, world; 2. world, Kingdom; 3. gospel, world)

The Primary Missionary Task

The theology of missions and the strategy of how to carry out the task are being debated passionately. What is most important in the church's mission and what should be omitted? What is the complete will of God for the church in today's world? There are many good things the church can do in missionary activity today. In mission areas, churches have undertaken welfare and social activities. Mission programmes sponsor educational institutions, hospitals, orphanages, welfare centres, instruction for home improvement and economic betterment, Bible schools, and evangelism. The fact must not be

overlooked that Jesus went about doing good. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, fed the hungry, and taught the people how to live in relation to one another. Few would deny, however, that His most important act was giving Himself on the cross for the sins of men.

The primary missionary task of the church continues to be the proclamation of the gospel that Christ died for our sins and was raised from death. Although social action must not be neglected, it can never take the place of sharing the good news that in Christ there is forgiveness and life. Social ministries grow out of the response of man to God's love. The person who has experienced God's redeeming love and who lives under the control of the Holy Spirit is aware of human needs about him and shares his life in meeting those needs. However, reconciling men of all races to God by preaching the gospel to every creature is the primary missionary task of the church.

Some of the important activities in mission areas include: teaching stewardship, helping Christians grow in grace, educating both the young and the old, ministering to the sick and hungry, training lay leaders, teaching the Bible, reaching into the neighbourhood to build brotherhood in the midst of strife, providing for deprived youth, working for peace and justice, and reaching lost men and women with the gospel. Of all the many important tasks, the supreme task continues to be the establishment of churches which reach the multitudes with the message of redemption.

Theological Implications for Missionary Outreach

God's revelation through a person

Missionary outreach does not begin with human dedication or resources but with the love of God. From eternity God has revealed His loving concern for the redemption of all mankind. The climax of His revelation came in His Son who sacrificed His life for man's redemption and sent the power of the Holy Spirit to guide Christians in sharing the message of redemption.

Although the printing press has enhanced the ability to spread the gospel, the involvement of persons in sharing the good news continues to be essential. The Christian who has experienced God's love and hope in resurrection from death must bear witness to that which God has done for sinful man in Christ. Sending gospel tracts and Bibles into villages and homes is not enough. The prophets previously had told about God's love and willingness to forgive, but His love and mercy became more real and personal when revealed in the life of a person—Jesus Christ the Son of God.

The primary missionary task of the church is to proclaim the _____ that Christ died for our _____ and was raised from _____.

(gospel, sins, death)

God's revelation through the person of His Son implies that mission strategy must continue to involve _____ (individuals) in making His revelation known.

(persons)

The role of the Holy Spirit

The presence of the Holy Spirit is basic to Christian missionary outreach. Even a casual reading of the Acts of the Apostles (missionaries) will reveal the importance of the control and leadership of the Spirit in the life of the expanding Church. Philip was guided by the Spirit to the Ethiopian who believed in Christ after Philip interpreted Isaiah 53 to him. Peter was prompted by the Spirit to go against his own custom of not entering the house of a Gentile. Paul and Barnabas responded to the leadership of the Spirit in initiating the first missionary journey. The apostles were very sensitive to the presence and guidance of the Spirit.

New Testament preachers possessed divine power, and multitudes were converted. This power was given them because they asked for it in order to do God's will as bold witnesses. They worked in the midst of persecution and ridicule, yet they refused to compromise their preaching and convictions. The success of the missionary outreach in their day was the result of men discovering the promises and power of God rather than depending on methods.

The work of the Spirit is to convict lost men of sin, judgement, and righteousness. He guides the words of the witness who shares Christ. He brings about the new birth of those who believe. Missions is allowing the Spirit to work through the believer in bringing lost men into God's Kingdom.

The one way of salvation

The speech and actions of the apostles originated from deep personal convictions. They sincerely believed and preached that "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, RSV). In attempting to be magnanimous in spirit, many Christians today conclude that Christianity is only one of the several ways to find God. The early Christians had the conviction that Jesus Christ was the only true revelation of God and the only sacrifice for sins whereby men may be redeemed. They preached this message with conviction, fervour, and enthusiasm. They were not formally trained in the languages, methods of biblical interpretation, and historical theology like many modern preachers, but they knew what they had experienced in Christ Jesus. By faith they claimed the promises of God, and in the presence of the Holy Spirit they were courageous in giving witness to their salvation.

The call for decision

As the first apostles went forth proclaiming the message of salvation in Christ, they pressed for decisions. They did not believe that the gospel should be proclaimed

The presence of the Holy Spirit is basic to missionary o_____.

(outreach)

The Holy Spirit c_____ the lost person, g_____ the witness, and brings about the new b_____.

(convicts, guides, birth)

Contrary to the teachings of the New Testament, many Christians believe that Christianity is only one of several ways to _____.

(God)

in an impersonal way and the non-Christian left without being persuaded to make his decision concerning what he would do with Jesus. When Paul was brought before the governor Felix to plead his innocence, he used the occasion to speak about his faith in the resurrected Lord. Later he had opportunity to speak to Felix and Drusilla concerning their faith in Jesus Christ. He reasoned with them concerning justice, self-control, and future judgement. "Felix was alarmed and said, 'Go away for the present; when I have an opportunity I will summon you'" (Acts 24:25. RSV). Christians who have concluded that witnessing requires no more than simply living a good life are stopping short of biblical examples. The disciples shared their witness and exhorted their listeners to receive Christ.

Every Christian a minister

Another fundamental biblical truth relating to missionary outreach is the involvement of the entire community of believers in carrying out the will of God. Every member of the New Testament Church was a servant or minister. Each was involved in praying for the lost and in giving testimony to the saving power of God through faith in Jesus Christ. By way of contrast, the contemporary Church is divided into *ministers* and *members*.

The doctrines of God and Christ

The position is frequently taken that the Christian community is presumptuous in going into another country or culture and imposing its beliefs on people who have their own gods. Some church leaders seem to be embarrassed to claim that Christianity is superior to other religions. For them, Christianity has become one of many ways to God. The basic question is whether or not Christianity is the truth revealed by God who created man and who gives life. If it is, then it must be the only way to God since Christian teachings are so different from teachings of other religions—both cannot be true. If it is not, Christians are presumptuous in pressing the claims of Christ on people of foreign cultures; the claim of Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life is false. The answer to the question lies in the doctrines of God and of sinful man.

If there is one God, He is Lord of all the universe. Men of all races are subject to Him as Creator and Redeemer. Man in sin has rebelled against the worship of and subjection to God. Man's sinfulness has resulted in a state of alienation and condemnation. The only religion which makes adequate provision for sinful, alienated man is Christianity. Jesus Christ died for man's sins and rose victorious over the grave to give man eternal fellowship with his God and Creator. If these biblical teachings are true, there is no other religion which offers such hope! The message is "good news," and every man throughout

Many Christians today do not press for a
d _____ as the New Testament witnesses
did.

(decision)

Match by drawing lines.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. New Testament church | a. Every member a minister |
| 2. Contemporary church | b. Divided into ministers and members |

(1--a, 2--b)

Finish reading this paragraph, which continues on the next page, before doing the following.

Christianity is superior to other religions because only in Christ is there--

1. _____ of sins
2. restoration of fellowship with _____ by grace
3. the gift of _____ life

(1. forgiveness, 2. God, 3. eternal)

the world should have the opportunity to know that in Christ Jesus there is forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. The fact is true that there are good points in other religions, but only in Jesus Christ are there forgiveness of sin, restoration to fellowship with God by grace, and the gift of eternal life.

Educational Foundations for Missionary Outreach

The need for information about missions

People are not concerned about human needs of which they have no knowledge. Even though air travel has enabled many to go abroad, most people who travel do not have the spiritual vision to see the deeper needs of others. The majority of people, especially in economically deprived areas, never travel outside their communities to see conditions existing in other parts of the world. The only way for them to know the needs of the world is to receive information by second-hand methods. Someone who has seen and perceived the spiritual needs of the world must share either by spoken or written words. Films of mission activities have become available in recent years and are being widely used to inform Christians concerning mission activities and needs.

The pastor's responsibility for missionary education

The pastor is responsible for leading the church to an awareness of world-wide missions. The Bible is a missionary book, and the pastor's preaching of it must reflect missionary theology; otherwise, his preaching will not be biblical. Preaching must go beyond biblical statements of missionary responsibility and include contemporary world needs. The Christian is so occupied with his own needs that it is not easy to lead him to a concern for others, especially for those whom he has never seen.

The pastor should include missionary biographies in his reading. He will find in them many illustrations which will make his sermons more interesting and will inform the people of needs in other countries. He should consider setting aside a week for mission study each year. Mission study books are available from various denominational presses.

The pastor should have in his library a variety of books on missionary subjects. Books which present the missionary message of the Bible, the lives and works of missionaries, the history of missions, and the contemporary needs for mission work are available. In addition to books, mission board publications provide in pamphlet form valuable information on the contemporary needs of missions. These pamphlets are usually available without cost.

Christians do not become concerned automatically about missions. They must be informed and challenged.

Awareness and concern are dependent on

_____.

(knowledge)

List three sources of material for missionary education.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The pastor is responsible for keeping them informed and for setting forth their missionary responsibilities as revealed in the Bible. The pastor should remember that a non-missionary church is a stagnate or dying church. The New Testament depicts a church as missionary and growing. If a pastor allows his church to continue not growing and not being missionary, he can scarcely claim to be following New Testament patterns.

Practical Involvement in Missionary Outreach

Guiding young people to do God's will

God uses historical events to make His will known to individuals. A person may hear the voice of God through a sermon, a testimony, or an experience in his own life. Young people should be exposed to situations which will call their attention to the will of God. They should be confronted with the needs of missions and guided to consider the possibility of God's calling them to missionary service. A young person has little chance of responding to missionary needs if he is uninformed.

If a person feels the Spirit of God speaking to him about Christian service, the pastor should be available to give counsel and guidance. After the young person becomes convinced of the direction of God's leadership, the pastor will need to help him make plans for his preparation for service. The pastor must avoid becoming aggressive in encouraging young people to enter Christian service, but he also should not miss the opportunity to encourage young people to respond to the will of God.

Many young people who have felt God's leadership to Christian service have been slow to respond because of the lack of opportunity for and guidance in serving God. After a young person has sacrificed to become trained for Christian service, he may discover that there is no place for him in the established denominational or church organization. Pastoral and denominational leaders should be aware of the fact that newly trained leaders lack experience for initiating and developing new work. The experienced leaders are responsible for assisting trained young men and women to find places to serve. Since so many in every society are non-Christians, the opportunities for beginning new missions are numerous.

Leading the church to support missions

Churches are responsible for supporting missions in three ways: through prayer, financial support, and personal involvement. Since the progress of mission work is dependent on the power of God, prayer plays a vital role. Paul implored churches to pray for him (see Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:18-20). Stagnated missionary endeavours find new life and growth through prayer. God's Word instructs believers to pray and promises that prayers will be

As you read Guiding young people to do God's will, list ways a pastor can help young people discover and respond to God's will. To help you, there is a key word given for each.

1. *preach* _____

2. *guide* _____

3. *prepare* _____

4. *service* _____

List three ways churches should support missions.

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

answered.

Churches should be led to support mission work financially. Churches which never give to causes beyond their own needs are selfish and spiritually blind. A church cannot grow in love (concern for others to the extent of meeting their needs) if it never gives to needs beyond its own membership. This principle is true for individual Christians also. Selfish churches are usually quarrelsome and unspiritual.

Churches need to be involved in missionary activities in their own area; otherwise, their participation in the fulfilment of the Great Commission is always by proxy. It is much easier for some people to give money and pray for missions than to be actively involved in meeting the needs of others. Missions within a community is understood usually as the church's reaching out in ministry to the physical and spiritual needs of persons who will not likely become part of the church fellowship. These persons include the sick and disabled, the impoverished, the handicapped, and others. Greater blessings come through direct involvement in meeting human needs than through the less direct participation of giving and praying. It is true that everyone cannot go to a foreign mission field, but everyone does go into the world (the world is no farther away than down the street where non-Christians reside). Jesus did not command His disciples to "go into all the world" but rather to "make disciples as you are going into the world." While encouraging its young people to respond to the Spirit's leadership to go to other parts of the world, a church must not neglect community missions.

Women's missionary work

For many years women of various denominations have organized into mission study and action groups. Women's missionary organizations have met three primary needs: (1) Women who have not been permitted to have major leadership roles in organized churches have found fulfilment and ministry through the women's missionary organization. (2) Through mission study, women have kept abreast of world mission needs and have had a greater interest than men in supporting those needs. (3) Women have been obedient to the Great Commission by participating together in community mission activities. Without the women's organizations, many churches would have little interest in and knowledge of world missions.

Material for women's work is available from many denominational publishing agencies. Organizational manuals and good programme materials are available for this work.

Men's missionary involvement

In the New Testament, men took the leadership in

To avoid proxy fulfilment of the Great Commission, churches should become involved in missionary activities in their own _____.

(area)

Women are normally more interested in missions because--

1. They s _____ and keep abreast of missions n _____.
2. They are more involved in c _____ missions.

(1. study, needs; 2. community)

missionary outreach. This pattern has not been true of modern missions. The majority of men have failed to study and stay informed about world missions and have neglected local missions. The lack of interest is due to a lack of knowledge. Men need to be as well informed about missionary needs as women. They too are responsible for personal involvement in meeting the needs of people who are not included in the fellowship of their church. Only a limited amount of periodical material for keeping men informed about mission needs and involving them in mission activities is available.

Conclusion

Both the Old and New Testaments emphasize God's plan for His people to be a missionary nation. The church is God's chosen people who have been set apart to serve Him as missionaries. The fact that many churches claim to teach the Bible but say little about the missionary task is astonishing in the light of the fact that this task is primary in both the Old and New Testaments. A church cannot be obedient to the commission of our Lord unless it is involved in missions. The pastor is responsible for leading in this involvement. A church which is disobedient in carrying out its task cannot expect God's fullest blessings.

Mission interest is dependent on

k _____ and

i _____.

(knowledge, involvement)

Home Study Exercise

Basic assignment (Levels 1, 2, and 3). Answer the following questions based on the content in the study guide.

1. List four doctrines in Genesis 1-11 which are basic to missions. _____

2. What was God's missionary plan for Abraham and his descendants? _____

3. Give three statements in Exodus 19 which describe Israel's missionary role. _____

4. How did Isaiah interpret God's plan for Israel in captivity? _____

5. List three New Testament teachings or examples which emphasize missions. _____

6. What is the church's primary mission? _____

7. What does God's revelation through an individual imply for mission strategy? _____

8. List three essential activities of the Holy Spirit in mission work. _____

9. List three ways that the message and practice of many contemporary churches differ from that of the New Testament. _____

10. How is Christianity superior to other religions? _____

11. Name three types of material the pastor may use in emphasizing missions. _____

12. List three ways a pastor should help young people discover and respond to God's will. _____

13. What are three ways a church should support missions? _____

14. Why have women had more interest in missions than men? _____

Supplementary assignment (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 217–228 in *The Churchbook* by Dobbins and answer the following questions.

1. What is the most tragic betrayal of Jesus by His churches?
2. How is God's will usually revealed?
3. What responsibility does the church have in the call of God to an individual?
4. Name and explain briefly five ways a church may influence social needs.
5. Name three conditions necessary for growing a strong missionary church.

Advanced assignment (Level 3).

1. What are the divine and human roles in the call of a young person to Christian service?
2. Outline a plan for educating your church in missions.

Seminar Discussion

1. What is the relation of redemption and missions as the primary emphases of the Bible?
2. Why is the doctrine of creation basic to missions?
3. What is missions and what is the primary task of missions?
4. Can small and financially weak churches be involved in missions?
5. What can a pastor do to lead men into greater missionary involvement?
6. What responsibilities does a church have to those who are called to go abroad in missionary service?