

A Philosophy of Missions

- **Missions exists because of the Great Commission.**

Biblical missions is directly focused on the Great Commission, which means a “forth-telling” ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with the performance of believer baptism and continual teaching that brings about obedience to Christ in all that He commanded. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20; cf. Mk 16:15). That this command extends beyond the first disciples/apostles of Christ is proven by the fact that 1) its promise of divine assistance extends “to the end of the age,” and 2) its completion - disciples made “of all the nations” - was not achieved during the apostolic era. It is the express duty of the church to labor in this endeavor sacrificially and passionately until it is completed. This going about making disciples has ramifications for *local* outreach, as the local church reaches out to its surrounding community, as well as *global* outreach, as the church sends out partners to proclaim the truth to foreign regions.

Implications:

- *There are only two options for members of the body of Christ: 1) be a zealous goer, who is also a zealous sender; 2) be disobedient*
- *This duty must be hailed as one of the very purposes of the church, not merely one of its programs. Discipleship at home and abroad (as our missionaries reproduce abroad what we are doing at home through biblical ministry. As we see people saved and sanctified in the Word at home, so we anticipate our truth-partners to engage in the same process.*
- *The use of resources should reflect the necessity and primary importance of this endeavor.*
- *A ministry that doesn't include this “obedience in all that He commanded” approach is not focused on Christ's Great Commission*

- **Missions exists to glorify God.** God is greatly glorified in the redemption of sinners. Thus, a missionary must be marked by an accurate and deep understanding of the Gospel of Christ. John Piper is well-known for saying missions exists because worship does not. Worship of our Triune God is the motivation for and the goal of missions. The primary motivation for the missionary endeavor is not that of easing the world's sufferings, rescuing souls from the fires of hell, or adding to the membership rolls of a church. The greatest motivation for missions is a passion to see people “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev 5:9) falling and declaring, “Worthy are You, our

Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power” (Rev 4:11) The psalmist cried, “Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You” (Psa 67:3). He saw the greater goal in the conversion of the nations- worship. Likewise, Paul saw the Gentiles who had been converted through his ministry as an offering to God (Rom 15:6). The motivating factor in missions is an earnest desire to see more souls added to the number of those who worship God. Hence, the Son is worshipped because He purchased “**for God**” men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation to be a kingdom of priests “**to our God**” (Rev 5:9-10).

Implications

- *Missions must be God-centered, not man centered.*
 - *Our own passion for worship will determine the extent to which we as a church are zealous for the missionary endeavor.*
 - *Efforts focused merely on humanitarian aid or benevolence without the goal of adding to the number of those who worship God are not rightly categorized as missions.*
 - *Individuals supported will need to demonstrate a grasp of the saving Gospel beyond shallow apprehension. They will need to understand how to evaluate shallow faith vs. saving faith, and be able to defend and proclaim the penal-substitutionary view of the work of Christ.*
 - *The missionary will be able to maturely express the sufficiency of Scriptures in conversion and sanctification. The theological maturity of a missionary should be equal to or greater than that of a pastor working in an established country where the Gospel has been previously proclaimed.*
 - *Thus, there must be depth in terms of a biblical soteriology. They must uphold the sovereignty of God in salvation, rather than the man-centered techniques of decision-oriented evangelism*
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- **Missions have always been in the mind of God.**

God’s desire for His name to be exalted among the nations did not begin with the inception of the church at Pentecost (Acts 2). Mankind was originally created as His image bearer (Gen. 1:26-28) to live for His glory. When that image was marred by the Fall (Gen 3), God immediately hinted at a provision He would make for man’s restoration (3:15), and acted to show His desire for mankind to be restored (3:21). When God later made a covenant with Abraham He showed His special love for him as the father of a nation (Israel), but in blessing that nation, His intention was to bring a blessing to all the nations – “In you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12:3) Hence Isaiah

56:7: “My house will be called a house of prayer **for all the people**”- “turn to me and be saved, **all the ends of the earth**; for I am God, and there is no other” (45:22). What God was doing in choosing and redeeming Israel had a greater purpose: “To show you My power to proclaim My name **through all the earth**” (Exod. 9:16). Solomon prayed that “**all the peoples** of the earth” might know the LORD’s name (2 Chron 6:33) because he knew the greater vision of God reflected by the psalmist: “Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let **all the peoples** praise you” (psalm67:3)

Implications:

- *Missions must always be in the mind of God’s people.*
- *Our efforts in the missionary endeavor should reflect the “all peoples” aim of God. We should aim far beyond the boundaries of our own people group.*

- **Missions will succeed as a means towards God’s decreed end.**

“Worthy are You to take to the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9). It doesn’t say that Christ purchased *all men* with His blood, but that He did purchase at Calvary people from every representative people group in the world. This is a *blood* issue. The sacrifice of Christ did “purchase” exactly that for which it was given. Men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation *will be saved*. The missionary endeavor will succeed, but not without the means God has ordained (Rom 10:12-17; Matt 18:19-20; Acts 1:8). The church is that means as it makes every effort to take the gospel message *to every people group* of the earth, knowing that it will succeed according to God’s decree – “This gospel of the kingdom **will be preached** in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14) – “**I will build My church**; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Matt 16:18)

Implications:

- *The church can approach missions with great confidence, knowing that the Lord of the harvest will bring the harvest.*
- *The church **must** participate in missions, knowing that it is the ordained means toward God’s end.*

- **Missions must work strategically, to accomplish God’s intended end.**

Scripture does not teach universalism. Many people will go to hell (Matt 7:13-14, 21-23). The church must therefore seek to strategically accomplish an attainable goal – planting the church among all people groups, not winning all people to Christ. The Gospel

message goes out to the whole world, though relatively few respond with saving faith. In other words, it goes beyond seeking to save as many people as possible or getting the message into as many geographic locations as possible (countries). Thus, our focus is global, as we take the saving Gospel to intentional regions for the establishment and sustenance of biblically healthy churches. “When the church has been planted in all the people groups of the earth, and the elect have been gathered in from all the “tribes and tongues and nations,’ then the Great Commission will be complete. Missions will be over” (Piper)

Piper explains:

“Timothy left Lystra, his hometown (Acts 16:1), and became a church worker (a Timothy – type missionary) in a foreign place, Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3) which had its own elders (Acts 20:17) and outreach (Acts 19:10). This is the model of a Timothy- type missionary: going far away to do Christian work where the church is fairly well established. It has a biblical precedent and it is a good thing to do, if God calls you.

But that’s not what Paul was called to do. His passion was to make God’s name known in all the unreached peoples of the world. He said that he made it his ambition “to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named” (Romans 15:20). One of the most stunning things Paul ever said is in Romans 15:19, 23 “From Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum I have fulfilled the gospel of Christ...I no longer have any room for work in these regions.” This stunned me, when I finally saw its implications.

No room for work between Jerusalem and Northern Greece! His work there is done in spite of all the unbelievers that remain! He is now moving on to Spain. How could he say this? The answer is that he was a frontier missionary, not just a cross-cultural missionary. He was called to reach the unreached peoples, where there is no church to evangelize its own people.

What most Christians don’t know today is that there are probably ten times more Timothy-type missionaries in the world than there are Paul-type missionaries. And yet there are still thousands of people groups – especially Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and tribal people – who have no access to a gospel – preaching church in their own culture. Patrick Johnstone and others published in late 1996 a book entitled *The Unreached People* (Seattle: YWAM publishing, 1996). In it the 2000 least reached people groups are listed in pages 102-111. This gives you an idea of the remaining urgent need for missionaries who are willing to cross language and culture for the fame of Christ and the Salvation of the perishing.

Therefore, our prayer for Bethlehem [Baptist Church] is that we put a very high priority on raising up and sending frontier missionaries – Paul-type missionaries. Not that we diminish the sacrifice and preciousness of the Timothy -type missionaries, but that we realize what the utterly critical, uniquely missionary need is in the world, namely, there are thousands of people groups with no access to the saving knowledge of Jesus. Only Paul-type missionaries can reach them. That must be a huge priority for us. Without the gospel everything is in vain. A crucial role that the Timothy-type missionaries play is to

raise up Paul-type missionaries among the peoples with whom they are working”.

Implications:

- *We should strategically target **un-reached** groups rather than merely aiming at any people (numerically) or any country (geographically) [consult the Joshua Project for 100 of the most-unreached]*
- *The support of frontier missionaries should be a priority in the use of our resources.*
- *The goal of our frontier missionaries should be the establishment of domestic ministries – i.e. self-governing, self-sustaining, and self-propagating churches within the new cultural context.*
- *In terms of priorities, GCC desires men who will preach Christ in regions without established local churches (Rom 15:20). Specially qualified individuals, who by virtue of unusual gifting and training, shall be supported to preach to those without a gospel witness (3 Jn 6-8). Individuals who help indigenous pastors preach Christ by training them in the above priorities shall be deemed worthy of support.*

6) Missions must be intimately connected to the local church

I. The local church must be actively involved in missionary prayer

A. For the supply of missionaries

“Seeing the people, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then He said to the disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸ “Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send our workers into His harvest” (Matt 9:36-38).

B. For the Success of the missionary message

“Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you” (2 Thess. 3:1; cf. Eph 6:19-20; Col. 4:3-4).

C. For the safety of the missionaries

“...and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith” (2 Thess 3:2) –“...That I may be rescued from those who are

disobedient in Judea” (Rom 15:31).

Implications:

- *Our corporate prayer as a church should regularly include prayer for the missionary endeavor.*
- *Our people should be informed and up to date on the needs of our missionaries*

II. The local church is responsible for sending out missionaries

- God is the supreme Agent in sending out missionaries

It was the Holy Spirit who made it clear that Paul and Barnabas were to be set apart as missionaries (Acts 13:2). Their departure for that work was described as “being sent out by the Holy Spirit” (v.4).

Implications:

- *We should pray for God to “set apart” such gifted men in our midst.*
- *We should examine those whom we would support in the missionary endeavor to determine whether they have been set apart by God for his work. Is this a desire in the individual to be a world traveler or is he driven by God’s call on his life?*

- The local church is the mediating agent in sending out missionaries.

While Holy Spirit was the ultimate Agent in sending out Paul and Barnabas, the church at Antioch was instrumental: “When they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:3). The laying on of hands was the means by which the leaders in the Antioch church, as representative of the whole congregation, recognized that God had set Paul and Barnabas apart for the ministry endeavor. In other words, missions is done by qualified leaders that are sent out by local churches (Acts 13:1-4; Rom 10:14-15). The individuals must be qualified as elders according to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. If an individual has not been ordained by a local church, he will be examined by GCC to determine his biblical discernment in applying the Scriptures to ministry. In some cases, those who have served faithfully as deacons or deaconesses may be considered for support ministry directly serving under qualified elders (1 Tim 3:8-13; Phil 1:1). Such individuals will need to show discernment in the Scriptures and excellence in ministry in a local church context.

Implications:

- *The church is the only human institution recognized in Scripture as a sending agency*
- *We should see missions boards as implementing agencies, not sending agencies. They exist to serve the local church and cannot replace the work of the local church in appointing and sending missionaries.*
- *If we consider supporting a missionary who is not set apart from our assembly and sent out from our church, we should: 1) Ascertain whether he has a sending church; 2) Contact that sending church to see if the elders of that church have affirmed God's calling and gifting of the individual.*
- *With sending comes the responsibility of discernment. The prayer and fasting in Acts 13:3 are indicative of carefully seeking to move forward according to the God's will. Such discernment (especially if we are not the sending home church) should include: 1) careful examination of the missionary's doctrine, life, calling, character, goals, and priorities; 2) similar examination of the missions agency with which he is associated. If, for example we believe that there are fundamental problems with the "church growth" or "seeker sensitive" movements, then we do not want to participate in the sending of a missionary who will attempt to implement those principles in another context. "If any man is preaching to you a different gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed" (Gal 1:9)!*
- *Since missionaries are an extension of GCC's ministry, helping us to reach the globe, candidates will affirm GCC's doctrinal statement without mental reservation. If there are differences they should be expressed in writing and are subject to further inquiry of the elders and those helping the elders. In the case of disagreement, a policy of study should be enacted to help the missionary gain competency in doctrine. Those supported in missions shall annually sign a statement affirming such a statement, or further detailing where they disagree.*

III. The local church is responsible for the supervision of missionaries.

"From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. ²⁷ When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they

spend a long time with the disciples” (Acts 14:26-28)

Since they had been initially set apart by the church in Antioch, it was to that church that they gave an account of their missionary endeavor.

Further, it was earlier stated that missions exists to plant churches (Acts 13-20; Eph 2:20-22). Therefore the authority structure of the missionaries’ daily ministry is within the context and accountability of a local church. As well, ultimate accountability will be through the structure of a local church that possesses biblically qualified elders rather than another organization without biblical precedent. Further, the ministry must be directly involved in church planting (1 Tim 3:15). The primacy of the local church is all that is known in the NT (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 7:17; 11:16; 14:33; 2 Cor 8:18-23; 11:28). There is to be depth in terms of a biblical ecclesiology.

Implications:

- *We should be intentional in holding our missionaries accountable. Those who are sent from our assembly should be viewed as still under the care and authority of our elders (Heb 13:17)*
- *If we support a missionary not as the sending church, but as secondarily in cooperation with it, we should nevertheless be adequately informed of his daily life and ministry so as to know whether he is doing the work for which he was set apart.*

IV. The local church is responsible for the support of missionaries.

3 John 1:5-8 is a key text for this connection:

Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; ⁶and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. ⁷For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth. Missions us funded sacrificially and purposefully.

- “In a manner worthy of God”

There is only one right way to send out a missionary – *in a manner worthy of the One they represent.*

- Because they “went out for the sake of the Name.”

They are not engaged in private business pursuits, but men who give their lives for the furtherance of the “The Name”- the propagation of reputation and glory of Jesus Christ.

- Because they accept “nothing from the Gentiles”

Going out for the glory of Christ and to bear witness to Him means that missionaries do not make themselves dependent (initially) upon their target audience (“Gentiles,” *pagans*, or those apart from Christ in this context). “A Christian congregation supporting its minister is one thing; missionaries begging money from unbelievers is another.”

- “So that we may be fellow workers with the truth”

The point of *sending* missionaries is so that those who must stay behind can still participate in and be obedient to the command to “make disciples of **all the nations**” (Matt. 28:19). Those who remain behind should be faithful among their own people, but they can reach the nations through those whom they send (cf. Phil 1:5; 4:15-16).

Implications:

- *Because they go out for the sake of Christ, our missionaries should be abundantly supplied. “In a manner worthy of God” doesn’t mean that we throw our old hand-me-downs and give our worn-out cars to our missionaries. It doesn’t mean that we drop a few quarters in the “Brown Barrel.” It means that we generously meet their material needs. And beyond that, it means that we **lovingly** and warmly under gird them with regular encouragement and earnest prayer support, and that we are always with them in spirit.*
- *Our Desire to be “fellow workers” in the missionary endeavor around the world will reflect in the amount of resources we channel in that direction. The wealth of biblical teaching on the use of our money and resources to be “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21) and to store up “treasures in heaven” (Matt 6:20), should be reflected in our church budget.*
- *It will be our goal to increase the amount of support to our missionaries, as the Lord provides.*

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