
The Role of the
Local
Church
in Fulfilling the
Great
Commission

A R T N A K A M U R A

*Thank you Kim,
my bride for life,
who has traveled the globe with me
as a faithful wife.*

*To God be the glory.
Great things He has done.*

About the author

Art Nakamura was born and raised in Seattle to Japanese-speaking Buddhist-believing parents. Art first heard the gospel during his first year at the University of Washington. As a young follower of Christ, Art learned about missions and missionaries while attending Faith Bible Church in Seattle. Several year later, he completed his undergraduate studies at Biola University with a degree in Intercultural Studies and an emphasis on missions. During his time at Biola, Art met his bride Kim and in 1989 the two were married.

Through the years, Art served in various roles in support of missionaries through the local church while also working in the corporate world. During this period, Art and Kim traveled to India, Singapore and Japan seeking the Lord's will regarding service overseas as missionaries. A few years later, Art was ordained by the elders of Foothill Bible Church and he was sent out as a missionary to India. He and Kim served in India from 2000 to 2005. Foothill Bible Church then asked Art to return to serve as an associate pastor to oversee the equipping, sending and supporting of missionaries through the local church. He continues to serve in this capacity today. Art and Kim have three children and five grandchildren and have been blessed to call Foothill Bible Church their home for nearly thirty years.

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Soli Deo Gloria.

Introduction

Early in my adult life as a follower of Christ, I became involved in a local church that was very supportive of fulfilling the Great Commission through the sending and supporting of missionaries. This congregation was originally composed of Japanese-Americans who heard the gospel during World War II in the internment camps and afterwards through a local Bible study. Throughout this period of time, three single lady missionaries ministered to reach the Japanese-Americans in the Seattle area. Their efforts led to the formation of a local church, called Faith Bible Church (FBC Seattle). For many years, the leadership at FBC Seattle sought to set aside up to 50% of the financial budget in the support of missionaries. This is where I first learned about missionaries and discovered what they do to make disciples of Christ cross-culturally.

Two particular couples, one who was sent out from FBC Seattle and another supported by the church, made a particular impact in my life. The one couple sent out from FBC Seattle served in Papua New Guinea to bring the gospel to a particular unreached tribe called the Bisorio people. Through their testimonies, I learned about the glories of bringing forth the gospel to an unreached people group. The Bisorio peoples had their own language, culture and worldview. However, the Bisorio people had no exposure to the Bible and no messenger nearby to proclaim the message of the gospel in their language. This couple (along with their teammates) were commissioned with the task of not only translating the Scriptures into the Bisorio language but also with the greater purpose of making disciples in order to start a new church. While on furlough, this missionary couple expressed their appreciation of the practical support FBC Seattle provided as a local church. I later came to understand more of what this meant as I experienced the role of a supported missionary.

Another couple served in Japan as the field directors overseeing several missionaries. They invited me to spend three months in Japan learning about missionary life and to gain greater exposure to various types of ministries under their mission organization. This proved to be a profitable time of understanding some of the complexities of serving as a missionary. I was able to eyewitness many critical arenas where the supporting church and the sending mission agency had opportunity to serve as a vital link in the ongoing support of missionaries. These opportunities included the provision of support emotionally, spiritually and financially; the maintenance of doctrinal integrity and ministry philosophy; assistance with interpersonal communication and conflict resolution; counsel related to singleness, marriage and parenting; and personal

encouragement tailored to meet the varied and unique challenges each ministry team and field dynamic presented.

I thought that I had a good understanding of what missions was all about. I had many interactions with missionaries, read many missionary biographies and books detailing the history of missions, attended multiple mission conferences, served on church mission committees and student missionary organizations, participated in outreach ministries to international students, and involved myself in undergraduate studies to pursue mission work.

One day, I met with a veteran missionary who served in East Asia as a crisis counselor for a particular mission organization. He asked me about my aspirations and goals. I responded by expressing my desire to be a missions spokesman or promoter for missions. He patiently listened to me and gently responded, “Art, you will never fully understand missions and the life of a missionary until you have been one yourself. All the books you have read, all your short-term experiences, and all the exposure you have had to missionaries may be helpful, but again, you will never truly understand the life of a missionary until you become one yourself.” His words have proved to be so true and insightful.

Over the years, the Lord has granted me the privilege of being sent out from the local church to serve as a missionary in India. I’ve had the privilege of interfacing with dozens of missionaries on the field. I have observed firsthand the woeful lack of preparation provided to the missionary and the overwhelming lack of support received from their sending body. The corresponding pain experienced by many missionaries has been acute and pervasive. My wife and I (and children) are so grateful that we did not experience this personally. When Foothill Bible Church (FBC Upland), my sending body, asked me to return and serve as an associate pastor overseeing the missionaries, it was my stated desire to continue in the overall care and support of our missionaries and to strengthen our commitment to the training and preparation of a future generation of missionaries. This thesis is my effort to articulate my ministry convictions related to the local church and their role in fulfilling the Great Commission. I’m personally grateful for the many men and women who have modeled this cooperative relationship between the local church and the missionary. *Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness! he will bless those who fear the LORD, both the small and the great* (Psalm 115:1,13). The following is the table of contents outlining the contents of this thesis.

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Chapter 1 – The Local Church and Submission to the Great Commission.

Scenario: The elders of the local church have recognized that the primary mission of the church is to make disciples according to Matthew 28:19-20. Since the Lord Jesus Christ gave this commandment, the elders have come to an agreement that the local church must align themselves with God's purposes by submitting to the Scriptures. This foundation of trusting upon God's sufficiency through His Word is based on 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – *"¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."*

Purpose: To provide a biblical and practical rationale for local churches to assume the responsibility to sacrificially train and send men in order to fulfill the Great Commission.

The message is from God.

Fundamental in understanding missions is that there is a particular purpose that God has in mind for mankind even in the midst of their fatal fall and rebellion in sin according to Genesis 3. It is in the form of a message declaring man's hopeless condition and God's solution. Despite one man's disobedience in Adam recorded in Genesis 3:1-7, God provides a message of promise according to Genesis 3:15 – *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

In other words, the promise of hope is forthcoming despite the promise of universal death and judgment upon all of mankind. The apostle Paul summarizes this fulfillment of God's promise of hope when he writes in Romans 5:17, 20ff – *"¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ." . . . ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Consistent throughout this history, was a message that needed to be declared. A message pointing to the character and promises of God according to His revealed Word. Peter declared, *“no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Peter 1:21).

Since the purpose of missions involves a message and messenger, the channel to deliver this message comes from God through the Holy Spirit. This message proclaimed fulfills Jesus’ promise made just prior to His ascension as recorded by Luke in Acts 1:8 – *“⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

As followers of Christ, especially we who are Gentiles, we are called to be a blessing as we have been blessed. One of the most beautiful discoveries members of the local church can make is understanding God’s provision of spiritual gifts in order to be a blessing to others. Paul declares, *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:10).” But he continues on saying in verses 12-13, *“remember that at one time you Gentiles . . . were separated from Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”* The message of the gospel is the only message of hope and reconciliation with God!

The means is through a called out messenger.

The belief of being called out and sent is really an answer to Jesus’ high priestly prayer recorded in John 17:18 – *“As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”* This thesis paper seeks to establish the principle that “being sent” has the function of sender and a sent one. This allows for a ministry partnership where there is mutual accountability and an inter-dependent relationship.

This concept of God calling out people for a purpose is an important theme in biblical history. The term “church” is cited later in the book of Acts and throughout the epistles, the Greek word for church is *“ekklesia.”* This means men and women have been called out by God to assemble or to gather for a purpose. The apostle Peter understood God’s purpose of calling out people and he describes it this way in 1 Peter 2:9-10 – *“⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who*

called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ *Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*" In summary, the Scriptures teach that God calls out people for the purpose of gathering, worshipping, praying, equipping, loving, caring, sending, proclaiming, supporting and interceding in order to demonstrate that God's people are Christ' disciples by demonstrating love for one another (John 13:35).

Throughout the Old Testament, there are historical accounts of God calling out certain men to proclaim the oracles of God to certain peoples – Moses to Pharaoh and to the people delivered out of Egypt (Exodus 3ff), Jonah to the Ninevites (Jonah 1ff), Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2ff), Isaiah to the Israelites (Isaiah 6ff), Jeremiah to the nation of Judah (Jeremiah 1ff), Ezra to the returning exiles (Ezra 7), are several examples.

In the New Testament, Jesus selected twelve disciples called "apostles" (Mark 3:14, Luke 6:13). This Greek word *apostolos*, means to send or one who is sent out to be a messenger of the sender's message. In other words, an apostle is one who is called by God to be sent out to declare a specific message. Jesus is our supreme example of an apostle (Hebrews 3:1-6). While we often use the word apostle referring only to the original eyewitnesses of Jesus' life, death and resurrection (Acts 1:21-22), this same word is used of other men (Barnabas, Titus and Epaphroditus) who were selected and sent out to proclaim God's message (Acts 13:2, 2 Corinthians 8:23, Philippians 2:25).

The apostle Peter preaching his first recorded gospel message also cites that God calls out men in order to be a blessing to other peoples throughout the world. Luke records in Acts 3:25 – "*You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'*"

The Mode is through the context of community.

Making disciples is not an independent venture but a relationship of inter-dependency. The model of the Trinity between the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit reflects an interdependent relationship whereby the Father sends the Son incarnate and the Holy Spirit intercedes throughout the relationship. I believe similarly that the missionary must have an interdependent relationship fully reliant on Christ through the Holy Spirit (John 15:4-5) as well as one of accountability to the local church. This relationship provides mutual encouragement producing more glory to Christ.

Even in the fulfillment of the Great Commission, there is a relationship between the sender (Jesus) and the ones (disciples) being sent out. Jesus declared in Matthew 28:18-20, *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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.”* In other words, Jesus’ command maintains a continual relationship throughout all time and place that still applies to followers of Christ today.

The understanding of missionaries being sent out to be a blessing has its biblical roots beginning in Genesis 12:3 – *“I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* This concept of being called out to be a blessing in order to bless others was what God had declared to the spiritual patriarch of the faith, Abraham. In Genesis 22:18, Abraham recalls God’s angels’ speaking to him, *“and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”*

What makes this revolutionary is that God’s program involves a sender in order to have one sent. I believe the Scriptures teach that this is the role of the local church. The apostle Paul provides a succinct and descriptive interplay between God’s message, the messenger, and the recipient of the message. In Romans 10:12-15 - ¹² *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.* ¹³ *For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* ¹⁴ *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?* ¹⁵ *And how are they to preach unless they are sent?*

The fulfillment of the Great Commission is the story of God using sinful men who are sent to herald, to proclaim, to declare, to preach, to teach and to testify of God’s glory to all peoples everywhere. All of this activity is done by faith believing that this is THE means that God has foreordained to fulfill the Great Commission. The proclamation results in an active faith in Christ. Romans 10:17 describes it this way, *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”*

Study of the local church in relations to missions as recorded in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts gives a narrative describing the birth of the early church. Luke’s record of the church’s activities provides insight that points to the priority that the local church ought to have as

they participate in fulfilling the Great Commission. In one sense, the local church gathered was in response to Jesus' words recorded by Luke in the gospel of Luke 10:2, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*

In Acts 1, Luke gives an account to Theophilus which records Jesus' message following His resurrection. Provided here are ample proofs of His resurrection being the central theme of his message. While the disciples believed the message of the coming kingdom, a question arose as to when Jesus will restore the kingdom to Israel (verse 6). Since Christ had risen from the dead, it appears that the disciples of Jesus assumed an imminent kingdom. Instead, Jesus' response gives a much larger global outlook concerning both the promise and proclamation through His Spirit. In Acts 1:8b, Luke records, ". . . *you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*"

This pronouncement revealed the fact that God's mission for the believers was to be an ongoing activity until Christ returns from heaven. Obviously, the disciples did not immediately understand since they were amazed at Jesus' radical departure. ⁹ *And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.* ¹⁰ *And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,* ¹¹ *and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:9-11).

Another important observation is that all the events happened in the context of community. More specifically, the people were led by God to assemble together in one place to hear the proclamation of God's message, and respond in corporate worship. What was unique about this gathering of fellow God-fearing saints, was the representation of people from various cultural backgrounds (Acts 2:5). The result was bewilderment, amazement and astonishment as people from all over the known world were speaking in their own languages and declaring the mighty works of God (Acts 2:7-11).

Chapter two in the book of Acts opens with an astounding event on the day of Pentecost. What makes this day particularly unique was the gathering of Jews returning to Jerusalem from all over the known world. They gathered together in celebration of the Feast of Weeks which marked the conclusion of the grain harvest. Luke records in Acts 2:1-4 that this day was unlike any other day

in history – *“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

The events as recorded in Acts 2 of the Holy Spirit’s coming and filling the saints opened the gateway of God’s fulfillment of Acts 1:8. The apostle Peter rightly declared that the proclamation of God’s prophetic message was for all peoples and he best summarizes by quoting the prophet Joel 2:32, *“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (Acts 2:21). The result of Peter’s message was the salvation and baptism of three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). While Peter and all the other apostles certainly the redemptive message of God (Acts 2:39), the application of that message was startling. It became clear that the message was not only to all God-fearing peoples (Jews and proselytes) but to Samaritans and Gentiles as well.

The subsequent chapters of the book of Acts give an account of God calling the apostles (and later other converts) to proclaim the gospel to all peoples. This results in the conversion of not only Jewish peoples from all over the known world (Acts 2-7), but also the conversion of Samaritans (Acts 8:4ff), Ethiopians (Acts 8:26ff) and Gentiles (Acts 10:22ff). The apostle Peter even became a personal eyewitness to this miraculous event of Gentiles converting to Christ (Acts 10:44-48).

Understanding the local church’s role and priority of making disciples.

The concept of the local church being the sending agency for missionaries has its historical roots recorded in the Scriptures. What I hope to establish is the premise that missionaries are not people who go out independently or on their own volition to preach the gospel but rather they are “called” and “sent out” by God using the local church as the means for fulfilling God’s purposes.

The local church is the historical means for the called followers of Christ to assemble for worship, prayer, teaching and fellowship (Acts 2:42ff). Similarly, the making disciples through the local church becomes the historical means of fulfilling this Great Commission. Since the local church is the place where one is taught and equipped, missions apart from the local church’s involvement

does not appear biblically consistent. The making, sending and supporting of future disciples, is very much central to the work of the local church.

Study of the church in Jerusalem and Antioch as the sending agency of missionaries.

Luke then records a major transition within Acts 11:19ff as the church elders in Jerusalem saw the value of sending (Acts 11:22) a qualified man (Barnabas) to proclaim the gospel. They also saw the need to train others through the local church in Antioch. These priorities are illustrated in the life of Barnabas who later went to Tarsus to recruit Saul and brought him back to Antioch for the purpose of assisting in teaching the Word of God (Acts 11:25-26). This local church in Antioch became a key center of equipping and training disciples as evidenced by the teaching of many people who were later identified as Christians (Acts 11:26).

The church in Antioch not only became a teaching center but a catalyst and sending body to further meet known physical and spiritual needs. Acts 11:28-30 gives us a brief overview of the local church in Antioch. Here we see the local church sending Barnabas and Saul (later named Paul) to minister to fellow saints in Judea who were suffering from famine. The act of informing the congregation, raising funds, entrusting these gifts to the elders, and then sending this gift along with their two spiritual leaders was an act of worship by the local sending church. This new precedence was certainly made known to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:25) as they returned back.

In Acts 13:1-3, the local church in Antioch continues the role of being the commissioning body to send forth missionaries. I will further describe in detail the local church's role in chapter three. This new venture becomes the new model for the local assembly to serve as senders. Previously, the local assembly served primarily in the role of teaching, instructing and providing opportunities to offer worship in many ways through singing, praying, fellowship, giving to meet needs, and sharing the Lord's Supper. But an additional form of worship is now birthed through the laying of hands (v.3) and sending men to proclaim the gospel.

The apostle Paul, having previously been sent out on his second missionary journey and having planted the church in Ephesus, later writes from prison to this congregation exhorting the believers *"to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."* (Ephesians 4:12-13). Ministry within the local

church must be purposeful and intentional in the making and maturing of disciples. The lack of attention given to this has historically led many people astray from the faith as described in following verse (14) - *tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*

The gospel's entry into the Gentile world becomes stunning news to the church leaders throughout Judea (Acts 11:1). Peter is now called to give an account to the church leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 11:2-17). The response was one of awe and worship (Acts 11:18). An important observation of Luke's recording of events is the priority of accountability to the local church elders. This includes giving an account of God's work of grace in order to promote more worship of Christ. This results in energizing more people to tell the wonderful works of God through the gospel.

An important precedence in the missionary enterprise is seen in the sending process. Those sent are to give an account of what God had done through their lives and ministry. Luke notes that these two men reported what their ministry produced, "*and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.*"²⁷ *And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:26-28)."*

In chapter 15, the church in Antioch sends Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:2-3) along with other eyewitnesses to Jerusalem to again report on their missionary efforts to proclaim the gospel among the Gentiles. The church in Jerusalem welcomes them to declare what God had done (Acts 15:4). This new precedence of inter-church accountability promotes further worship and ultimately encourages more participation in the missionary enterprise of making, maturing and multiplying disciples (Acts 15:22-32).

Several years later, Paul returns to visit the church in Antioch after spending eighteen months in Corinth. Paul's time in Antioch is extended as the need to strengthen all the disciples becomes more apparent (Acts 18:22-23). For Paul, he served in a context in which the role of submitting to God's will by serving, strategizing, sending, and supporting the gospel work through the local church. The entire process that Luke records provides a template for today's churches to emulate principally.

In summary.

When the local church leadership refuses its sole mission of making disciples by going to all the world, there is stagnation. God's mercy and purposes are forgotten. We fail to recall that we, as followers of Christ, are recipients of other people sharing with us over many generations and men and women sacrificially gave of themselves to preach the good news to us. Our forefathers of the faith. The true church throughout history has been comprised of men and women who have recognized God's mercy upon their lives and have become living sacrifices to God as their act of spiritual worship (Romans 12:1). They echoed Paul's words of Romans 1:1 who describes himself as "*a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle (sent one to proclaim a message), set apart for the gospel of God.*" (Romans 1:1).

The prospect of mobilizing and sending forth choice servants from amongst the local body is sacrificial. But to the recipients who have never heard this gospel, this prospect becomes life-giving and soul-saving. To send from amongst the community of saints, is the culmination of worship and requires faith in the only God who is able to rescue men who are lost, dead in their trespasses and sin. It is best summarized by this famous quote from the pioneer missionary William Carey, "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God."

Chapter 2 – The Local Church and its' Mission Strategy.

Scenario: Upon learning a compelling story of the spiritual darkness of an unreached people group, the elders of the local church realize that there are people in this world who have no access to the gospel and no gospel witness in the area. The elders of this local church begin to pray asking the Lord how they can participate in a more significant way as they seek to fulfill the Great Commission.

Purpose: To provide guidance on the local church's role of identifying and setting apart qualified men and women for vocational missionary service.

The local church recognizes the importance of being a sender based on Romans 10:14-16.

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"

The apostle Paul provides a compelling argument for the importance of having preachers who actually preach God's Word in order for people to respond in worship to this merciful God. To not preach the gospel only assures that the unbelieving community will remain dead in their trespasses in sin. That is why spiritually related activities that do not have a gospel message component are not missions. Sadly, much of today's activities labeled as missions do not incorporate the proclamation or the preaching of the gospel. They are activities that ultimately cannot save a person's soul. Ministry without the message of the gospel preached becomes an activity of deception since it can easily bring a false assurance that all is well when in reality the recipient's soul is lost, without hope and faces imminent judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

Based on the previous chapter of this thesis, the local church elders are under the conviction that they must be more proactive in participating in the fulfilling of the Great Commission as stated by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19. This command by Christ requires a supernatural effort to fulfill since 1) it is a command that defies human logic; 2) it involves total trust upon God's

promises to be fulfilled; 3) it relies on the Holy Spirit for enablement to complete the task; 4) it requires faith to move forward despite limited resources and personnel. Despite these insurmountable odds, history records testimony of God's Word being translated and preached, God's church being built, and God's glory shining through the ages.

The local church recognizes the need to train in order to send qualified and proven men.

As the New Testament churches were being formed, godly leadership was established (see Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5). Elders were appointed in order to shepherd the flock and exercise oversight (1 Peter 5:2). The apostle Paul noted to the church in Ephesus that God's methodology involved using gifted men for the purpose of equipping fellow saints for the work of ministry. These men were called to build up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12). Paul noted earlier that God provided these gifts and gifted men within the context of the local church (Ephesians 2:10).

One of the most important factors to consider when identifying a future missionary is their ability to impart biblical truth. The ability to replicate the training that they have received is also vital. Can the prospective missionary make disciples? Does the missionary candidate have a heart of a shepherd? In other words, is there evidence of a love for God and a love for people. How is the missionary candidate trained and how do they show the ability to train others? The apostle Paul, in his final letter to his beloved disciple Timothy, recognized that intentional training is a necessary component when it comes to making disciples. *"And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also"* (2 Timothy 2:2).

Based on the local church's responsibility to make disciples, there is the recognition that the missionary candidate must demonstrate that they are able to make more disciples. Does the potential missionary who follows Christ have the ability to lead others to follow him as he follows Christ? The apostle Paul states it this way in 2 Timothy 1:13, *"Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."*

The missionary candidate must meet elder qualification and be ordained.

Meeting the elder qualifications as succinctly stated by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 is a non-negotiable qualification for a missionary candidate. The reason for this high standard is related to the high call of vocational ministry. As stated previously, a missionary is a man set-apart to proclaim a message of reconciliation between a holy God and sinful men. The missionary

must demonstrate a level of personal discipline and self-control so that the watching world recognizes a man above reproach, without hypocrisy between his message and his conduct personally and publicly. Paul's own testimony to the church in Corinth explains it well – *"I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:27)."*

The apostle Paul commands Titus to complete the mission of the church by appointing elders in every town in Crete (Titus 1:5). He then outlines the qualifications of the office of an elder as well as their primary duties (Titus 1:6-9). In other words, a missionary candidate is recognized for his proven character as well as his skill and proficiency in teaching sound doctrine. He also has the courage to gently correct someone who is not rightly aligned with truth (see also Galatians 6:1). In summary, a missionary must have a level of conviction, character and competence to be entrusted in a leadership role within the church and beyond.

For the church and the missionary candidate, an ordination exam is a means to test their biblical knowledge of God's Word before the congregation. Paul exhorting his pastoral mentee Timothy, tells him in 2 Timothy 2:15, *"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."* This public testing provides an objective measurement to determine his biblical knowledge and ability to defend the faith through the Scriptures. This would also align with Titus 1:9, *"He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."*

Identifying and empowering the missionary candidate to utilize their God-given gifts.

For the local church, the elders have an encouraging opportunity to identify qualified men and women and discover their unique giftedness which suits them to participate in the building of God's kingdom. According to Romans 12:3ff, the diversity of gifts and talents is a means by which we recognize God's provision and mercy since He is the Creator of these gifts. Because of the richness of God's provision, it is the responsibility of the church elders to understand how to employ these gifts for the building of His church and the expansion of His kingdom.

The New Testament gives many examples illustrating how these gifts were utilized to meet the need that existed beyond the reach of the local church. The apostle Paul's writings in Romans 15:22ff, 2 Corinthians 8-9, 2 Corinthians 10:14-18 and Philippians 4:14-18, all speak of how

ministry partnership by way of church support has served as a vital means of personal encouragement, gospel partnership and the meeting of spiritual-physical needs beyond themselves.

Examining and inquiring about the missionary candidate's heart as a shepherd and evangelist.

One of the great joys for the local church body is identifying a prospective missionary candidate. The apostle Paul reminds us that ultimately it is God who has prepared this person since he/she is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand (Ephesians 2:10). For the elders of the local church, there is the recognition that the process of equipping and sending is the continual sacrifice of praise to God (Hebrews 12:15-16). It is also an entrustment from the Lord to whom the church leaders will be held accountable (Hebrews 12:17). With this in view, the elders of the local assembly must affirm that this person has demonstrated a track record of faithful service to the Lord through the local church (2 Timothy 2:2). The act of identification along with the responsibility of equipping, sending and supporting an identified candidate serve as part of the chain of making disciples to be sent as witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

In most employment arenas, the selection process of a qualified candidate for a particular job assignment runs through standard criteria including physical, academic, skill-based and experience-based qualifications. For the missionary candidate, these variables certainly are important features to consider as well. However, the missionary candidate faces even more important criteria. The apostle Paul notes that the missionary calling includes evidence of God's intervention upon one's life through the Lord Jesus Christ. In his letter to the church in Corinth, the apostle Paul states the following, ²⁶ *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.* ²⁷ *But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;* ²⁸ *God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,* ²⁹ *so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.* ³⁰ *And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,* ³¹ *so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much*

trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:25 – 2:5)

Some of the practical evidence of God’s intervention of His Spirit and power should be demonstrated in the candidate’s current sphere of influence. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 says that these gifts are given to every believer and is demonstrated for the common good. Ideally, the local leadership has already seen or heard of the missionary candidate’s faithfulness to their given task including service at home, on the job and in the local church. These qualities include faithfulness of their given responsibilities. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 summarizes this point well, *“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”*

Another quality is demonstrated in the home life. Does the candidate demonstrate a Spirit-controlled life in the home where a pattern of consistency is modeled? The apostle Paul provide clarity on this matter as it pertains to a church leader and this qualification would aptly apply to prospective missionary. In 1 Timothy 3:4-5, he states, *“He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?”*

The candidate’s sphere of influence not only includes the domestic home front but also their workplace and interaction with unbelievers in the community. Finding out whether the prospective candidate demonstrates a heart of evangelism is particularly telling since there is often an assumption that a missionary candidate desires to make Christ known to those around them in the community. It is incumbent on the local church leadership to find out how evangelism is manifested in the life of a prospective missionary. Consider also the fruit of this person’s labor. Colossians 4:5 gives a template to ask this question in order to find out how intentional a candidate is in making Christ known to those in his/her social sphere – *“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.”*

The local church elders and congregation are able to affirm a candidate’s proven character.

I believe that the process of becoming a “sent one” minister of the gospel is the culmination of theological training and discipleship over a period of time. In an age of instant production, training

for missionary service may appear to be a long process of preparation. Men and women who enter schooling for the medical-psychological profession also face the additional amount of educational and experiential skill-based training that is required in order to receive some type of certification to practice their profession. The lengthy process is established out of concern for the care for the physical, mental well-being of a person. The missionary candidate has the responsibility for the well-being of an eternal soul in whom he must give an account to God alone (James 3:1). He/she will often be confronted with a variety of physical, mental, emotional issues that require wisdom and discernment. A church-based candidacy process provides an opportunity to observe the candidate's stewardship of time and resources in preparation for the mission field.

The local church elders are able to recognize the spiritual giftings based on observation of the candidate's usage of their spiritual gifts.

Over the years, I have observed a cluster of characteristics that are essential in the life of a prospective candidate. Identifying these qualities help clarify arenas of spiritual giftedness, achievement and/or need of personal growth. I use an acronym to assist in the evaluation of a prospective missionary candidate. It is called **F.A.I.T.H.** – **F**aithful, **A**vailable, **I**nitiator, **T**eachable, **H**umble. Let me explain how this acronym helps in identifying and assessing a person's character in relation to missionary preparation.

Faithful – Faithfulness is an important hallmark of a person set-apart for vocational ministry. The missionary candidate should be characterized as being faithful to his responsibilities and current calling (employment, home life, & ministry) at this time. The elders must be convinced that he/she has a consistent track record of being faithful to their ministry commitments. I think of 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 – *“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”*

Available – Does this person demonstrate a willingness to be made available to serve others and consider others more important than themselves. Are there examples whereby the person has demonstrated a love for people? Are they characterized by showing up to serve in all types of scenarios? Does their availability reflect a heart of service or seeking to be seen or noticed? A good passage that exemplifies this heart is Philippians 2:3-5 – *“³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not*

only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.*”

Initiator – Another important feature of any prospective missionary is finding out whether this person takes initiative to develop relationships with other members of the body of Christ, unbelievers, co-workers, family members and to friends. Because a missionary, given their job description, must be a learner while forming relationships and seeking to understand a culture. Taking initiative is crucial. Jesus says in Mark 10:45 – *“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Teachable – The discovery of the missionary candidate’s teachability is directly tied to the next word, humility. Teachability is also associated to being a learner. Fundamentally, every disciple of Christ is supposed be a learner. *In Luke 6:40, Jesus describes a learner this way, “A disciple (learner) is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”* An enduring quality of a good missionary is being an astute student who continues to be a student of the Scriptures, of men, and the surrounding culture of the very people whom one seeks to serve. Similar to Luke 2:52 – *“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”*

Humble – A critically important characteristic of any missionary candidate is humility. The local church leadership is able to discern this when the candidate is tested as a result of person’s sin, being sinned against, being admonished, rebuked or corrected. Can the candidate can readily identify their battle with pride and how they have clothed themselves with humility similar to Peter’s words in 1 Peter 5:5 – *“Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

Examining a prospective candidate through the eyes of F.A.I.T.H. gives the elders a good overview. But often these views are built on assumptions that require probing. Listed below are several major arenas that can be evaluated as the church leadership determines fitness for vocational cross-cultural ministry. Below are a list of topics and questions in assessing a future missionary candidate. The purpose of inquiry is not for the purpose of pass/fail but instead serve

to come alongside the brother/sister in identifying their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) as a missionary candidate.

Spiritual formation assessment

- Please share your spiritual background and personal testimony of faith in Christ alone.
- What Scriptural passages were formational for you?
- Do you enjoy studying the Scriptures? How do you study the Scriptures?
- How do you memorize and meditate upon God's Word?
- Are you able to articulate and defend the Gospel through the Scriptures?
- Do you agree with the doctrines of your local church?
- Are you able to teach and/or defend the doctrines of the local church?
- How do you maintain your spiritual disciplines – prayer, reading & meditation?
 - Describe your personal habits over the last twelve months.
- Do you have any spiritual mentors? Who are they? How do they speak into your life?
- Who has been the most influential person in your life? Why?
- What events helped form your desire to be a missionary?
- How are you actively putting off the desires of the flesh?
- Name specific people who hold you spiritually accountable? Are they willing to confront you?
- Have you ever experienced a time of testing because of your allegiance to Christ? Describe.
- What is your biblical understanding of suffering and the sovereignty of God?

Spiritual gifts and local church ministry experiences

- Why do you believe that you are called to vocational cross-cultural ministry? What events led to this consideration?
- What passages from Scripture have been impressed upon you regarding this call?
- What do you believe are your spiritual gifts and how have you used these gifts?
- Does the leadership of your local church affirm your gifts and ministry calling?
- Does your local church seek to support and send you forth for vocational ministry?
- Can others outside of the local church affirm your calling? Please name them and their role in your life.
- Describe your ministry experiences during the past few years.
 - What ministries are you currently involved?

- Share your experiences regarding teaching opportunities to adults and children.
- Have you disciplined anyone?
 - Share your experience and ability to disciple other men/women.
 - Share your disappointments in discipleship ministry.
- Share your experiences working under authority in ministry and/or workplace.
 - Do you enjoy working under authority?
 - Can you cite an example of being tested under authority?
- Do you enjoy working individually or working alongside a ministry team?
 - What do you see as your role in working with a ministry team?
 - Are you characterized as an active or passive participant on a ministry team?
- Do you have a heart for evangelism?
 - How has this been manifested?
 - Describe your personal opportunities over the last twelve months.
 - Have you led anyone to Christ? Please explain.
- Can you share examples of measurable success in the above ministry experiences?
- Share your greatest ministry regrets and/or failures? What did you learn about yourself through this experience?
- Is sacrifice and suffering a component of missions? Why or why not? Explain.
- What sacrifice(s) are you making and are willing to make in your pursuit of fulfilling the call of God upon your life?

Proven character assessment

- What does above reproach mean to you and how does this reflect one's life?
- Do you have a good testimony among those who are outside the church? Explain.
- How is your conduct and work performance at your workplace? Explain.
- Describe your personal habits over the last twelve months in the following areas.
 - Family nurture and spiritual formation.
 - Entertainment, media and social time.
 - Alcohol, tobacco and/or other consumable products.
- Are you accountable to anyone outside of God?
- Are you prone to depression or discouragement? How do you address this matter?
- Do you have certain racial prejudices? How do you address this matter?
- What do you enjoy (ie. – hobbies or interests) outside of ministry?

- Have you proven yourself in demonstrating F.A.I.T.H. (faithful, available, initiator, teachable and humble) in ministry? Cite examples.
- Please share how you handled disappointments and disappointing people.
- How well do you handle reproof or correction? Cite examples.
- How well do you handle criticism – fair or unfair? Cite examples.
- How well do you handle interpersonal conflict? Cite examples.
- Do you demonstrate perseverance in ministry? Cite examples.
- Do you demonstrate love for people? How is that manifested?
- Are you a spiritual leader? Cite examples.

Physical assessment

- How would you describe your overall physical condition?
- Are there prior or current physical limitations?
- Are you taking ongoing medications that affect your ability to minister? Mindful of current HIPPA laws so this may require wisdom and mutual agreement of inquiry.
- Please list any previous medical interventions that temporarily hindered your ability to minister.

Mental and emotional-health assessment

- Have you ever received professional counsel regarding your mental/emotional condition? Explain.
- Have you taken any type of personality and/or emotional-health assessment test? What were the findings or results?

Family and relational assessment

- What does your spouse think of your calling? If applicable, what does your child(ren) think of your aspiration towards this ministry calling?
- What do your parents think of your ministry calling?
- Are there certain circumstances or obligations that you have that may affect your decision regarding your call to ministry?
- From those who know you best, including family, what are they saying about your ministry call?
- Describe how you have specifically handled personal, relational conflict with family members.

- Have you ever had a violent confrontation that resulted in physical altercation? Explain.

Social, communication and cultural discovery assessment

- Do you enjoy people of other cultures? Cite examples.
- Are you an effective communicator within your own culture? How about other cultures? In what type of setting are you most effective? Cite examples.
- Do you have any cross-cultural experience and/or experienced language-learning? Explain.
- How much cross-cultural experience do you have in the L.A. area?
- Have you researched and participated in a cross-cultural or indigenous fellowship? Explain.
- Explain the history and culture of the target country and people group you seek to serve?
- Do you know and/or have you begun learning the language of the target people group?

Academic and professional assessment

- Explain your academic background.
- Explain your Bible training background (formal and/or informal).
- What have been your academic/professional aspirations and completions?
- What professional training/skills do you possess?
- What type of training/skills have you received?
- What type of books do you read?
- What periodicals, websites and/or blogs do you subscribe/read regularly?
- What authors do you enjoy reading?
- What are some of the book titles that have influenced you in the last years?
- Name some authors who have been influential in your life through their books? Why were they influential?
- Have you read missionary biographies for insight and inspiration? Cite examples.
- Have you read history of mission or biblical theology of mission books? Cite examples.
- Have you read "Perspectives on the World Christian Movement"? Provide feedback.
- Have you read cross-cultural ministry books? Cite examples.
- Have you read books pertaining to the people group or country you hope to serve?
- Does your professional experience/skills point to a right fit for ministry?

Work habit assessment

- Are you characterized as a dependable, hard worker by your employer? Explain.
- Are you characterized as one who completes tasks on-time?
- List your professional achievements and/or awards from high school onwards.
- Cite work promotions and managerial experience including the number of employees you supervised? How would your co-workers describe your work ethic and leadership?

Stewardship assessment

- Are you debt free? Have you ever been in debt and how did you succeed to address the matter?
- Are there financial obligations that potentially affect your ministry aspiration?
- Are you willing to sell your possessions in order to proceed to the call of vocational ministry?
- Are you able to live sacrificially regarding lifestyle?
- How have you learned to be content with little or much (Philippians 4:12 & 1 Timothy 6:8)?
- Without providing a financial disclosure statement, what is the current state of your personal/family finances especially in relationship to assets and liabilities?

Ministry leaders are readers.

I first heard this quote from Pastor Chris Mueller of Faith Bible Church, "A leader is a reader." I would agree with this statement and desire to provide practical clarity for the missionary candidate. A leader is a reader of good books that have deepened their understanding of the work of missions. In doing so, the candidate gains wisdom and insight from men and women who preceded them in the missionary endeavor. Proverbs 19:20 says, "*Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.*" This exercise also fortifies one's faith in reading about God's Providential hand in providing His grace that is sufficient for all trials and temptations. A reader is reminded that the cost of proclaiming Christ has a high cost and requires tremendous sacrifice for the missionary, his family, his supporting church and for the recipient of the gospel.

Recommended Books to Read in Preparation for Cross-Cultural Missionary Service

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<p><u>Missions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Operation World”• “Let the Nations Be Glad”• “Serving as Senders” <p><u>Anthropological & Cultural</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Communicating Cross-Culturally”• “Case Studies in Missions” <p><u>Biographical & Historical</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Mountain Rain”• “From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya”• “Shadow of the Almighty” or “Through Gates of Splendor”• “The Life & Letters of Henry Martyn”• “To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson”• “Filling Up the Afflictions of Christ”• “Diary of David Brainerd” <p><u>Devotional / Practical</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Desiring God”• “No Graven Image” or “These Strange Ashes”• “Good Soil” or “Two Ways to Live” <p><u>Theological</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Biblical Theology of Missions”	<p><u>Missions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Missionary Methods – St. Paul or Ours”• “Missions and Money”• “Perspectives of the World Christian Movement”• “When Charity Destroys Dignity”• “A People for His Name” <p><u>Anthropological & Cultural</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Ministering Cross-Culturally”• “Agents of Transformation” <p><u>Biographical & Historical</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “A History of Christian Missions”• “Spiritual Secrets - Hudson Taylor”• “A Chance to Die”• “William Carey”• “Missionary Patriarch” <p><u>Devotional / Practical</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Spiritual Leadership”• “Future Grace” <p><u>Theological</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “What is the Mission of the Church?” <p><u>Church Planting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Planting New Churches in a Post Modern Age”	<p><u>Missions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Understanding Church Growth” or “Bridges of God”• “The Reentry Team”• “The Art of Coming Home”• Focusing on history of missions for the particular region/country/peoples <p><u>Anthropological & Cultural</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Anthropological Insights for Missionaries” <p><u>Biographical & Historical (destination)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Freedom at Midnight”• “India: The Grand Experiment”• “Missionary Conspiracy: Letters to a Post-Modern Hindu”• “City of Joy” <p><u>Devotional / Practical</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Dangerous Calling”• “Brothers We Are Not Professionals” <p><u>Theological</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Biblical Doctrine” <p><u>Church Planting & Discipleship</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “The Vine Project”• “Planting Churches Cross-Culturally”

Please note that the above recommended readings are valuable tools in preparation for cross-cultural ministry. But this list is by no means comprehensive, and not everything recommended is theologically endorsed. But these readings will promote thought, prayer and insights into God’s work of grace in cross-cultural ministry. A missionary must be a student of not only the Scriptures but of people, cultures and language.

The local church recognizes various gifts and ministry needs on the mission field.

The work of missions has diversified in many directions. Due to the advancement of technologies in transportation and communication, the ministry needs have broadened to provide more ready assistance in meeting physical and medical needs on the ministry field. Assisting the church planting effort in remote areas of the world opens us a host of other service opportunities. One of the challenges for the local church is to determine which particular ministry needs rise to the level of support considerations. Leadership must also consider a candidate’s particular area of skill (ie. – medical or aviation) and expressed desires to serve cross-culturally as a missionary to support this cause.

The local church decides on ministry priorities of support in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Due to the wide range of ministry needs on the mission field, the elders of the local church must decide on their ministry priorities. There are many enterprises under the cause of missions and each local church will need to decide what specific ministries they will support. Another consideration is the target people group of interest to the church. Finally, the church must decide how much to support the candidate and for how long. Developing a strategic ministry priority communicates to the congregation the local church's passion as it relates to international ministry and the strategic use of its resources. My personal opinion is that the total mission budget ought to reflect a balance of fifty percent evangelism and fifty percent edification. Here's a suggested percentage of financial support in each arena expressed in a tier system.

- **Tier 1** - 50% of the overall mission budget is supporting the ministry of Bible translation, church planting and/or evangelism. This means the overall financial priority reflects a high priority of supporting missionaries directly involved in the above ministry.
- **Tier 2** - 30% of the overall mission budget is supporting the training of indigenous leaders or church leadership training. This focus is geared towards the edification and equipping of the saints for future leadership development in the indigenous church.
- **Tier 3** - 20% of the overall mission budget is directed toward support type ministries including medical assistance, relief development and care, aviation support, educational needs for missionary kids and administrative support of a mission agency, etc.

I believe the local church leadership must develop some type of objective criteria as it relates to budgeting for missions in order to avoid losing focus on stated ministry priorities. An important question to ask is whether the support of the ministry assists in fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-38).

The local church is committed to church planting as the primary means of fulfilling the Great Commission.

In chapter one, I previously stated that the local church is the primary means by which God fulfills the Great Commission. Since the local church is the primary means, a church planting effort would further accelerate the making of disciples as we seek to fulfill Matthew 28:19-20. Therefore the church should enthusiastically dedicate their support to planting more churches around the world. However, the task of equipping and sending a church planter requires

intentional training by the local church since this particular task faces intense opposition from the enemy (1 Thessalonians 2:1-16, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10).

The local church seeks to identify a potential church planting missionary candidate.

The aspiring church planting missionary candidate exhibits certain characteristics that are in evidence. The apostle Paul notes that men who are called to vocational ministry to preach the gospel are not men who are valued from the world's standard (1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5). But there are certain characteristics of a qualified candidate that can be observed. A recent study on this topic points to some common traits, gifts, abilities, and desires of church planters.

(Taken from *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* by Ed Stetzer, pp. 79-80):

- **Visioning Capacity:** the ability to imagine the future, to persuade other persons to become involved in that dream, and to bring the vision into reality.
- **Intrinsic Motivation:** that he approaches ministry as a self-starter and commits to excellence through hard work and determination.
- **Creates Ownership of Ministry:** that he instills in others a sense of personal responsibility for the growth and success of the ministry and trains leaders to reproduce other leaders.
- **One who relates to the Unchurched:** that he develops rapport and breaks through barriers with unchurched people, encouraging them to examine and to commit themselves to a personal walk with God. As an additional outcome, new believers become able to lead others to salvation in Jesus Christ.
- **Spousal Cooperation:** this describes a marital partnership by which church planting couples agree on ministry priorities, each partner's role and involvement, and the integration and balance of ministry with family life.
- **Effectively Builds Relationships:** that he has the skill to take initiative in meeting people and deepening relationships as a basis for more effective ministry.
- **Starters Committed to Making Disciples within the local church:** that he values congregational development as a means for increasing the number and quality of disciples. Through this commitment they increase numerical growth in the context of spiritual and relational growth.
- **Responsiveness to the Community:** that he is able to adapt one's ministry to the culture and needs of the target area residents.
- **Utilizes Giftedness of Others:** that he equips and releases other people to minister on the basis of their spiritual giftedness.

- **Flexible and Adaptable:** that he can adjust to change and ambiguity, shift priorities when necessary, and handle multiple tasks at the same time. This leader can adapt to surprises and emergencies.

Local church-based missionary candidacy process.

The ability of the missionary candidate to be focused on their God-given task is a test of their sincerity and earnestness. I'm reminded of men and women who desire to enter the medical profession. There is much effort required in this pursuit including academic studies, tests and exams, hours of clinical training and board reviews before any certification is given to practice medicine. And this is for the caretaking of a mortal mind/body. How much more skill is required for the caretaking of men's souls!!

The process of being trained and equipped may appear arduous, but the stakes of making Christ known has far more eternal consequences if done rightly. Slothfulness and/or lack of focus speaks of a candidate's character and it is better for the local church leadership to identify and help the candidate grow in self-awareness prior to field service.

With all the regimen of training and preparation, the process of becoming a missionary can appear to be a daunting task. I'm reminded of this powerful quote by a former missionary (Helen Roseveare) who asked that we should not be asking the question of "is it worth it?" but change the question to "is He worthy?". Is Christ and His gospel worthy of giving one's life in order that others may know the love of Christ, be saved and give Christ more glory. Indeed, He is worthy!!

Below is a helpful guideline for a local church to oversee the development and process for the missionary candidate. This "check-list" is a practical measurement to walk alongside for the sake of accountability and progress report.

Stage One: Introduction	Stage Two: Call and Consideration	Stage Three: Confirmation, Pre-field Training and Commissioning	
Local church membership - testimony of salvation - baptism - confirmation of membership	Active participation in evangelism - training in personal evangelism - demonstrate ability to evangelize - lead and train others to evangelize	Continued development of leadership role in the local church - mentor development - finding personnel replacement - recognition of personal development	Particular Training for Women/Wives - medical care issues - childcare and children's education - housing and housekeeping - on-field expectations & responsibilities
Active participation @ local church - Sunday classes - prayer meetings - small group member - discipleship (learning/leading) - service activity and/or events	Active participation @ local church - growth in ministry responsibility - demonstrate teaching skills - demonstrate discipleship skills - demonstrate ability to lead others toward spiritual maturity, ministry effectiveness, & personal development	Pastoral staff assessment - affirmation of leadership role - recognition of spiritual gifts-strengths - recognition of personal development - theological-doctrinal matters - practical theology development	Church planting Internship option - ability to lead others - leading in evangelism - shepherd's heart (counsel & care of others)
Supporter of local church's missionaries - Faithful in intercession & service - Available (to serve missionaries) - Initiator (motivated to contact & serve) - Teachable (seeks to be a learner) - Humble (spirit of humility)	Discipleship & personal growth - recognition of personal development - receiving mentor and personal tutelage - spousal support and encouragement	Development of ministry plan - identification of target peoples - identification of target ministry - written 3-5 year plan - written long-term ministry goals - development of future team members - development of entry strategy	Final affirmation by church elders - philosophy of ministry plan - ministry objectives for first term
	Vision trip or short-term ministry - learning from & serving missionaries - develop relationship with missionaries - cross-cultural adaptation experience		Application and affirmation to an elder approved mission organization - development of prayer support team - development of financial support - development of network churches - development of communication - training requirements/expectations
	Educational-professional development - completed educational requirements for a particular field/ministry. - professional recognized skills in order to gain access to particular field.	Language & Cultural Development - LAMP method training - written long-term language goals - recognition of cultural values - biblical discernment of cultural values	
Begin reading & listening list - understanding role of local church - understanding theology of missions - understanding history of missions	Continue reading & listening list - understanding cross-culture missions - understanding church planting - understanding missionary issues	Advanced reading & listening list - understanding targeted people group - understanding cultural anthropology - study political, historical, economic and religious history of local culture.	Ordination exam - preparation - determine crediting organization - ordination exam and service
Initial interview with missions pastor - counsel and affirmation to proceed to Stage Two.	Interview with church elders - satisfactory personal assessment of individual and family responsibilities in various arenas including finances, emotional state, relationships, etc. - counsel and affirmation to proceed to Stage Three.	Coaching by missions pastor - accountability to the above endeavors - strategic planning & team partnership - leadership development - identifying viable mission agency	Commissioning from local church - send-off service - packing, travel arrangements, visa, etc. - move-out, move-in transitions - arrival and set-up arrangements - set-up communication lines

Study of the local church's role of affirming God's call.

A significant responsibility in the life of the local church is the identification of a qualified man/woman to be set apart and sent out as a missionary. The next chapter outlines this exciting time for the local church. The title, missionary, is a publicly recognized position stating that this person is spiritually qualified as observed by the leaders of the local church. The church-planting missionary Paul says similarly to this newly established church in Thessalonica, *"We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.* (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

Chapter 3 – The Local Church Serving as Senders.

Scenario: The local church has identified a prospective missionary candidate who aspires to make Christ known to an unreached people group. The question arises as to next steps of actually preparing the candidate and the local church to send out a person. Does the candidate go directly to the unreached place or are there other people or organizations to serve alongside in order to accomplish the task?

Purpose: To provide practical guidance on how the local church serves in a pivotal role when identifying, training and sending the missionary candidate.

Sending gifted men.

Luke's eyewitness account of the local church as a sending agency for missionaries serves as a breakthrough model of multiplication. Acts 13:1-3 cites, "*Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*"² *While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*³ *Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off."*

Luke first identifies specific leaders of the local church in Antioch. And it is important to note that these leaders had specific gifts enabling them to communicate Biblical truths. They're immediately identified as prophets and teachers. Prophets were men who spoke for God and had the ability to interpret God's will both prophetically and according to His revealed Word. Whereas teachers are distinguished differently since they are recognized instructors of the Law. Teachers were able to teach truth, the characteristics of God, and practical duties for men. Their reputation preceded them as those who had authority to not only teach God's Word but serve as masters of the subject matter pertaining to God.

The church in Antioch recognized these gifted men, as ones set apart for the purpose of being sent. This precedence of identification and setting aside recognized leaders also communicates that sending out someone from a local church is sacrificial. Men who are gifted and proven are not readily available in every church. The decision to send out a gifted man of God from amongst

the body is a sacrificial loss to the local congregation. When churches are intentional in sending their gifted and proven men, they are seeking to emulate God's heart (Philippians 2:1-5). God sent His Son. This act of offering of one's own flesh and blood, of unselfishly providing resources and talents, helps in setting a culture that values sacrificial giving versus the worldly culture of getting and keeping.

Sending faithful men.

The early church fathers saw the importance of right teaching and practice being faithfully communicated and effectively to other regions of the known world. This is in alignment with Matthew 28:20, of making disciples of all the nations "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." The gospel message and its practical application affected new converts from both the Jewish and Gentile backgrounds (see Acts 15:1-21). The leadership council from the church in Jerusalem recognized that teaching was critical and so they carefully selected men with good reputations to accompany Barnabas and Paul for the purpose of training the church in Antioch. Acts 15:25-27 testifies, *"it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth."*

The selection of Judas and Silas proved to be very helpful to the believers in Antioch. Luke's account summarizes this in one sentence, *"and Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words."* Their mission to assist Paul and Barnabas proved to be successful and complete. The next sentence explains that Judas and Silas were recognized and sent back to Jerusalem (Acts 15:33-34). Mission accomplished!!

Sending men equipped to preach the Word.

A helpful guideline for any local church in considering whom to send out as a missionary is to identify certain leaders who are already recognized as gifted communicators of God's Word. While this account is descriptive of how the church in Antioch started their first endeavor to send missionaries, it is also prescriptive of identifying certain spiritual disciplines to be performed by the church's leadership.

The early church recognized that the ability to preach the Word of God is a God-given entrustment. The early church father, James, warns that this entrustment should not be taken

lightly since the teacher will be held in stricter judgment (James 3:1). The apostle Paul also recognized an important feature for any mission assignment is to send a gifted man trained to preach the gospel. Paul testifies that in 2 Corinthians 8:18-19, *“With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will.* In other words, the missionary being sent out is already recognized for preaching the gospel. This characteristic is vital because the only message and gift to a people without hope is bringing forth the eternal Word in this everchanging world.

Sending from the local church body.

One of the most beautiful events in the life of the local church, outside of corporate worship and communion, is the rare privilege of sending out a godly qualified man to proclaim the gospel to a place where Christ is not known (Romans 15:20). What makes this a special event in the life of the local church is its rare occurrence. The activity of sending represents the pinnacle of fulfilling the Great Commission by the raising, supporting and commissioning of a beloved qualified servant from amongst the people of the local church. The activity represents a living sacrifice of praise (Hebrew 13:15) as a corporate offering to God. The offering itself being the choicest of servants from among the peoples.

However, this proactive step of faith defies the world's imagination of success. For many unbelievers, sending such individuals (often young families and/or individuals) to foreign and unreached appears almost tragic. Often the question is raised, “why?” For unbelieving relatives of the missionary, this activity of volunteering and being willing is an astounding and unthinkable endeavor. Historically this act has brought forth scorn and mocking from the unbelieving world. But to those who are being saved, it is witnessing the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).

When the local church participates in the sending and/or supporting of the missionary, the positive effect can be very inspirational when both parties remain loyal to the Word of God. Here are some of the major benefits that I have observed over the years:

- There is congregational encouragement because of the mutual participation of sending and supporting. The missionary is blessed because he is being supported and the congregation is encouraged by the collective effort to fulfill the Great Commission.

- There is generational encouragement because it encourages the much younger generation to actively participate as they consider their own future vocation. This activity encourages the older generation to see the fruit of their labor in investing into the younger generation.
- Encourages the wholesale participation in fulfilling the Great Commission. Church members are more willing to make sacrifices in order to support such endeavors.
- The activity of sending from amongst us is a collective endeavor and not an individualistic pursuit.
- There is a sense of fulfilling an eternal purpose when seeking to plant a church.
- There is a corporate bond when sacrificing time and resources to financially support, intercede in prayer, and relinquish of friendships and kin in order to see a God glorified beyond our borders.
- There is a collective communication effort as ministry updates are both sent and received.
- A greater global awareness is cultivated as news pertaining to the missionary's area of ministry is monitored.

The role of para-church ministries.

Para-church ministries known now as mission agencies have played a prominent role in the support of the missionary. I'm only providing a brief overview of their important role in support of missions. Most local churches do not have the manpower and experience to address the many complexities of supporting a missionary. Over the past seventy years, the mission agency has served as the consultant, counselor and caretaker for the missionary. One the primary reasons is the local church's inability to administrate various support needs for the missionary. Many mission agencies are comprised of former missionaries who understand and are able to assist with many professional responsibilities such as handling taxes, foreign financial transactions, cross-cultural care, medical crisis intervention, children's education, etc. The mission agency, over time, has usurped the role of the local church since many organizations serve as recruiters, trainers, counselors and senders in place of the local church. This shift of responsibility from the local church to the mission agency has also contributed to the shift from church planting as a priority to church aid or community relief efforts.

Mission agencies and ministry emphasis.

The proliferation of mission agencies has resulted in a vast array of ministry endeavors labeled missions. Many organizations, despite their well-meaning intentions, undermine the value and

importance of church planting and discipleship. Discipleship apart from the local church's involvement is not consistent with the Scripture's model for making disciples. While the local church is supposed to engage themselves in the role of sending laborers to the harvest, they often forfeit this role to a mission agency. Mission agencies then assume the primary role in identifying, training and placing candidates in a field of service. The candidate then goes to various churches to solicit financial support. The missionary candidate oftentimes has not been affirmed yet by their local church leadership, yet the mission agency has already given their approval. The result often leads to the local church's absolving their responsibility to shepherd the missionary candidate. This leads to further problems as I will explain later.

Another prevalent issue within mission organizations is the emphasis placed on meeting physical needs. The shift of emphasis from church planting to community relief efforts has reallocated resources and personnel away from the more primary tasks of church planting and discipleship making. The demand to meeting physical needs including food relief, water acquisition, medical aid and development (ie.- hospitals, medical-dental aid, etc.), orphanage support, missionary aviation, missionary children education, sex trafficking and other such endeavors are endless. While these earnest efforts are commendable in many ways, if these efforts are not in cooperation with the national church's ministry priority of making disciples, these activities will not last beyond the current generation. The local church elders will need to identify their ministry priorities.

One of major concerns about the shift of mission priorities today is the resulting weakening of gospel-centered preaching according to the Word of God. There is a growing missions drift as priorities shift away from making disciples and church planting. Temporal relief is provided while the recipient is still dead in their trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1). I believe that both the local church and mission agency are potentially complicit in this shift and creating a greater disservice to a given community as ministry efforts become solely focused on meeting physical needs. The leadership of the church must recognize this great calamity and refuse to promote a false hope when the real dilemma for all mankind is resolving their enmity with God (James 4:4; Romans 5:1).

The local church and mission agency partnership.

Finding a like-minded mission agency that shares the same ministry priorities will further aid the sending church's goals. Failure in this arena results in frustration for the missionary and the supporting church in the long-term. This means the sending church and the missionary candidate

must research and identify which organization will serve them both well. A successful partnership can result in mutual encouragement. The missionary especially benefits since they will be the ones primarily interfacing with the mission agency.

Collaborative sending efforts.

Most churches are not in a position to send and support a missionary full-time since they do not have the expertise or manpower to address the many complex issues pertaining to the ongoing care of the missionary. With this in view, it is imperative to find a mission agency that recognizes the sending church's role as shepherds to the missionary and assists with keeping the missionary on task and focused upon the agreed upon objectives. The mission agency's role is to serve the local church and the missionary with the provision of administrative support. The elder board of the sending church needs to take a pro-active leadership role in shepherding the missionary throughout their journey. When this does not occur, due to negligence, the missionary candidate will be discouraged and will seek consultation from the mission agency or other supporting churches. As long as each entity (missionary, sending church, supporting church and mission agency) understand their given role, the result can be a healthy relationship. Below is a suggested way to develop a partnership agreement with the mission agency.

Ministry partnership model.

The local church leadership develops a partnership agreement process (5-steps) in order to determine compatibility with the mission agency and other churches who are partnering with the missionary.

Step 1 - Define and Determine Strategic Ministry Goals.

- Identify the purpose and need for this partnership agreement.
- Explain what, where and why this needs to take place. What are the benefits?

Step 2 - Identify and Contact Prospective Churches-Organizations.

- State intentions and long-range purpose goals with prospective contacts.
- Discover compatibility of partnership. Determine what are the negotiable and non-negotiable issues in order to identify ministry partnership.
 - Doctrinal alignment.
 - Philosophy of ministry alignment.
- Develop SWOT analysis (see below) with prospective contacts.

Step 3 - Discuss, Explore and Pray About Future Ministry Partnership

- Examine long-term strategic goals and resource allocation.
- Identify individuals/teams for ministry partnership.
- Define what is ministry partnership and pastoral care/counsel.
- Explore and plan future events together.

Step 4 - Develop Ministry Launch Sequence.

- Plan and prepare the process for ministry partnerships.
- Allocate resources in order to implement plans.
- Develop training, preparation, departure and exit strategies.
- Define and develop lines of authority and communication channels.

Step 5 - Communication process.

- Begin communication with respective congregations.
- Raise financial & prayer support structure.
- Develop the means of providing updates on the progress of the partnership agreement.

Below is an example of a SWOT analysis whereby the local church leadership determines the compatibility of the prospective ministry partners, churches and mission agency.

S.W.O.T.			
Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identification of like-minded ministry partners. ➤ Recognizing whom to direct or to allocate resources based on gifts & talents. ➤ Shared ministry means less burden on one congregation. ➤ Mutual encouragement of accomplishing a major ministry goal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Allocation of energy, time & resources from the church. ➤ Managing, measure and restrain usage of resources to other partners. ➤ Keeping up data on partner organizations. ➤ How to practice the “keep it simple” principle. ➤ Danger of lack of clarity, purpose and structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Positive influence into community. ➤ Cross pollination of ideas. ➤ Strengthen respective fellowships through shared ministry goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Disagreement with other ministry partners. ➤ Ability to receive criticism. ➤ Priority levels can easily be compromised. ➤ Being clear for reasons of differences. ➤ External threats constantly pressing re: mission of the church.

Aligning ministry convictions.

The development of these convictions by the elder board will serve to provide clarity in the midst of many ministry challenges and priorities for the church. Below are ten non-negotiable philosophy of ministry convictions developed to assist the sending church.

1. Missions is an impossibility apart from the power of God. All men of every culture are born radically depraved, at enmity with God, and restraining the truth (Romans 1:18-21; 3:23; Ephesians 2:1-3). The conversion of a man and the advancement of missions are both an absolute impossibility apart from the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration (Titus 3:3-7). Modern church growth strategies and many new mission methodologies often overlook this essential truth.

- 2. The true Gospel must be proclaimed.** The Gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16) and the preaching of the Gospel is the great “means” and “methodology” of missions. The Gospel is, first and foremost, God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). It answers the eternal question of how a just God can rightly justify wicked men (Romans 3:26). It points to Christ alone, who bore the sins of His people upon the cross, was forsaken of God, and crushed under the full force of His just wrath against sin (1 Timothy 2:5). The good news of the Gospel states that through Christ’s death, the justice of God was satisfied (Romans 4:25), and salvation was won for a great multitude of people (Romans 5:9). This is evidenced by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).
- 3. The Gospel transcends culture.** The greatest need of all men of every culture is the clear proclamation of the Gospel (Romans 1:16). Men are saved through the Gospel and continue in sanctification through continued growth in the full counsel of God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Although differences in culture are to be considered, it is more important for the missionary to be biblically sensitive than culturally sensitive. A missionary was once asked how he preached the Gospel to a certain remote tribe. He declared, “I do not preach the Gospel to a remote tribe. I preach the Gospel to men!”
- 4. Incarnational missions is essential.** Although there may be some effective non-personal means of communicating the Gospel, there is no substitute for one man living among a people, teaching the Gospel to them, and living out his faith before them. God sent his own Son, and He became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1,14; 3:16; Philippians 2:5-7).
- 5. Superficial evangelism is one of the great obstacles to missions.** Non-theological preaching, entertaining skits, and Gospel films are no substitute for the biblical exposition of the Gospel. Inviting men to raise their hands and pray a prayer is no substitute for the biblical call to repentance (Romans 2:4), faith (Hebrews 11:6), and discipleship (Matthew 28:19). Biblical assurance of salvation does not flow from a past decision or a prayer, but from the examination of one’s enduring lifestyle in the light of Scripture (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5).
- 6. Discipleship for the purpose of church planting is the primary work of missions.** There are many gifts and callings in the body of Christ, but all of them are to work together on the mission field with the primary goal of planting a biblical church (1 Corinthians 12). It is one thing to do mass evangelism and to boast of the numbers of decisions. It is quite another to establish a biblical church (Matthew 28:19-20) through the training of faithful men (2 Timothy 2:2).

- 7. God has provided specific roles and limitations in ministry for each gender.** The local church holds to a complementarian view versus the egalitarian view of gender roles especially as it pertains to leadership in the marriage, family and in church leadership. Based on 1 Timothy 2:10-15, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, Titus 2:1-8, and 1 Peter 3:1-7, there are specific responsibilities given for each gender.
- 8. Adherence to the sending church's doctrinal statement is non-negotiable but church polity and practice is negotiable.** It is vital to discern the differences between personal preferences and how faith and practice are manifested in the host culture. Understanding cultural context may assist the missionary in avoiding unnecessary conflicts between nationals and expats regarding various practices of the Christian faith. Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 serves as guiding principles for living the Christian life in another culture.
- 9. Missions and money can be a major source of stumbling block for believers.** It is imperative to understand that godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Timothy 6:6-8) and learning to practice contentment is critical (Philippians 4:11-13). The great temptation based on 1 Timothy 6:9-19 is to fall into the pursuit of riches. Missionaries are often entrusted with financial resources when meeting specific needs. It is essential they steward these resources with wisdom and discernment. National believers may be tempted to greed and envy as they observe the material possessions, often creature comforts that are owned by the missionary. It is wise to be sensitive to the host culture in this regard. Consider 2 Corinthians 8:9. Counsel from godly national leaders and other veteran missionaries may prove to be very helpful in avoiding this common problem.
- 10. True missions is sacrificial and costly.** Amy Carmichael explained that missions is no more and no less than an opportunity to die (Galatians 2:20). We live in a fallen world that is at enmity with God and opposes His truth. Therefore, missions and suffering go hand in hand (2 Timothy 2:3). Any advancement of the kingdom of Christ into the dominion of the devil will be met with warfare (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-20). Sadly, there are many countries and people groups where martyrdom cannot be avoided.

In summary.

The local church leadership in partnership with the mission agency can provide valuable training and tools in the sending process. The strong infrastructure of training and the level of care will be necessary as the next chapter addresses the local church's role of ongoing support for the missionary.

Chapter #4 – The Local Church and Missionary Support.

Scenario: Missionaries face a number of challenges since they are physically away from their known support structures such as family, friends, shared fellowship, familiar language, favorite foods and cultural norms. The additional pressures of learning a new language, new culture and new community can be daunting. More importantly, there is spiritual opposition because Satan does not want God's people to grow and more people turn to Christ.

Purpose: To provide practical guidance as to how the local church serves as a primary supporter and encourager of the missionary through prayer, finances, communication, practical advocacy, short-term ministries, visitation and refreshment.

Local church support.

The New Testament provides a wonderful narrative of the relationship between a local church and the missionary ("sent one"). In Acts 13:1-3, the missionaries Barnabas and Saul were sent off by the local church. Later, these missionaries returned to their sending church in Antioch (Acts 14:26-28) and reported their discoveries of God opened the door amongst the Gentiles (unreached peoples). Luke's description in verse 27 is very telling, "*And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*" The missionary's account was not just a few minutes over one Sunday morning gathering. Verse 28 states, "*And they remained no little time with the disciples.*" Many commentators note that Barnabas and Saul most likely remained at least a year to provide a detailed account of God's miraculous work.

This unprecedented ministry caused much inquiry to the point that the church in Jerusalem wanted to hear directly from the missionaries. We know that Paul, Barnabas and Titus (Galatian 2:1) were appointed by the local church in Antioch to go to Jerusalem to give testimony according to Acts 15:2. Along the way, verse three recollects that these "sent ones" stopped in Phoenicia and Samaria "*describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.*" This accounting of their ministry endeavors demonstrates that the missionary's ministry efforts are not the outworking of an independent activity but of a public, collective effort that brings

forth further praise to God. Accountability is an important consideration for the elders of the local church. This theme continues on in verse four as the three men (and possibly more) testify *“in Jerusalem where they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.”*

The church in Jerusalem was faced with the great responsibility. Reminded of Jesus' words in Luke 12:48, *“everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required.”* The church leadership in Jerusalem was learning that the good news of the gospel was for all peoples!! Luke observes that the elders responded in accordance with this new revelation. In Acts 15:22ff, the missionaries (Paul, Barnabas, Judas and Silas) were sent off by the local church in Jerusalem back to Antioch. A model which includes testifying of God's work as well as encouraging people to believe the gospel through Christ only increases worship and strengthens fellow believers in the local church (Acts 15:30-34). Luke's descriptive account of preaching, teaching, and sending through the local church provides us an example of the ministry of missions.

Further New Testament examples of local church support.

- The apostle John commends Gaius for his support of missionaries who are fellow workers of truth. He states in 3 John 5-8, *“Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, ⁶ who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*
- The apostle Paul gives thanks by recalling the financial support he received from the church at Philippi. He states in Philippians 4:14-18, *“Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵ And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸ I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.*
- The churches in Macedonia received exceptional praise from Paul when speaking of their generosity despite their poverty. He states effusively in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, *“We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty*

have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”

The important role of local churches partnering in support of missionaries and other ministry endeavors beyond their local sphere of influence.

Earlier in my writing, I established that the local church is the primary means of making, maturing and multiplying disciples of Christ. And the local church is the primary mobilizing body to send out gifted men to proclaim the good news of the gospel. Another critical role that the local church serves is in the ongoing support of the missionary. How the local church provides this ongoing support is very crucial since it provides a constant reminder of the Great Commission for both the missionary and the supporting church. Local church support is varied, yet practical. The following are some examples:

- **Intercessory prayer** – advocating for the missionary before God corporately and individually. The proactive role of intercessory prayer mobilizes the congregation to be actively engaged in the ministry.
- **Communication** – encourage the missionary by words of encouragement through modern means including phone, Facetime, Zoom, Whatsapp, Signal, email, text and old-fashioned snail mail. Sending photos and personal updates of one’s family helps the missionary to remain updated.
- **Financial support** – the provision of meeting the ongoing needs on a regular basis. This would be sacrificial and above the regular giving to the local church.
- **Personal visitation** – from elders and from members of the local church. This level of intentionality communicates personal care and concern for the missionary.
- **Missionary updates** – provide updates via video messages, live phone calls, and newsletters.
- **Missionary testimonies** – give many opportunities to preach, teach and/or testify of God’s faithfulness. Encourage the missionary to share their stories of God’s power and intercession in bringing forth the gospel to an unreached people. This could be during worship service, small group fellowships, Sunday classes, youth meetings, a missions conference or coordinating other public and private venues whereby opportunities are given to praise God for His work of grace through the lives of the missionary and his family. Acts 15:30-31 provides a good account of this example, *“So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and*

having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.”

- **Practice hospitality** – host, provide meals, provide material needs (especially for families), listen to their testimony of God’s work through them, provide housing and transportation needs while on furlough/home assignment.
- **Care packages** – sending gifts that provide extra encouragement during holiday season, birthday remembrances especially for the children of the missionary, send Amazon online gift certificates, etc.
- **Provide places for refreshment** – via vacation getaways, amusement parks, retreat centers, or a personal hobby interest (ie. – pro ball game, NASCAR, musical concert, golfing, surfing, etc.). During home assignments or vacations, the missionary continues to face the ongoing pressure of updating their supporters. Provide opportunities for personal counsel and care by sending good readable enjoyable books, articles on related counseling topics and other resources
- **Provide biblically-rich resources** – including books and/or conferences designed to refresh ministers of the gospel and their families.
- **Assist in their children’s educational needs** – depending on their circumstances. Often missionaries are in areas where education materials for their children are not readily available. Providing school books and supplies along with tutorial aid materials are very helpful especially in preparation for long-term educational and career goals for the missionary children.
- **Become the spiritual uncles/aunts/grandparents** – to the missionary children when the missionaries are visiting. Taking a proactive interest in the missionary’s children only deepens the bonds of connectivity and relational ties connecting them well to the local church. When the children are in the high school ages, find out their long-term interests and providing resources to assist in their pursuits.
- **Send a short-term ministry team** – to minister to the missionary needs onsite including teaching the Word devotionally to the missionary, their family, and their team. Personally deliver gifts to meet their needs. Provide encouragement through personal fellowship. I will further explain further under short term ministries (STM).

Encouraging and supporting missionary friends.

Developing realistic expectations of the missionary and his ministry is an important place to start when venturing to support him. The local church leadership must hold to the belief that ongoing

personal development of its missionaries is essential to the task of effective cross-cultural ministry. This framework of ongoing personal development and care is shaped by the multifaceted needs of missionaries - needs such as financial, pastoral, spiritual and physical. Needs which include continual training/education, assistance with discipleship of the family unit, team building and guidance as it relates to children's education. For cross-cultural workers, member care is essential not only from the mission but also from those who partner with the workers in ministry. Development and care should be ongoing, and should occur in both overseas and stateside environments. The support and development of the missionary is a commitment that spans his life cycle.

Intercessory prayer for the missionary is indispensable.

The role of intercessory prayer serves as a means for the local church to conform to the image of Christ as they uphold their fellow saints before the living God. This proactive step also demonstrates the church's dependency upon God's intervention in respect to many practical arenas. Below is a suggested guideline to assist in praying specifically for the missionary.

1. Love for God.

Pray that the love for the Lord will deepen, and devotion to Christ will be a prime motivation for service (Romans 12:1-2).

2. Love for Others.

Pray for a heart of love and respect when serving others. This includes nationals, missionary coworkers and/or national ministers. Pray that their love would *"increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else"* (1 Thessalonians 3:12).

3. A Deeper Relationship with God.

Pray that priority will be given to the personal reading and meditation upon God's Word (Psalm 1:1-2). Missionaries are often tempted to be constantly busy with activity. Pray that the missionary would consistently seek time alone to commune with his Father and abide in Christ (John 15:4-5).

4. Spirit-Controlled Lives

Pray that actions and reactions will be under the control and of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

5. The Fruit of the Spirit

Pray that the fruit of the Spirit will be seen in their personal lives (Galatians 5:22-24).

6. Wisdom and Knowledge

Pray that the missionary will have the wisdom of God that is *"first pure, then peaceable,*

gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." (James 3:17-18).

7. Courage

Pray that the missionary will reflect the apostle Paul's word in Ephesians 6:19: *"Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel."*

8. Receptive Hearts

Pray that the Lord will lead your missionary to people whose hearts will be open to hearing and receiving the gospel message.

9. Disciples

Pray that the missionary will experience the joy of leading others to salvation, by making disciples and teaching them to obey everything Christ commanded (Matthew 28:20).

10. Strong Faith

Pray that the missionary will have great faith that will lead them to expect great things from God and attempt great things for God (Hebrews 11:6).

11. Steadfastness

Pray that the missionary will reflect Paul's exhortation, *"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

12. Strong Family

Pray that the missionary and his family will grow united as family unit and with one another in community of fellow co-laborers and nationals. (1 Corinthians 1:10).

13. Protection

Pray for the missionary to be protected from physical and spiritual harm throughout their service. *"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one"* (John 17:15).

14. Material Needs

Pray that the Lord will supply all their financial and material needs *"according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19).

15. Health and Strength

In today's increasingly violent world, missionaries face not only sickness, but they could also be victims of crime, civil unrest or political upheaval. Pray that the Lord will grant measure of health and strength needed to bring about God's greatest glory and His greatest good.

The local church and support in administration.

Often, there are many activities that the entire church family can be involved in to support their missionaries. The establishment of a volunteer lay committee provides some level of consistent support and centralized coordination including:

- The coordination of administrative needs for the visiting missionary and their children;
- The coordination of accommodations while on home assignment/furlough;
- The coordination of a band of prayer supporters who faithfully intercede for the missionaries;
- Assistance with communication between the missionary and the congregation.

The role of short-term ministries (STM) in support of the church-supported missionary.

I believe the role of STM commonly known as short term missions can be an effective means of support. This endeavor can be mutually encouraging for both the local supporting church and the missionary. This ministry is properly identified as “short-term” since the duration and purpose of the support is to meet specific needs as requested by the missionary.

A biblical model for this practice is found in 2 Corinthians 8 whereby the apostle Paul acknowledges that the churches in Macedonia were seeking to support fellow believers in Jerusalem and Judea who were suffering due to a great famine. Titus and another brother of good reputation were being sent on a short-term ministry (STM) to provide encouragement through their gifts and preaching. 2 Corinthians 8:18-19 states it well, *“With him (Titus) we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will.”* The showing of good will was not only the sending of gifts to meet material needs but also the sending of men gifted to speak the Word since they are messengers. Paul notes in verses 22-23, *“And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.”*

Another biblical example is cited by the apostle Paul in Romans 15:25ff, *“At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷ For they were pleased*

to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. ²⁸ *When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.* ²⁹ *I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.”* Paul’s purpose of visitation was to bring forth mutual encouragement among the churches. The number of supported missionaries may be few or great, but in either case it takes a collective effort to adequately serve each one appointed.

However, the idea of short-term missions and its purpose has been obscured due to the many opportunities that have been promoted in a para-church context. Sadly, many organizations, churches and individuals promote these ventures, whetting an appetite for adventure rather than service in order to gain a spiritual experience. These STM participants are often spiritually immature and inexperienced carrying with them unnecessary cargo and lack of regard with condescending attitudes. The lack of discipleship in understanding the work of the church supported missionary only widens the gap of misunderstanding creating unnecessary hindrances to the gospel message. While this paper is not about critiquing the modern STM approach that is being practiced worldwide, I remember reading that millions of dollars are dedicated to this enterprise every year. The effects of this approach on the local church domestically and internationally is sobering. That is a topic worth investigating for another time.

I believe that STM can be a very effective ministry when there is a discipleship relationship created between the missionary and the STM participant. Similar to a professional intern learning from their short-term stint in a particular professional field, the resident professional (missionary) can teach, model and encourage the STM participant as he/she gains a better understanding of the trade (ministry) and grow to appreciate the necessity for proper training.

In summary, I support STM when it is a faith venture involving the local church and the long-term missionary or national pastor serving beyond the physical and cultural boundaries of the sending church. Their opportunity is primarily to provide some tangible support for an existing worker and their ministry. It is not an independent venture. The local church’s primary purposes of STM are three-fold:

- 1) To serve and encourage the host missionary, church planter and/or national pastor’s ministry efforts by assisting in local evangelism campaigns and/or equipping of the saints within the local body;

- 2) To provide personal encouragement and training to the supported missionary and/or national pastor;
- 3) To provide a venue for cross-cultural training, exposure and discipleship for a prospective missionary candidate.

Does STM answer meet the need in fulfilling the Great Commission?

No. Currently, the mobilization of STM is unprecedented in church history. In the past 50 years, there has been a significant increase in STM travel to other countries and communities which have become more readily assessable. Yet, despite the growing level of STM, it has not produced a general increase in long-term service and commitment to full-time missions. The fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) requires a long-term and full-time sacrificial commitment to go and make disciples, baptizing and teaching them to observe God's Word in the host language and culture. Since STM methodologies are, by definition, supportive in nature, they can never be the primary means of fulfilling the Great Commission.

Yes. STM endeavors can be a means of being consistent with the biblical model of missions and discipleship by 1) providing a service of support and encouragement to the missionary; 2) providing an opportunity to train future full-time missionaries through on-hand mentoring, cross-cultural training and investigative fieldwork; and 3) increasing general awareness of the spiritual needs for the missionary, the unreached peoples who need the gospel and the needs beyond the local church.

The value and mutual benefit of STM.

The value of STM for the local church is great and includes the following benefits:

- 1) Strengthens the ability and effectiveness of the missionary' and/or national pastor's overall mission of church planting;
- 2) Provides personal training and development to the missionary, the national pastor and/or nationals in the local church;
- 3) Provides mutual encouragement and support to the missionary, national pastor, nationals in the local church and to the STM member(s);
- 4) Provides the means to prepare future long-term missionaries with practical field experience and insight to the rigors of full-time cross-cultural ministry and church-planting;

- 5) Informs and updates members of the sending body and the STM member to better understand:
 - a) the needs of the cross-cultural church-planting effort; and
 - b) the complex issues for the missionary, national pastor and local church.
- 6) Enables the local church to actively participate in wider range of missionary endeavors by:
 - a) Personal interaction and fellowship;
 - b) Utilization of various gifts and talents of the STM members and encourages increased participation by the local church;
 - c) Encouraging more prayer support for the missionaries, the national pastors, the national church, and the STM members.
 - d) Giving of financial and other gifts in kind;
 - e) Generating more enthusiasm for the fulfillment of the Great Commission as well as compassion for the needs abroad.
 - f) Informing the local church of mission agencies to evaluate whether stronger future partnerships should be pursued.

What makes this type of proposed STM program distinct from most other STM ministries?

The primary distinction of this proposed STM program is its two-fold purpose:

- 1) Since the elders of the local church believe that the international and domestic outreach ministries are an extension of their primary ministry focus, STM primarily serves the local church-supported missionary and/or national church planter. The geographical scope and ministry vision of STM is intentionally focused on the current support of the local church's international and domestic ministry. A major benefit is the potential growth in discipleship and accountability for the missionary, national worker and the STM member.
- 2) One other distinction of this proposed STM program is the particular emphasis on serving and coming under the direction of the missionary and/or nationals. The primary ministry emphasis will be the preaching, teaching and/or counseling of the Word of God. This means that the STM member's main emphasis will be on evangelism, biblical instruction of doctrine and/or equipping the saints in practical theology. While the nature of the STM may also entail various forms of service and mercy ministry, these actions are a means of access and opportunity to preach and teach the Word of God, not an end in themselves. Exceptions may occur in times of major catastrophic crisis whereby emergency care and assistance is required.

Who qualifies to participate in the local church's STM program?

Due to the nature and focus of the local church's STM program, the following list is the minimum requirements for qualification and the reasons for these expectations.

- 1) **Member** - An official member of the local church or those under the age of 18 who meet membership qualifications except for the age requirement due to the importance of elder oversight and willingness to submit to local authority.
- 2) **Faithful** - One who is currently and/or historically active in participating in one of the local church's ministries (especially teaching and evangelism) due to the importance of demonstrating proven character and faithful service within the local body first before being sent out to minister abroad.
- 3) **Fit** - One who is physically in good health due to the rigors of travel, cross-cultural adjustments, and the frequent demands of ministry.
- 4) **Endorsed** - The STM participant has the endorsement from at least two elders in order to confirm spiritual maturity and good standing in the local church. Also, in the case of a minor or individual financially supported by their parent, the participant would also need an additional approval by their parent(s).

Expectations of the STM worker?

The following general expectations of each participant are imperative due to the degree of difficulty frequently encountered in STM ministry.

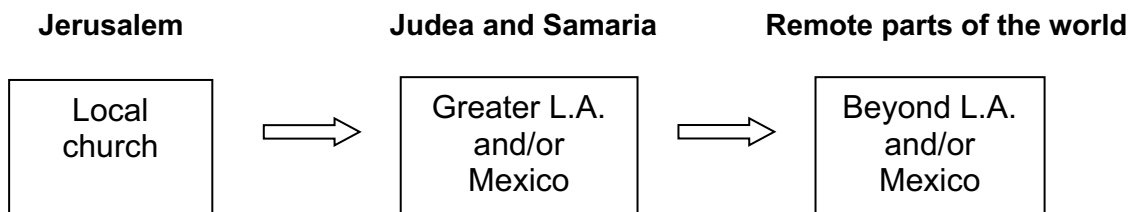
- 1) **Servant attitude** - One who eagerly pursues opportunities to serve rather than be served in the host culture based on the model of Philippians 2:3-7. This means that the STM participant must demonstrate:
 - a. a proactive desire to find ways to serve the missionary, national pastor, national church and/or host family in order to alleviate ministry burdens and minimize the sacrifices made by the host(s);
 - b. a willingness to serve in whatever role/duty requested including speaking engagements, testimonials, presentations, perceived menial tasks, etc.;
 - c. a ready eagerness to express love, compassion, concern, and care to the people whom they are serving by asking questions, expressing interest and minimizing attention to oneself.
- 2) **Adaptable** - One who "embraces flexibility and ambiguity". This means that the participant is willing to humbly submit and graciously accept the schedule, customs, foods and authority of the missionary, host, or culture (Philippians 2:14).

- 3) **Teachable** - One who demonstrates humility by willingly accepting instruction, rebuke and/or admonishment without murmuring. All STM members must maintain a learning posture in addition to a servant attitude. This means that their time of preparation and participation must include a component encouraging an understanding of the culture, language and ministry in order to communicate the Gospel most effectively in a contextualized manner.
- 4) **Self-control** - One who demonstrates the ability to refrain from outbursts of anger, gossip, mocking and rude behavior. One who refrains from expressing judgments, personal opinions, agendas, and/or other actions contrary to I Corinthians 13:4-7 and consistent with II Timothy 2:22-26. One who is sensitive to cultural norms and customs regarding modesty, appearance, greetings and speech.

STM ministry procedure.

A. When & Where STM

As mentioned previously in this policy, the STM program is designed to assist the local church supported missionary or national pastor according to their expressed need. While the summer months (June – August) have historically been the most convenient time for STM, depending on the needs, there may be programs during other times of the year. The elders should require proven character and experience in ministry locally (Jerusalem) as a prerequisite to venture into the Judea and Samarias (greater L.A. and Mexico) of STM. Also, it would be advisable to have this same expectation in other remote parts of the world.



B. How STM works and how long? Below is an example:

Step 1 - Identification (September-November)

Contact the local church-supported missionaries and national pastors inquiring about their needs for STM assistance.

Step 2 - Communication (December-January)

Inform the congregation and actively recruit potential STM servants to meet the needs.

Step 3 - Application & Interviews (February-March)

Begin reviewing and interviewing applicants. Provide guidance and follow-up to applicants. Provide counsel to individuals who may not be ready at this time.

Step 4 - Training & Confirmation (April-May)

Begin mandatory training and development of high expectations for STM candidates. Promote support (prayer and finances) campaign of members and ministry.

Step 5 - Sending & Actualization (June-July)

Commission, send and support STM participants. During this period, also set-up a audio-video conference in order to promote intercession and updates to increase vision and awareness for the sending body.

Step 6 - Debriefing & Follow-up (August-September)

Coordinate a group and individual debrief sessions, immediately upon arriving home in order to provide support, accountability and development of discipleship for STM members. Also coordinate a follow-up evaluation with the host(s) missionary and/or national in reviewing the effectiveness of ministry, assessment of individual/group contribution and possible future strategies and long-range planning.

Step 7 - Review and reporting (September)

Coach STM members to provide the elders with a written summary of the previous STM campaign(s) efforts highlighting strengths and weaknesses as well as noting areas of improvement for the following year.

The role of relief workers and support work to aid nationals and long-term workers.

In the world of missions, the topic of physical relief is a never-ending dilemma since there will always be famines, earthquakes and other natural disasters that require some level of compassion and care. But in the words of missionary historian, Stephen Neill, *“if missions is everything, then nothing is missions.”* In other words, missions as it relates to Jesus’ Great Commission is narrow in its focus - make disciples.

The mission of the Church is to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19) by *“going into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation”* (Mark 16:15). I once heard Pastor John MacArthur, citing Martin Luther, say (I’m para-phrasing) that “ministering to people in addressing their physical affliction without preaching the gospel is doing a greater disservice to their souls.

Why? Because providing temporal relief without preaching the gospel only provides a false hope that their condition will get better when in reality they are headed for destruction because of sin.” One of the biblical arguments for supporting relief ministries under the claim of missions is citing 2 Corinthians 8-9 as the apostle Paul encourages the churches in Macedonia to take a collection in response to the famine in Judea. Citing compassion and a sense of equality (2 Corinthians 8:13), mercy ministry needs are constant especially with advent of instant news updates from around the world.

However, I'm of the opinion that context of relationship plays a big role in determining where to send support and relief. I believe that the apostle Paul clearly states two important operating principles that can be learned from the early churches. First of all, there was the direct interdependent relationship between the saints in Jerusalem-Judea and the churches in Macedonia. Paul informs us in Romans 15:25-27, *“²⁵ At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷ For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.*

And secondly, the monies raised and given were personally delivered by men who were commended by Paul and the other churches. 2 Corinthians 8:17-23 provides details of the financial transactions explaining they were done honorably before God and men. This involved at least two reputable men in order to demonstrate their actions were above reproach. Missions and money have historically been the source of scandal and undermined the credibility of gospel witness. That explains Paul's actions when he delegated the responsibility to reputable men such as Titus and another brother whose reputation were famous among all the churches when it came to their preaching of the gospel.

The local church and national church support.

One of the more complicated topics to address when it comes to fulfilling the Great Commission relates to the support of national workers serving within a particular foreign country. Should the local church directly fund a national worker who has devoted his life to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God? The oft-used rationale is that for every one supported American missionary, many national workers could be supported. While this pragmatic argument may appear to have some merit, this communicates that fulfilling the Great Commission is a matter of stewarding

financial resources. And that is contrary to the biblical narrative. God sent His Son (John 3:16). Local churches sent out men (Acts 13:1-3). There is the sacrifice of sending one's best resources – gifted men set apart to be living sacrifices to herald the most important message personally (1 Corinthians 15:3).

In this day of globalization, the ability to support national work is much more feasible due to online financial transaction. The growing economic gap between first world countries and developing third world nations magnifies the disparity between the rich and poor. As such, the local church may assume the support of a national worker based on some special relationship. However, this should not be a substitute for the local church sending and supporting missionaries of their own.

Some of the challenges to supporting national work are:

- Lack of financial accountability in the stewardship of designated resources;
- Losing the focus in making disciples and church planting through the local church;
- Creating a dependency relationship from wealthy churches who have authority in over them. This sets up a structure of authoritarianism that undermines the gospel;
- Discouraging national believers within their local churches to give sacrificially in the ongoing work of ministry (2 Corinthians 8:5);
- Denies the national believers the opportunity to give cheerfully out of their poverty, similar to the Macedonian churches. They then will fail to see God's provision of their needs as described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 9:6-12;
- Long term negative effect of dependency from overseas sources;
- The negative effect of financial dependency turns into entitlement and ultimately ingratitude since a discipleship of dependency upon God and godly contentment was never learned or modeled;
- Promotion of covetousness and the pursuit of riches in this world since material possessions are often an enticing hindrance and temptation (1 Timothy 6:9-10);
- Distorting the gospel message since the prevalence of "health-wealth gospel" is rampant throughout the developing world, especially in already impoverished areas;
- Decreases the affluent church's motivation to send their own members to fields of service. Sending money only becomes more of a pragmatic venture. "My dollar will go further supporting a national worker" is the common refrain. This is in contrast of God's method of sending His only Son (John 3:16, Philippians 2:5-8).

In summary.

The local church that embraces a full participation in the Great Commission understands that this endeavor is the mission of the church. The local church's full participation will mean setting a priority of their financial and human resources to be intentionally directed in the sending and support of missionaries. The cultivation of this culture creates a church ethos of making, maturing and multiplying disciples. The rallying of support for this cause will result in keeping the main thing, the main thing. Make disciples!!

Chapter #5 - The Local Church's Role in the Missionary's Sanctification.

Scenario: Missionaries inevitably are confronted with external and internal conflicts within their marriages and family relationships among fellow missionaries and national co-workers in their ministry context. It is important to identify those from whom does the missionary can seek counsel and to define what accountability looks like.

Purpose: To provide practical guidance for the local church as it seeks to assist the missionary in matters of counsel and/or correction. Such matters may include, but are not limited to counsel regarding cultural adaptation, doctrinal challenges and personal sin.

The role of the local church to intercede for the missionary.

Since the local church serves in the sending and supporting role of the missionary, it seems logical that the local body would also serve in some role of accountability. Sadly, this is not always the case since the sending church is often burdened with cares and concerns on many fronts. The many responsibilities that consume the mind and time of the local church leadership often take precedence. The result over time is that the communication between the sending church and the missionary easily wanes. As a result, the missionary can experience a growing sense of isolation.

Personal communication and more importantly, a personal visit, can communicate volumes to the missionary. These priorities demonstrate the church's commitment to the missionary's personal growth in Christ and serves as a means of accountability. Luke, records the apostle Paul's example of such a visit in Acts 15:41. Paul writes intimately to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:14-15, *"I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth."*

Personal challenges faced during missionary service.

The missionary is often held in high honor because of their spiritual qualifications and sacrificial service for the cause of Christ. However, a missionary is still a sinful man who is tempted to sin. The perception that the missionary is a "super saint" or "spiritual giant" distorts the reality that trials and temptations are common to every man (1 Corinthians 10:12-13). The need for accountability is vital for every missionary. Remember Paul's exhortation regarding godly

contentment to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6 was written to men who serve in church leadership. This ought to alert us to the need for regular engagement in the life of our missionary. The more we know our sent ones, the more we can speak into issues of personal growth and sanctification.

Depending on the locale and circumstances, the missionary will often be viewed as the wealthy man since he often possesses first-world comforts while trying to live in a second or third world environment. Unbeknown to the missionary, his lifestyle creates a certain amount of envy and a stumbling block to others locally. Verse 9-10 of 1 Timothy 6 becomes a reality before him – *“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”*

Factors that influence the need for accountability:

1) Internal pressures – The missionary’s shortcomings and weaknesses are magnified when they become aliens in a foreign-host culture. Isabelle Kuhn, a missionary who served in China, once said, *“Girls, when you get to China, all the scum of your nature will rise to the top.”* Adapting to cultural norms, while maintaining a gospel witness, brings about internal pressure for a number of reasons:

- Familiar support systems are not readily available due to being physically distant from family, friends and the local church;
- Learning a new language makes it more challenging to have basic communication from the heart;
- Adjusting to local cultural customs, surfaces a measure of insecurity and inadequacy as inevitably mistakes will be made along the way;
- Growing in an understanding of and sensitivity to the expectations and needs of local believers, neighbors and friends can be challenging in a new cultural context;
- Determining ministry and family priorities and boundaries becomes a weighty matter in a new cultural context where misunderstandings are sure to rise;
- Wife and children are under the same duress as they navigate the challenges listed above. Meanwhile, the husband is adapting to new ministry demands and expectations;
- Missionary childrens’ needs grow in their complexity in a new cultural context while adapting to one’s host culture. The missionary experiences the pressure to maintain relationship with their stateside sending church, family and friends;

- Trying to meet the mission agency or sending-supporting church's communication expectations;
- In spite of much toil and labor, few converts and little fruit seen in the lives of those served and invested in can be a source of great discouragement.
- Learning to adjust well when met with new challenges of how to accomplish certain tasks;
- Learning to embrace the new environment with joy that is observable rather than with disdain;
- Serving in isolation without a sense of belonging and being part of the community.

2) External pressures – Besides the internal pressures as stated, the missionary is quickly exposed to many environmental changes that require the ability to adapt fluidly to the new norms. Many of the unreached areas of the world are in places where there are many physical barriers that can be a source of discouragement. Here are some examples of adjustments that feel acutely by the missionary:

- A new and often harsher climate (hotter or colder);
- Unreliable infrastructure as it relates to water, power, travel, safety and sewage;
- Sensory overload as a result of new sounds, smells, tastes and sights;
- Changes in population density;
- Changes in personal space and time;
- Changes in daily routines impacted by new surroundings, services and marketing strategies;
- Changes in means and modes of transportation;
- Understanding personal safety and safety for one's children;
- Related to sensory overload is the missionary's high value of privacy and quietness;

Time and patience to adapt is a sanctifying process for the missionary.

Our modern age has produced a set of expectations that adjustment and change will come much sooner for the missionary. The result can be a set-up of disappointments. In Brazil, there is a good illustration of crossing cultures. Near the city of Manaus is the convergence of two rivers called the "meeting of the waters." The sandy, gray-blue waters from the Rio Solimoes and the darker, murky waters from the Rio Negro meet with such force that they stay separated for more than six miles before joining together. For the missionary, their personal cultural values frequently collide with their new host culture. Learning to embrace a new culture well is

a learned skill. Mindful of Philippians 2:5-7, *“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”* William Carey, missionary to India and father of the modern mission movement, once said, *“If he give me credit for being a plodder he will describe me justly. Anything beyond that will be too much. I can plod. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything.”* I believe that the mentality of a plodder is a key attitude for missionaries to possess for long term effectiveness.

Differing ministry philosophies on the field.

One of the more common issues that produces turmoil is conflicting ministry philosophies. Most missionaries are not prepared to address this matter biblically. Oftentimes the missionary serving alongside fellow co-laborers, especially in a team effort for a particular task, find their ministry philosophies differ. The differences can often result in a conflicts can center on shared ministry goals. While the means to meet those goals differ. In Acts 15:36-40, Luke records two godly leaders who had conflicting ministry philosophies. Paul and Barnabas were not in agreement about the inclusion of John Mark in their next journey. This sudden rift was no small matter since it was concerning the redeployment of John Mark. Earlier, Luke provides a brief comment on John Mark’s departure from the mission field. Acts 13:13 says, *“Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem.”*

Despite the fact that Paul and Barnabas were not able to resolve their disagreements, the church leadership in Antioch allows the separation of these men. Verse 39 says, *Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.”* And in verse 40, *“but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.”* Luke’s recording of this event is important because it serves as a reminding us that ministry conflicts do arise. What is equally important is that the local church leadership was made aware and gave their blessing of support while respecting their differing ministry philosophies. The results were significant. Paul goes on to his second missionary journey that bears much fruit as he plants churches. For Barnabas, his effort to minister to John Mark resulted in this weaker brother’s eventual usefulness to Paul (2 Timothy 4:11, Philemon 1:24) and eventually authored of the gospel of Mark.

Many times, a missionary with strong convictional beliefs, will be tested as he interfaces with a fellow missionary or national worker who holds to a differing ministry philosophy. The role of the missionary's local church can prove to be very helpful in lending wisdom and counsel as conflicts are resolved. Listening to the missionary's concerns can provide objective insight and timely intervention.

Role of mediation by the local church elders.

It is very common for the missionary's ministry expectations are met with unexpected roadblocks resulting in personal frustration. James 4:1 describes the missionary's internal consternation when he writes, "*What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?*" The result can often lead to a sense of isolation and temptation to quit.

The assurance of support from the supporting church can be very instrumental in the sanctification process of the missionary. The elder's collective wisdom to the missionary can be helpful in pointing out the "log in his eye" which is very common for newbies on the mission field. Helping the missionary early on by holding them to the initial task of being a learner of the language, culture and fellow missionary's ministry philosophy can stave off the temptation to desert ministry.

Sadly, many missionaries do not cry out for help and intercession resulting in hasty decisions. This is where the local church and the mission agency can work cooperatively to intercede and possibly mediate depending on the source of conflict. Pastoral care by the sending church and the mission organization can be a timely way to intercede to lend godly perspective. One significant way to minister to the missionary, his spouse and children is to have personal visitations from the sending church in order to provide encouragement. This act of love communicates to the missionary, the host nationals and sending church community of their great affection of support.

Role of counseling and care by the local church.

As previously stated, missionaries face many personal, interpersonal and ministerial challenges. Since they are followers of Christ, they also fight the faith in personal holiness (Romans 6:12-14) and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Another important layer of consideration is the knowledge that Satan is an active opposer with many schemes against the missionary (Ephesians 6:10-16) including persecution (2 Timothy 3:12) and

suffering (I Peter 5:8-10). The missionary must recognize that the weapons of this warfare are not of the flesh (2 Corinthians 10:3-4; Ephesians 6:13ff). This ability to stand (Ephesians 6:13-14) and endure hardship (2 Corinthians 6:4-10) are the evidences of the surpassing power that belongs to God (2 Corinthians 4:7-11). Historically speaking, the temptations to doubt and discouragement are common for the “sent one” spokesman for God (Moses in Number 20; Elijah in 1 Kings 19). The elders of the local church must remember that the missionary faces many temptations that are common to man (I Corinthians 10:13).

That is why regular assessments and communication must have some level of priority for the elders since they were the ones who represented the local church in the sending out and support of the missionary. One way of appraisal is to review the missionary’s conviction, competence and character – the three C’s. The local church can provide an evaluation form (see below) that provides a window of knowledge. This can be followed by some form of communication to begin inquiring and understanding the arenas to pray, to intercede in counsel and to provide spiritual encouragement. The apostle Paul, understanding the rigors of ministry, exhorts the church in Thessalonica to *“to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all* (I Thessalonians 5:12-14).

The local church can provide encouragement to the missionary to remain on task fulfilling the Great Commission.

The local church elder can play a pivotal role of providing encouragement when the missionary loses focus on their mission due to hardships, sin and discouragement. I’m reminded of great men of the faith who needed personal encouragement – Abraham (Genesis 15), Moses (Exodus 3-4), Elijah (1 Kings 19), Daniel (Daniel 2), Jonah (Jonah 4), Paul (Acts 9), Timothy (2 Timothy 1) to name several examples. A good supporting church will provide encouragement through the Scriptures in order to rejuvenate their spirits. Romans 15:4-6 reminds us, *“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Many missionaries experience marital and parenting conflicts as a result of serving in a cross-cultural context. The internal and external pressures surface areas that need to be confessed and

repented in order for the couple to thrive in ministry. Previously, these conflicts may have been avoided and the underlying sin issues were never really addressed due to many distractions in the home culture that were quickly dismissed. When these times of disputes arise, the local church elders can serve in a critical role in mediating and providing admonishment, correction and further training in righteousness. Once again, missionaries are fellow brothers and sisters who need constant reminders as well.

Missionaries must recognize that suffering is part of God's means of sanctification.

Missionaries are not immune from forgetting that suffering is part of the cost of following Christ. I'm reminded of the apostle Paul's words to Timothy who was the young pastor in Ephesus. Embrace suffering according to 2 Timothy 2:3. Paul continues to say in 2 Timothy 3:12, *"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."* It appears that suffering is part of the cost that both the missionary and the sending church must embrace as part of the God's work of sanctifying His children and the local church. Job 23 serves as a good reminder of God's Sovereign control of our suffering. Especially verse 10, *"But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold."*

When I state that suffering is God's means of sanctification, I'm reminded of Peter's words in 1 Peter 4:12-14 – *"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."* The role of mutual encouragement from the missionary to the local church and vice versa serves a significant role to be conformed to Christ.

For the missionary, their theology of suffering will be critical in protecting their hearts from straying away from their trust in a Sovereign God who orchestrates all things, good or bad, for His purposes. The apostle Peter reminds believers to entrust their soul to God who judges justly (1 Peter 2:18-23) and to the One who is our Faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19). Why? Because Christ suffered for us, He is our example in order that the missionary may follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). The other important reason is to be reminded that there is the great temptation to stray like sheep but God has provided a great Shepherd and Overseer of their souls (1 Peter 2:25).

A practical way to regularly assess the missionary is to have them complete an evaluation form. Below is a sample copy of assessment. This form serves as a tool to follow-up and provide accountability and support for the missionary. It is also a way to record the missionary's status and accomplishments.

ANNUAL EVALUATION FORM

For all missionaries supported financially by the local church.

(Please fill in boxes with as much information as appropriate, each box will expand accordingly.)

Missionary's Name:

Missions Agency:

Date of Report:

Dates on the field and projected next home assignment will be on or about:

Objective of the Annual Evaluation Form

It is the desire of the elders of the local church to help you meet your ministry objectives. In order to provide this assistance, we ask that you share with us your prayer requests, ministry and personal needs, ministry activities, your progress and short-range plans. For those that serve in sensitive regions, please make sure that your words do not pose a security risk to you.

Current correspondence and communication data:

Address:

Phone:

Office Phone:

Fax:

Email:

Your website address if you have one:

Your agency's website address if they have one:

Name and address of immediate supervisor

Financial needs:

What are your present monthly financial support requirements? \$

Are your financial support requirements being met? Yes No

If not, how much do you lack? \$

Communications

How often do you send a general prayer/newsletter to your supporters?

Do you have accessibility to video equipment that would enable you to supply the local church with occasional video clips of your family and ministry?

Are you able to provide the local church with photographs of your family and ministry? Yes

No

Names of family members (Please include their birthdays.)

Wedding anniversary:

Years of service in ministry:

Individual and family well-being

Health challenges

Do you have any medical needs that we should be aware of? Yes No

If so, please explain:

Ministry challenges

Are you facing a difficult or discouraging situation in either your family or ministry, which you would like to share for prayer, encouragement, or counsel?

Ministry information

General furlough data (frequency, dates, typical or specific itinerary):

Ministry overview and description

Your educational experience:

Your ministry title or position designation (If you are jointly supported as husband and wife, please indicate ministries of each.)

Present ministry:

A brief description of each ministry listed in the question above:

Names and locations (cities, towns, villages) where you minister:

Names of co-workers with whom you partner in ministry:

Fellow missionaries

Lay leaders and local pastors

Any other co-workers

An overview of the people you are seeking to reach through your ministry with the Gospel.

Ethnic, tribal, language or national distinctions:

Age or social economic distinctions:

Major ministry activities during the past year.

Specific ministry projects accomplished during the past year:

Visible spiritual results of your ministry during the past year.

Major ministry goals for the next 12 months

Do you have an exit strategy for your ministry, which indicates when and how you will complete your ministry objectives in your present assignment?

Items for Praise

Items for Prayer

Additional Remarks

Besides prayer are there any ways that the local church can help with your ministry?
We ask for a minimum of quarterly contacts (newsletters, email, personal letters, etc.) from missionaries that the local church supports. Do your records indicate that you are complying with our request?

I have read the enclosed the local church's Doctrinal Statement and am in complete agreement with it. *(If responding by returning a copy of this document via email, use the Electronic Response by typing name and date in the appropriate fields and click on box to apply check.)*

Name/Signature:

Date:

Electronic Response: I completely agree with the local church's Doctrinal Statement.

Electronic Response: I DO NOT completely agree with the local church's Doctrinal Statement. (please explain below in Comments box).

(If married, please have spouse sign and date as well)

Name/Signature:

Date:

Electronic Response: I completely agree with the local church's Doctrinal Statement.

Electronic Response: I DO NOT completely agree with the local church's Doctrinal Statement. (please explain below in Comments box).

Comments:

LOCAL CHURCH'S DOCTRINAL STATEMENT – SUMMARY

To be included with Annual Evaluation Form

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the foundation of the faith and practice of your supporting local church.

1. Every word of the Holy Scriptures is inspired of God and without error, in the original manuscripts.
2. The Godhead exists eternally in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one God.
3. Angels were originally created holy, but some fell including Satan.
4. Man was created in the image and likeness of God, but in Adam all mankind fell into sin with the result that all men are sinners, hopelessly sinful in themselves apart from the grace of God.
5. God has revealed different dispensations or stewardship with corresponding rules of which the present dispensation is the “age of grace”.
6. The eternal Son of God became incarnate in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is true God and true man.
7. Salvation is received by faith alone in Christ, who died for our sins and rose again.
8. Every true believer is promised positional, progressive, and ultimate sanctification.
9. All who were born of Spirit, through faith in Christ can have assurance of salvation and are eternally secure in Christ.
10. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Godhead, who regenerates, indwells, baptizes, and seals all true believers in Christ, and fills those yielded to God
11. The Church, composed of all true believers, is the body and bride of Christ, formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
12. Some gifts of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and miraculous healing, given to the apostolic church temporarily, are not bestowed today.
13. The Scriptural ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are for all true believers in Christ.
14. Christians are called to a holy life of service and testimony in the power of the Holy Spirit, which service includes the propagation of the Gospel message to the whole world. There is promised reward in heaven for faithfulness in such service.
15. The blessed hope of the imminent return of the Lord for His church is to be followed in order by: the tribulation; the second coming of Christ to the earth after the tribulation; the

establishment of the reign of Christ on earth for one thousand years; and the eternal state of blessing for the saved and the eternal state of punishment for the unsaved.

16. Marriage has been established by God and is defined as the legal union of one man and one woman in which such union is a lifetime commitment. Legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage. Hence, sexual activities, such as, but not limited to, adultery, fornication, incest, homosexuality, pedophilia and bestiality are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible. Further, lascivious behavior, the creation and/or distribution and/or viewing of pornography, and efforts to alter one's gender are incompatible with the biblical witness.

Chapter 6 – The Local Church and Severance of Missionary Support.

Scenario: Missionary terms eventually come to an end. There are varied scenarios and several reasons for this transition – ministry change, family crisis or change, moral disqualification, retirement, etc. What is the role of the local church as they come alongside the missionary in their transition off the field?

Purpose: To provide practical guidance for the local church as they come alongside the missionary in a season of ministry transition from returning reassignment, resignation, termination or retirement.

The common reality of missionary attrition.

When the missionary and the local church set out to fulfill the Great Commission, it is often a joyous occasion marked by many declared goals. There are good intentions behind these ministry plans and expectations. However, these plans are often tested by a variety of events and circumstances. Remaining steadfast becomes a challenge because the roadblocks often turn to stumbling blocks. The exhortation in James 1:2-4 is applicable, *“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”* Sadly, missionary attrition is the resulting end to such times of testing. Over fifty percent of missionaries sent out from their local church do not return to the mission field beyond their first term of three to five years. In view of the qualifications and preparation necessary to become a missionary as noted earlier in this thesis, this statistic is alarmingly high.

There are many factors that account for this high rate of attrition. I will not be exploring the topic of attrition in depth but instead will provide just a brief overview of some of the reasons for this fact. The purpose of this writing is to explore the local church’s role in the severance of support for the missionary. Also, I seek to address the necessity for the local church to engage with the missionary as he/she transitions back to their home culture and fellowship. It is important to help redeploy their gifts for further gospel work and disciple-making.

The local church learns that opposition comes in various forms.

Since the message and ministry of reconciliation between God and man is a spiritual endeavor, the local church and the missionary must recognize that there will be opponents. The Scriptures provides us insight that there are enemies of the gospel. Jesus says that *“Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.”* (Mark 4:15). The apostle Paul identifies the work of Satan when he wrote, *“because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.”* (1 Thessalonians 2:18). Unbelief is pervasive since *“the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”* (2 Corinthians 4:4). The result is men of depraved minds and ones deprived of the truth (1 Timothy 6:5) create constant friction among the people being served by the gospel work.

The intensity of opposition can be fierce and unrelenting. The apostle Paul reflects back on the difficulty of the gospel work when he writes in 2 Corinthians 1:8 – *“For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.”* The physical and emotional toll is high. The results are often tragic. Not only are missionaries adversely affected but their spouse, children, fellow co-laborers and the national believers are often part of the collateral damage. These relational tolls are often the hidden costs that many churches are not prepared to address since the missions is often focused on the sending aspect, and are unprepared for the sudden return, retooling or reassignment that is suddenly needed.

The apostle Peter reminds fellow elders in 1 Peter 5:8ff that the opposing forces from Satan are very active and the cause of much suffering worldwide. He writes, *“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*⁹ *Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*¹⁰ *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”*

That is why the apostle Paul reminds the believers in Corinth that messengers of the gospel, including himself, face many detractors and opposers. The missionary must see himself only as an instrument of God to herald good news to lost sinners. 2 Corinthians 4:1-2 says, *“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced*

disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." Sadly, missionaries do lose heart, but it often comes from an unexpected source. Fellow believers and fellow missionaries!!

Not only is there spiritual opposition from enemies of the gospel, but oftentimes the missionary faces conflicts with fellow brothers and sisters on the same ministry team. This common occurrence only validates that missionaries too, are sinners. Misunderstandings and miscommunications can lead to false assumptions that undermine trust in a team dynamic and sow seeds of conflict. The missionary is helped when church leadership enters into the fray of conflict and lends a measure of objectivity. The Scriptures provides some direction to this end. Proverbs 18:17 says, *"The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him."* The apostle Paul instructs the young pastor Timothy, *"Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses."* (1 Timothy 5:19).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the supporting local church often works alongside the mission agency and can serve as a mediating agency during times of interpersonal conflict in marriage and/or ministry. Without this type of support, missionary attrition is almost sure to follow. This dilemma is sadly a common problem that can often be prevented. The result of unresolved conflict is severance or reassignment that raises greater burdens of concern for the missionary and the sending church.

Common severance scenarios leading to the process of transition.

Having discussed general pressures upon the missionary, we now turn our attention more specific strains. Below are the general topics that have led to high attrition rates among missionaries.

1. Interpersonal conflict resulting in ministry change.

Most missionaries do not enter vocational ministry anticipating interpersonal conflict. However, conflicts are commonplace and can often result in ministry change. This leads to unfulfilled expectations and that ministry does not appear the way they had envisioned. Acts 13:13 records that John Mark must have experienced this since he prematurely departed from his ministry assignment. Paul and Barnabas "sharp disagreement" as recorded in Acts 15:36-41 led the two men to separate. Differences between missionaries often lead to sharp disagreements because both parties will generally have deep ministry convictions that led them unto to the mission field.

2. Doctrinal or philosophy of ministry change leading to reassignment.

Another common reason for missionary attrition is the differences in doctrine and/or philosophy of ministry matters. Oftentimes, missionaries are men of conviction who have a certain level of expectation that other missionaries and nationals will hold to their same beliefs. Sometimes, these differences do not arise until they encounter a person or situation that spotlights their contrasting views. For example, the role of women in ministry may become an issue when working alongside ministry teammates. Are women to be involved in ministry team meetings or are they not? One spouse allows his wife to participate in ministry decisions and the other couple believes that the wife should not be speaking authoritatively to another husband. The resulting difference in perspective leads to further ministry conflict.

3. Family or medical, crisis or change.

Unexpected and tragic circumstances do touch the lives of those serving on the mission field. Whether missionary, spouse, or children, family members are not immune to death, diseases, terminal illness or an unexpected tragedy on the field. From car accidents to cancer, tsunamis to terrorists, kidnappings to child abuse, threat of war to sudden social-political changes, to loss of family or loved one at home, marital conflict or a crisis all have had adverse effects upon the missionary's service. For the sending and supporting churches, objective discernment in these situations is vital. Entering in as an advocate and/or mediator requires the full attention of leadership. When an unexpected crisis or change requires the missionary (and his family) to return from the field permanently or for a period of time, the local church can serve as a place of refuge during these turbulent times.

4. Moral Disqualification

A very tragic loss within the ministry realm is moral disqualification. A missionary must be above reproach morally (1 Timothy 3:2-5). When this is not the case, immediate removal from the field of service is necessary. Sadly this is often discovered rather than confessed. The local church's intervention will be critical in the restoration of the missionary and their family. Paul's instruction in Galatians 6:1-10 serves as a sound instructional outline as leadership walks alongside the returning missionary and their family.

5. Retirement

Retirement for the missionary is often associated with completion of the task or the recognition of limited abilities due to age or infirmity. Recognition of this season of transition is usually anticipated. Depending on the mission agency, long-term planning for retirement has been arranged accordingly. But the local church can themselves recognize the missionary's years

of faithful service, highlighting the fruit of the ministry and possibly find ways to redeploy their gifts and talents in building the local body of Christ.

6. Supporting church has changed internally.

A significant setback news for any missionary is learning that the supporting church's leadership or ministry philosophy-priorities has changed. Below are some common scenarios that can adversely affect future missionary support.

- Pastoral leadership changes that lead to a shift on the church's mission strategy, vision and/or goals. For example, the supporting church once emphasized open-air street evangelism decide to focus on church-planting and discipleship. Or the leadership of the local church decides to focus on the 10/40 window of unreached peoples but the current missionary serves in Latin America.
- The local church is met with a major financial setback that they can no longer afford to support the missionary and their ministry.
- The local church has decided to make changes in their financial resource allocation of their missionary support.

Communication is critical when there are significant changes by the sending church.

Previously, I have made mention of the missionary's accountability and report to their local church. There's an expectation that the missionary will provide regular updates of their activities and prayer requests. But what happens when there are significant changes from the sending church? I believe that the local church must also provide some regular update especially when there are significant changes that might affect the missionary.

As a principle of consideration for the missionary, the local supporting church elders taking initiative to communicate early in the process of their change would be of great benefit. For the local church leadership to be forthright about their upcoming changes would communicate a level of assurance that the missionary is an important member of the family. Especially if the outcome would have an adverse effect on the missionary's support/livelihood. Discussing these matters before a conversation with the missionary enables the local church to consider the difficulty this will be for the missionary.

Another important matter for the local church to discuss is the consideration of supporting the missionary through the transition process before the conversation with the missionary. Some of the intimate topics include:

- Assessing the missionary's strength and weaknesses in relationship to future redeployment;
- Strategize a reasonable timeframe of support for redeployment for the returning missionary;
- Provide means and ways to assist with relocation costs, housing, etc. in support of their transition back from the mission field or redeployment elsewhere.
- Strategize ways and means to encourage the congregation to come alongside the missionary in transition. See below for more details.

Recognize the shock of reentry back to sending culture.

The sending body that sent and supported the missionary over many years must recognize that reentry back “home” can be a very difficult transition. The process of transplanting a tree serves as a good illustration of what many returning missionaries experience upon reentry. The missionary, like the transplanted tree, had already established roots in their host environment. The development of relationships and cultural adaptation often took years of investment and unseen labor before the missionary became settled comfortably in their host culture. Reentry, which involves the sudden uprooting of one’s personal and ministerial life, parallels the uprooting the well rooted plant with roots deeply embedded into the soil. If the plant is going to survive in its new environment, great care is going will need to be taken. Returning missionaries find this to be very traumatic. Planning and preparation of the soil is most helpful for a plant to slowly adapt to its new environment. Similarly, it is for the returning missionary family. The local church can be a valuable source of proactive help when member care to an ailing soldier and his family returning from the battlefield of cross-cultural ministry.

Here are some important variables to consider on behalf of the returning missionary:

- **The missionary has changed their outlook of life and living.** While away, the missionary grew in his perspective of self, of others they were serving, and of systems as adaptation was made in a new cultural context. Meanwhile, the supporters at home grew themselves adjusting to the everchanging cultural values and norms of their own. For example, the affluent Southern California culture is fast paced with the influence of media and visual entertainment. This is in contrast to the returning missionary who is returning from a developing world which in many cases is void of those regular infusions. This is not necessarily a negative values judgment on either culture but instantly expresses the vast differences between the two worldviews. Though “home” in their passport country, social

values, lifestyles and priorities become a new foreign culture that require relearning the norms and patterns of living which was once second nature.

- **The children of missionaries experience this phenomenon called “third culture kids.”** One important consideration is recognizing that sons and daughters of missionaries are often feeling displaced socially, culturally and spiritually depending on the degree of engagement with the host culture and the sending culture. As mentioned earlier, the missionary and his family has already adapted to the host culture. For many missionary kids, they have already embraced the host language and cultural values and formed lasting relationships. The sudden return especially during the formative teen or early adult years can often negatively impact personal and social developments. The temptation to resist this displacement and retreat from relationships is common among children of missionaries.
- **New job placement.** A new job or career path along with the aforementioned issues only adds a measure of strain to adjusting back to the home culture. Depending on their previous work experience and skill, the returning missionary will likely engage in the working world at a level far below that which he left. Since they will not enter into the workforce with accolades that they previously received when sent out to the mission field. Oftentimes, the spouse will also enter into the workforce in order to make ends meet.
- **Physical adjustment to cost of living.** As previously mentioned, one of the difficult realities is the adjustment to cost of living stateside. The missionary permanently returning to their former culture immediately recognizes that the cost of housing, food, insurance and general living expenses are often vastly different from what was once known. Prior to leaving their field of service, most missionaries have had to relinquish personal belongings. Now the returning missionary faces the daunting task of reacquiring a residence and purchasing clothes, appliances, furniture, and other belongings as they establish life stateside. This can be a major financial undertaking. A proactive interceding church can be of great service to the returning missionary by assisting to meet their basic needs.
- **Retirement and reentry plans may require assistance.** Within the local church are fellow members who are gifted in many areas. Their gifts can be actively employed in serving the returning missionary. Locating housing, assisting with financial stewardship, previewing educational options for children, and orienting a returning family to shopping venues are just a few ways church members can be involved in the reentry process. These practical helps will be invaluable, alleviating a measure of the mental and emotional stress that accompanies the process of transition.

Coming alongside the missionary in transition.

- **Practice hospitality.** Members can be encouraged to host the returning missionary in their own home. The effort to physically meet with the missionary communicates interest in their life and work. To make the time to meet communicates the priority of personal interaction and interest.
- **Listening to understand.** To listen patiently is extremely helpful when bearing one another's burdens. Guilt and discouragement are common emotions experienced by a missionary returning prematurely. Oftentimes, the missionary will rehearse the seemingly poor choices and regrets they had on the international ministry front. Because they're sinners, they need godly saints who will take the time to listen and bear their burdens. I think of Colossians 3:12-13, *"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another."* Listen also to their journey, asking questions which draw out their story.
- **Be patient and persistent to show love.** Time and patience are necessary for the returning missionary and their family since there are adjustments to be made on many levels. I'm reminded of Romans 12:10, *"Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor."*
- **Weep alongside.** Weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15). For many returning missionaries, the pain and loss of their dream can feel like a death of a loved one. Oftentimes, the missionary has wholly devoted their heart, mind and soul to the missionary enterprise. While it is tempting to inordinately cling to a ministry position or goal, the missionary experiencing this deep sense of loss, can be a strengthening force as one gains a biblical perspective. Weeping alongside is often a helpful means to holding them up while walking along with the fellow saint.
- **Recognize their personal sacrifices.** The returning missionary made certain sacrifices that were costly on a number of levels. The prospect of starting all over can sometimes appear daunting. Don't assume all is well. Take the time to see how the missionary is managing reentry. The sending church body plays a valuable role in the life of the returning missionary. Members should be encouraged to actively engage the individual or family in transition. The following are some practical ways to do this:
- **Rehearse the power of the gospel.** Inquire about how the gospel sustained them personally. Ask the returning missionary about their stories: successes, failures, disappointments, resentments, etc. Find out how the missionary preached the gospel to themselves and to others who are constantly observing their lives. Explore how the gospel impacts other people

and cultures. Have them explain the implications of preaching the gospel and its consequences.

- **Pray alongside.** One of the most helpful acts of kindness to a returning missionary is to pray alongside them upon their return. The topics of prayer can include confession, intercession, praise and appeals for future guidance. Pray alongside in these ways and more is a proactive demonstration of genuine love and concern for their lives. James 5:13-16 serves to remind us, ¹³ *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.* ¹⁴ *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.* ¹⁵ *And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.* ¹⁶ *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”*
- **Provide avenues for debriefing.** Returning missionaries greatly appreciate being asked to recall and reflect upon God’s faithfulness to them. Ask about answered prayers. Have the missionary recall God’s timely provision of their needs. Encourage them to reflect upon God’s Sovereign protection in a number of arenas. Inquire and have them recall the various trials and tribulations. It has been my observation that very few people seek to ask leading and probing questions in order to understand the returning missionary’s thoughts. The local church’s proactive participation in the debriefing process communicates a tremendous demonstration of love. Be quick to listen to the missionary and slow to speak about oneself. Below are a list of questions to ask in debriefing.
- **Understanding the role of God’s Providence.** Oftentimes, the returning missionary will experience great grief and loss in a number of arenas. The pain of regrets, missed opportunities, disappointment when expectations were not met, personal failures, etc., can all cause the missionary to feel overwhelmed by their lack of accomplishment. Especially in view of great expectations built within their own minds or by others. A wise brother or sister can be very helpful in providing timely counsel and remind of God’s Providence in all things (Romans 8:28). *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver* (Proverbs 25:11).
- **Identify items worthy of praise.** Intentionally setting aside opportunities to praise God and give thanks provides an outlet for the missionary to express gratitude and to rehearse evidence of grace upon the missionary’s life and ministry. This can take place in corporate or personal time of worship. The corporate effort strengthens the congregation and invites their participation in the cause of the Great Commission. This activity also exalts Christ and enables the congregation see God’s hand of intervention. *Finally, brothers, whatever is true,*

whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:8-9).

Engaging the returning missionary in conversation.

Many people are at a loss as to how to communicate with the returning missionary. Remembering that missionaries are ordinary people. They are unique in that they have experienced life and ministry in a culture beyond the one the local church has known. They return, having adapted to a change in environment, to differing lifestyles, faith practices, foods, and cultural values which have not been experienced by most members of the supporting church. Sometimes the missionary and their family have difficulty explaining their experiences.

Members of the congregation can help draw out these experiences by way of insightful questions. Mobilizing the congregation to engage with the returning missionary both socially and spiritually. The principle of asking good questions is applicable to all of our relationships but this invaluable skill is especially meaningful when meeting with the returning missionary. Next time you meet your missionary consider engaging them in some of the following questions:

- How did you come to faith?
- How/when were you called to a life of ministry?
- What was most difficult about leaving “home” before you traveled to your new context?
- What was the greatest challenge you faced living and serving in a new context?
- What ministry opportunities has the Lord opened up for you?
- Tell me about a relationship that has impacted you in your new area of service?
- What was a high point for you spiritually?....a low point?
- Which aspect of your ministry did you find most challenging? Most rewarding?
- What do you do for fun in your new context - what do your kids do for fun?
- What encouraged you most while you were serving in your new context?
- What did you learn about God while serving in a new context?
- What did you learn about yourself while serving in a new context?
- How were relationships enriched in the context of service? Challenged?
- What do you find most challenging as you return to the United States?
- What has changed in you...what has changed in us since we last saw you?

The local church's role of restoring and retooling the former missionary.

Finally, the local church can serve the returning missionary by offering various forms of physical, emotional and spiritual refreshment upon their return from the field. Providing a place to retreat in order to physically rest can be a healing balm for the individual/family who has been running hard for a period of time. This particular form of investment into the missionary's well-being may be of great service for their body and soul. Resources channeled in this direction are never wasted. Since the returning missionary is a member of the local church body, it will be important to rediscover the spiritual gifts that God has prepared beforehand and employ them for His glory (Ephesians 2:10).

For example, returning missionaries are often sympathetic to immigrants. Their wealth of understanding and knowledge can be of benefit in an outreach effort to immigrants in the community. Their cross-cultural experiences bring to the local church unique perspectives that can enrich members of the congregation. Their willingness to walk by faith and abide in Christ can strengthen fellow saints.

I'm reminded of John Mark, whom the apostle Paul says *"he was very useful to me in ministry."* Despite John Mark's earlier ministry setback, which could be labeled as a missionary casualty, the Lord was gracious to grow him so that he was later useful to Paul and to many others. According to church history, John Mark was known as Mark the Evangelist and he planted the first church in Africa (Alexandria). John Mark was also the author of the first gospel written, the Gospel of Mark. The lesson we can learn from John Mark's life is that the local church in Antioch and Jerusalem (via Peter) was instrumental in rebuilding his life to be fruitful in accordance with Philippians 1:6. May the local church (Christ' Bride) continue to serve in this way as a means of fulfilling God's Great Commission.

Chapter 7 – Summary and Concluding Thoughts

Scenario: A local church desires to actively participate in the fulfillment of the Great Commission by supporting and sending missionaries. Where do they begin?

Purpose: To provide a summary overview for the local church's involvement in participating the Great Commission by giving assistance in their effort to launch a missions program.

God's means to declare His glory among the nations is to mobilize His Bride (the church) to fulfill His Great Commission and Great Commandment.

Jesus' command to make disciples of all the nations is the impetus for missions. But the question that needs to be answered is how? By what means did God intend to see the Great Commission be fulfilled? The Bible provides the historical narrative declaring that God is the One who initiates the message of redemption through the work of His Son. God is the One who calls out men to deliver this message. God is the One who enables men to speak through the power of His Spirit. And God is the One who uses His bride (the church) to be the sending and supportive entity resulting in a collective enterprise of worship.

I believe that the Scriptures teach both prescriptively and descriptively that the local church serves as the sending and supporting agency by which all men are sent to proclaim the good news and make disciples. Using the many diversified gifts and talents within the body, the local church is mobilized to prioritize their resource for the purpose of making disciples across the globe. God's glory is ultimately declared among the nations, to every tribe, language, people and nation. Psalm 96:3-4 says, "*Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.*"

Review of the biblical precedence of long-term interdependence between the local church and the missionary.

The development of long-term interdependence between the local church and the missionary helps to sharpen and strengthen the sending church and missionaries alike. The mission of the church is kept in clear focus. There are sacrifices being made on both sides. For the local church, it is the sacrifice of sending one of their best to serve as an ambassador for Christ,

extending the church's arm of outreach beyond their own community. The local church also sacrificially gives of money, time in intercessory prayer, and possession to meet the missionary's need. For the missionary, their willingness to be sent out underscores the urgency of making Christ known. The missionary's report provides an update showcasing the power of the gospel in and through changed lives. As theologian Carl Henry, once said, "*The gospel is only good news if it gets there **in time.***"

Long-term missions versus short-term missions.

Discipleship and church planting requires full-time commitment of resources and prayerful intercession. Development of long-term relationships with missionaries and with the people whom they're serving strengthen this commitment. Emphasizing independent short-term mission only undermines and distracts from the commitment to making, maturing and multiplying disciples.

It often takes months and years before gospel fruit is born. Satan would want nothing more than to distract from this priority! Consider the labor involved in learning a local language and culture; studying the people who are blinded by their sin and enslaved to the god of this world; understanding the idolatrous practices and fears that hinder the unbeliever from their life to Christ; effectively communicating the gospel message so that a people who have heard are able to understand complex elements; discipling believers to walk in obedience to Christ according to the Scriptures; and translating the Scripture in the local language so subsequent generations will have access to the power of the gospel in written form.

All of this requires much investment of time and resources. The local church's faithful support along with the relentless commitment by the missionary is a powerful testimony of devotion to the great cause of Christ. The life of the local church is to be not a frenzied proclamation because time is short, but a steady program of expansion throughout the world. Yet with an unflinching sense of urgency because for each man, any and every moment may prove to be the crucial time of decision. Meanwhile, the church fights to keep focused on the main priorities in their purpose statement – make disciples of all peoples.

Mobilizing returning missionaries.

One of the great resources for the local church is the utilization of gifted workers who have served faithfully and who can be utilized to train a future generation of missionaries and church planters. Titus 2:1-2 are key qualities to look in an experienced or returning missionaries are outlined.

These individuals can provide a great service of training within the local church. Paul writes succinctly instructing older men, *“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.”* An experienced missionary who has retained and practiced sound doctrine can train the next generation to discern between convictions and preferences.

Passing the baton to the next generation.

Paul’s instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2 is written in the context of church leaders being intentional to pass the baton to the next generation. Paul writes, *“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”* This instruction to a younger pastor is really part of a double emphasis, including this one generation and the next. Several verses earlier, Paul stated in 2 Timothy 1:13-14, ¹³ *Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁴ *By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”* This applies to the training and equipping of future missionaries to be sent from the local church. The entrustment of God’s message to faithful men requires the church to remain on task, equipping and sending workers into the harvest (Matthew 9:37-38). I close with this quote from an unknown missionary, *“We don’t need more people out here, we need the right kinds of people.”* May the Lord help the elders of the local church to remain focused on sending and supporting the right kinds of people. *Soli Deo Gloria!!*

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Good Missionary Quotes

“Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.”

- William Carey – missionary to India.

“He is no fool – who gives what he cannot keep – to gain what he cannot lose.”

- Jim Elliot, missionary to the Huaorani peoples, Ecuador

“I have found there are three stages in every great work of God; first, it is impossible, then it is difficult, then it is done.”

- Hudson Taylor, missionary to China

“There is no success without sacrifice. If you succeed without sacrifice it is because someone has suffered before you. If you sacrifice without success it is because someone will succeed after.”

- Adoniram Judson, missionary to Burma (Myanmar)

“You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.”

- Amy Carmichael, missionary to India

“If everything is mission, nothing is mission.”

- Stephen Neill, former missionary to India and church history historian

“I have but one candle of life to burn, and I would rather burn it out in a land filled with darkness than in a land flooded with light”

- Ion Keith Falconer, missionary to South Arabia.

Follow Christ wherever He leads, for you will discover that He has prepared all things – the place, the pain of sin, the pitiful state of lost people, the pride of life in all men including yourself, the promises of His Word, the purpose of the gospel and most importantly, the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

- Unknown

“To convert one sinner from his way is an event of greater importance than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from temporal evil.”

- George Smeaton, Scottish pastor & theologian

“Missionary zeal does not grow out of intellectual beliefs, nor out of theological arguments, but out of love.”

- Roland Allen, missionary to China

“All my desire was the conversion of the heathen... I declare, now I am dying, I would not have spent my life otherwise for the whole world.”

— David Brainerd, missionary to the Delaware Indians of North America

*“Give me the Love that leads the way
The Faith that nothing can dismay
The Hope no disappointments tire
The Passion that'll burn like fire
Let me not sink to be a clod
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God”*

— Amy Carmichael, missionary to India.

“Some wish to live within the sound of a chapel bell; I wish to run a rescue mission within a yard of hell.”

- **C.T. Studd, missionary to China, India and Africa**

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't.”

— John Piper, pastor & author

“If a commission by an earthly king is considered an honor, how can a commission by a Heavenly King be considered a sacrifice?”

— David Livingstone, missionary to Africa

“We don't need more people out here, we need the right kinds of people.”

- Unknown missionary